

CABLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, OCTOBER 15, 2020--6 PM—via Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Jeffrey Diamond, Ed Fechner, Neal Pilson, David Wyatt, Sean Wilson.
Danielle Filleo acted as Zoom host for the meeting.

Absent: Jill Pompei, Tom Grizey

The ninth meeting of the CAC was called to order by Committee Co-Chairs Neal Pilson and Ed Fechner at 6:03 PM via Zoom.

As the first order of business, the Committee approved by unanimous vote the minutes of the September 17th meeting, which had been circulated previously.

Next, the Committee discussed the status of relicensing and the general timeline for completing the process. Ed Fechner described his conversations with Mr. Michael Mael, Municipal Liaison from the Department of Telecommunications and Cable (DTC) and Mr. John Maher, of Charter/Spectrum. Mr. Maher has proposed that, in the event that a new agreement is not fully implemented by the expiration of the old agreement, January 18, 2021, the old agreement should remain in full force and effect until a new agreement can be completed and this was acceptable to the Committee.

Next steps in the relicensing were agreed as follows -

1. On October 22, 2020, the Committee will hold a public hearing to collect comments from town residents regarding Charter/Spectrum's past performance and service and future improvements or additional services they would like to see.
2. Following the public hearing, the Committee will draft a letter including a list of proposed changes, additions and/or deletions to be included in the Renewal Agreement and submit this to the Board of Selectmen for their review and approval before sending this letter to Charter/Spectrum. Potential additions to the agreement may include future grants for equipment to support educational or municipal programming, a dedicated public channel, adding residential phone service and cost-sharing for "long installs".
3. Charter/Spectrum will prepare a draft Renewal Agreement, after considering the proposed changes from the Committee and return the new document to the Committee's review.
4. The Committee will review the Renewal Agreement with the Richmond Select Board, then provide further comments to Charter/Spectrum and seek to resolve any open terms.

5. Charter/Spectrum will prepare the final Renewal Agreement and return this final document to the Committee, which will review it and forward it to the Board of Selectmen along with its recommendation.
6. If the Select Board approves the final Renewal Agreement, it will execute the document, which will become effective according to its terms.

The Committee then discussed potential opportunities to work with Pittsfield Community Television (PCTV) to record, produce and distribute educational, municipal and public programming for the town. (David Wyatt recused himself from this discussion due to a potential conflict of interest.) It was noted that the 5-Town Consortium (Great Barrington, Lenox, Lee, Sheffield, Stockbridge) uses Community Television of the Southern Berkshires (CTSB) to perform this role for those towns' residents. After discussion, a meeting was proposed between Jeffrey Diamond, Ed Fechner and Neal Pilson, representing the Committee, and Mr. Shawn Serre, of PCTV, to discuss details and a tentative date and time of 2pm, November 6 was suggested. Jeffrey Diamond will contact Mr. Serre and confirm. In the meantime, Neal Pilson will contact parties in the 5-Town Consortium and ask them for a copy of their agreement with CTSB.

Next, the Committee briefly discussed financing alternatives for programming equipment or other costs. Neal Pilson commented that, while grants, such as Cultural Council funding should be pursued, after some research, it appears that funds would also need to come from the town, school and library budgets. It was generally agreed that those costs should be shared by the whole town and not solely by subscribers.

Lastly, the Committee tentatively agreed to meet again, following the public hearing and the meeting with PCTV, on November 12 at 6pm (via Zoom). Neal Pilson will confirm the date and time and circulate the agenda before the meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and approved and the meeting ended at 6:45pm.

Respectfully submitted by Sean Wilson, Secretary