

Communications Commission Regular Meeting Minutes

Administrative Conference Room
Meridian Municipal Building, Okemos, MI

April 6, 2016

Present: Commissioners: Chair, Walter Benenson; Vice Chair, Patrick Crowley;
Commissioner, Andrew Lathrop
Staff: Deborah Guthrie, Communications Director, Andrea
Smiley, Administrative Assistant and Lynn Meikle,
Graphic Designer & Equipment Specialist
Township: Trustee, Ron Styka
Comcast: None
AT&T: None
Haslett Schools: None
Okemos Schools: None

Call Meeting to Order: Chair, Benenson called the meeting to order at **6:02 pm.**

Public Remarks: None

Approval of Agenda:

Chair Benenson moved **TO APPROVE**, Chair Benenson asked if there was something that needed to be added to the Agenda. Trustee Styka stated that it could just be a discussion item later in the meeting. Chair Benenson asked Director Guthrie if she had any suggestions on how to handle the additional information. Trustee Styka asked if Chair Benenson was making reference to ACD.net. Director Guthrie stated that she had mentioned that the Commission could vote to amend the agenda or it could just be a discussion when Trustee Styka gives his Township Information report. Seconded by Vice Chair Crowley

Voice vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes:

Vice Chair Crowley moved **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 2, 2015.**
Seconded by Commissioner Lathrop

Voice vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Communications/Announcements:

1. Applications for Vacant Commissioner Seat – Vice Chair Crowley asked how many current vacancies for the Commission and Director Guthrie replied that there was currently one vacancy to fill and that the Commission needs to appoint a new Commissioner to fill the remaining term of the previous Commissioner Seipel. Discussion continued concerning the quantity of alternate seats needed. The Commission asked for a review of the original discussion to see how many alternate seats was discussed and agreed upon.

Chair Benenson continued the discussion with the current applications submitted for the Commissioner seat. One application submitted by Katharine Dyke, who he spoke to on the phone and seemed very interested. She was originally scheduled to attend the meeting but had to decline at the last minute. Chair Benenson suggested that we reach out to her about the internship program because she seemed very interested in TV production, ect. Trustee Styka asked if Katharine actually filled out the application for the Commission and Chair Benenson confirmed that she did. The other application was submitted by William McCleary. Chair Benenson asked about the process for appointing and rejecting applicants. Trustee Styka stated that an application doesn't guarantee an appointment. Vice Chair Crowley stated that both applicants should be invited to the next Commission meeting to speak to the Commissioners.

Director Guthrie asked the Commissioners to address the memo included in the packet concerning the appointment of Katharine Dyke. She asked the commissioners if they wanted to proceed with the memo or if they wanted to invite the applicants to speak at the next Commission Meeting. Chair Benenson stated that he would reach out to Katharine Dyke again about her application since she was unable to commit at the time. Director Guthrie asked the Commissioners again if they wanted applicants to come in and speak at the next Commission meeting. Trustee Styka stated that his neighbor was interested, as well; he just has to fill out the application.

2. Resignation of Commissioner Brian Seipel – No additional information
3. MPSC Regulation – Director Guthrie began the discussion with details about the MPSC handling cable complaints and overseeing the cable complaint process. MPSC stated that they didn't have any money from the video industry to cover informal or formal complaints, so they decided they were going to eliminate that from their responsibilities. All of the information has been removed from the website. Director Guthrie stated that she believes she would be able to contact AT&T directly if she had a complaint, but that the company was not interested in an agreement in regards to cable complaints similar to the agreement that Comcast has with the Township.

Old Business:

1. Resolution of Support – Name Change Request – Director Guthrie stated that a Resolution of Support was drafted and that the Commission needed to approve the language in order to be presented to the Township Board. The resolution shows the name change from the Cable Communications Commission to the Communications Commission. Commissioner Lathrop asked the question as to the name choice, Communications Commission or Cable Commission. Trustee Styka stated that other names could be

suggested. Trustee Styka stated that the Township Board is looking for a unit to feed this type communications information to that can make recommendations back to the Board. Chair Benenson asked if everyone was in agreement on the name "Communications Commission". Everyone was in favor. Vice Chair Crowley stated that the new name will line up better with the department's name. Trustee Styka stated that the term "Communications" includes cell phones, broadband, Wi-Fi, metro act, events, marketing, etc. The commissioners agreed to the new name and the resolution of support. Walter agreed to sign the memo to be presented to the Township Board at the next meeting.

