



Cable Communications Commission Special Committee Meeting Minutes

Administrative Conference Room
Meridian Municipal Building, Okemos, MI
May 22, 2013

Present: Commissioners: Walter Benenson, Patrick Crowley, Tunga Kiyak and Andrew Lathrop
Staff: Deborah Guthrie and Kristi Schaeding
Township: None
Comcast: None
AT&T: None
Haslett Schools: None
Okemos Schools: None

Call Meeting to Order: Chair Benenson called the meeting to order at **5:05 pm**.

Approval of Agenda:

Commissioner Crowley moved TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. Seconded by Commissioner Kiyak.

Voice vote. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Remarks:

Township Manager Frank Walsh introduced himself and was welcomed by the Commission.

Cable Satisfaction Survey Discussion:

Chair Benenson appointed Commissioner Lathrop as Chair of the Special Committee and the members to include: Commissioner Lathrop, Commissioner Crowley and Commissioner Kiyak.

(Chair Benenson left the meeting at 5:25 pm)

Communications Director Guthrie started the discussion with specifics on franchise renewal dates. She explained that Comcast announced during past commission meetings that their franchise agreement with the township expires in 2015 and this contradicts our franchise agreement that states 2020.

Commissioner Crowley recommended retaining a polling company to conduct the survey and used the example of MSU's IPPSR (Institute for Public Policy and Social Research). Guthrie explained that budgeting funds for a polling company and RFP's (Request for Proposals) would be required.

Commissioner Crowley suggested reviewing the last two surveys and carrying over questions that are valid and relevant. He stated that he would prefer to keep most of the demographic questions to gain information and to better serve the residents.

“How are you receiving your media?” and other related questions that address the viewership of the PEG channels was suggested to be used by Commissioner Crowley.

Communications Director Guthrie explained that according to the township cable ordinance:

- It is the purpose of the cable commission to make sure video service providers are in compliance with the technical requirements.
- To make sure they are meeting the customer satisfaction components of the Meridian Township ordinance.
- To ensure that the government access channel is bringing information to the residents as described in the HOMTV policies.

Communications Director Guthrie also recommends reviewing current issues with Comcast that are not in accordance with the franchise agreement:

- Refusal of HD delivery
- Lack of representation on the channel guide
- No video on demand (VOD) available
- Lack of a customer service center in Meridian Township
- The closing of the public access studio facility on Miller Road and Trowbridge Road
- No longer offering video production classes to residents

She commented that a problem she anticipates is receiving less funding from franchise fees in the future. According to Guthrie, the main artery of the franchise agreement and P.A. 480 hinges on video service so any new methods that residents use to receive information creates less revenue for the township. Guthrie also recommended adding customer satisfaction questions about Comcast that could possibly lead to an informational training session for Comcast customers.

A possible survey question proposed to ask a local business owner:

“Would you find benefit for your company to be on TV and displayed to 15,000 subscribers?”

Also discussed as part of the scope to address:

“i-Net” is included in the franchise agreement and Commissioner Kiyak announced that he will investigate, find its importance and report back to the commission.

Communications Director Guthrie proposed that she will examine survey costs and review the language regarding survey costs in the franchise agreement and will report back to the commission.

Communications Director Guthrie informed the commission that a franchise fee review had also been conducted during the last survey.

The Commission was in agreement to carry over survey questions regarding PEG channels, for example: “Are you watching the MSU WKAR channels?”

Commissioner Kiyak began a conversation by asking what survey questions would be asked of non-users. Possible Questions:

1. "How do you receive your information?"

Answer List: Broadband, Cable, Internet, Phone

2. "What services do you receive?"

Answer List: Video, Cable, Internet, Land Line Phone

3. "Do you have a Land Line Phone?"

Answers List: Yes, No

4. "How do you receive television programming?"

Answers List: Cable, Broadband, Dish, Internet, Hulu, NetFlix, iTunes, Amazon, X-Box, All of the Above

5. "How do you receive your local news information?"

Answers List: Local News, Local Government Access Channel, Online Resources, Radio, Local School Channel, Local Newspapers, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest

Communications Director Guthrie recommends adding "extent of services" questions into the survey. She commented that AT&T cherry picks where they want to provide video service in the township and we have no idea which neighborhoods they are providing service to. Guthrie stressed the importance of finding video service areas of video providers in the township and a technical audit would reveal that information. She stated she will also look into the fee for a technical audit.

Commissioner Crowley recommended AT&T be added to the agenda of the next regular meeting along with creating a letter to AT&T addressing the lack of compliance and violations of P.A. 480 requirements to meet low income housing requirements.

Communications Director Guthrie discussed the ongoing issues with the Zayo Company (formally Arialink) and the video service they are providing in the area and not paying the township a franchise fee.

Commissioner Crowley recommended Zayo be added to the agenda of the next regular meeting along with creating a letter to the company addressing the issues.

Future Agenda Items:

Nothing to Report.

Public Remarks:

No remarks from the public.

Adjournment:

Chair Lathrop moved TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. Seconded by Commissioner Kiyak.

Hearing no objections, Chair Lathrop ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 7:00 p.m.