

Cable Advisory Committee
Minutes of October 25, 2010

Present for the Cable Committee were: Louis Rousseau, Dan Picard, Ted Kosiavelon, Christopher Ferguson, Kevin Willett and Lenny Proposki. Also present were: Dennis E. Piendak, Town Manager and Samantha Carver the recording secretary. The meeting was held at the Richardson Room in Harmony Hall located at 1660 Lakeview Avenue, Dracut, MA.

Absent: Hank Noel

Present at the meeting were former Cable Advisory Committee members: Jack Lyons, Louis Darvaris and Bob Corey

Mr. Piendak opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m. He stated that this is the second meeting for the CAC. Mr. Piendak introduced the former members of the Cable Committee and Mr. Lyons began the discussion.

He stated that around the first of this year he had written a letter to Mr. Piendak advising him that due to the fact that the Cable Advisory Committee members have all become DATV Board of Directors that basically they cannot serve in both capacities and the Board of Selectmen would have to appoint a new cable advisory committee. The Board of Selectman appointed a new committee and the former committee are present to explain some of the functions of the Cable Advisory Committee.

Mr. Lyons went onto explain that the first step is to conduct an ascertainment when the new contract comes up. The way you can do this is to go on the State website and you can download or look at contracts that have been negotiated with neighboring communities. Most likely the new contract that will be negotiated will be for a term of ten or fifteen years in duration. Mr. Lyons advised the Committee to compare with the other communities and make sure you get the same options as the other communities. Mr. Lyons stated that three quarters of the Comcast contract is boiler plate but the areas you have to pay attention to are PEG Access, Annual Funding and the Technical Fund. He advised that what you want to do is break up the workload among the committee and take three or four articles each, make brief notes and then share your notes with the Committee at the meetings for a discussion. There should be at least three members to negotiate when it comes time. At that time you should have a pretty good idea of your negotiating tools.

Mr. Lyons noted that most of the complaints the Committee will field are for programming and cost. Unfortunately you do not have any control over what Comcast or other carriers charge. That falls under the FCC Regulations.

Mr. Lyons also stated another question he would get a lot of is "why isn't Verizon here?" Mr. Lyons stated the answer is they are not sure why Verizon is not in Dracut. They assume that maybe it's not cost effective for Verizon because they would have to be on a "level playing field" with Comcast which means they would have to wire the whole town and they may only get half of the customers. Currently there are 9500 customers with Comcast.

Mr. Darvaris spoke about the technology in Dracut. Currently they have an Institutional Network or INET and they use a T-line split to service all the buildings. This is for audio/video service. They had to negotiate with Comcast for data sharing and they did not put it in the contract they put it in a side letter to the contract. The schools also use the INET. The problem is this is an older technology and the parts for the system are limited.

A solution to this is to update and install a Virtual Private Network (VPN) which would constitute putting a modem in each building and this would be very costly. The cost could be estimated upwards of \$400,000. The other option would be to have Comcast do this and the subscribers pay Comcast back over the life of the contract. As part of the current contract, there is a user fee collected from each subscriber which amounts to .50 cents on their bill. This money is paid to the Town quarterly and is to be used for equipment and or time. Mr. Lyons added that the money received from the technical fund was used for the new robotics system at Harmony Hall.

The Committee Members email addressees were provided to Mr. Lyons and the secretary will provide the email address of the former Committee members to the current Cable Advisory Committee.

The Committee thanked the former Committee for coming in.

Cable Advisory Committee Organization

Mr. Willett made a motion to nominate Chris Ferguson as Chairman. Mr. Picard seconded the motion. No other nominations for Chairman were made. The motion carried unanimously.

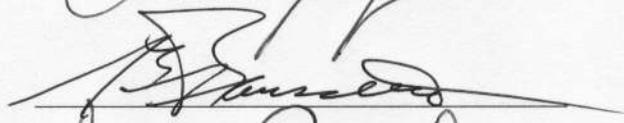
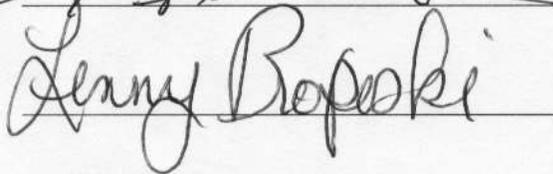
The Committee will consider a Vice Chairman at the next meeting when all members are present.

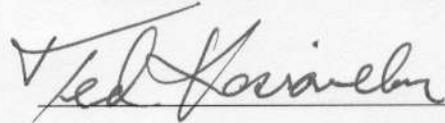
Mr. Proposki made a motion to approve the minutes of August 30, 2010 as presented. Mr. Rousseau seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The next meeting was discussed and determined to be November 22, 2010 and staff will invite Tim Kelly of Comcast to the meeting. If Mr. Kelly is not available that date, November 29th will be sought.

Mr. Picard made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m. Mr. Rousseau seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Cable Advisory Committee


Absent: Hank Noel