2. Communications Needs Assessment Project – Director Guthrie stated that the MSU students chose a different project. Chair Benenson commented that there were two different departments to submit the project. Chair Benenson stated that he would reach out to the other department to see if those students would be interested.

New Business:

1. Memo to Township Board – New Commissioner Appointment – Discussed earlier in the meeting, Commissioners decided to revisit. Chair Benenson is planning to reconnect with one of the applicants.
2. Resolution to Repeal PA 269 – Director Guthrie updated the Commissioners stating that the judge placed an injunction on the new law. Trustee Styka commented that it still needs to be repealed because the injunction is only temporary.

Director Guthrie explained the memo from Township Manager Walsh and the Resolution of Support to Repeal PA 269. The resolution was passed by the Township Board and forwarded showing their support. The new law is a huge issue for the Communications Department and the Commission because it entails everything that the department does on a daily basis. Chair Benenson asked if there were any documents that the Commissioners should sign. Director Guthrie commented that the resolution could be redone to reflect the Commission to include Chair Benenson's signature.

Chair Benenson moved **TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION TO REPEAL PA 269**. Seconded by Commissioner Lathrop

Voice vote: Motion carried unanimously.

3. HOMTV Website Proposal – Director Guthrie presented the proposal from Eric Stelljes, a resident in the community, for the new HOMTV website

design. He also designed the current website when it was originally launched. The major upgrade will be a mobile website with RSS feed which will help with the election notifications. Another aspect will be the incorporation of SWAGIT, our new provider of hands-free video streaming® and broadcasting solutions to local, state and federal government.

Director Guthrie introduced Lynn Meikle, Graphic Designer and Equipment Purchaser to the Commissioners. Lynn has been involved in all of the AV projects for HOMTV and the Township, including the new cable line and setup for the new Central Fire Station.

Lynn Meikle discussed the features of Swagit and how the services provided will save time on trimming programs/shows and Township meetings. Swagit also integrates a mobile website that has RSS feeds so that programs can be watched on a mobile device and the video quality is HD. Swagit will also offer the first step into closed captioning. It will still have a three day lag time, but at least it offers the service.

Director Guthrie commented that the only item from the proposal that will not be done is the candidate management system. The money is not available in the budget right now. However, pricing for election software has been looked at in order to track election results. Director Guthrie will present the costs to the commission when available. The timetable for the new website launch is scheduled for June 1, prior to elections.

Reports:

1. Cable Compliments/Complaints: Nothing new to report
2. Video Service Provider(s): No information
3. Communications Director's Report:
Director Guthrie reported that Township Manager Walsh is currently low on administration staff because the Executive Assistant was promoted to Human Resources Specialist, so he moved the due date on the new quarterly report to June 1.
4. Chair's Report: Nothing to report
5. Township Information:
Trustee Styka discussed information that was included in the Township Board packet for the April 5 meeting. ACD.net presented information to the Board in order for staff to receive direction on whether to continue to negotiate the placement of the Distributed Antenna System (DAS) towers. Copies of the information were provided to the commissioners. The Township Board is asking for input from the Cable Communications Commission on how to proceed. Trustee Styka commented that the Township Board understands that the Commission will not meet again for two months. One option is that ACD.net has to sign a franchise agreement. The other option would be through Special Use Project (SUP) which involves private property and other regulations. Trustee Styka explained that the Township Board is asking the Commission to discuss and provide feedback.

Vice Chair Crowley ask about a timeline. Trustee Styka stated that there is no timeline right now. Director Guthrie stated that she already explained to the owner that the pole design would have to change in order for the Board to approve. The poles are used to improve connectivity and signal issues. The poles act as mini satellites and will be placed in the Township rights of way.

Vice Chair Crowley asked if it could be explained which option, from a governmental stand point, would be more beneficial to the Township. Trustee Styka stated that the two different options dictate where the poles are placed. It is a matter of convenience to be able to place the poles in the rights of way area. Trustee Styka stated that the Boards initial reaction would be to do a franchise agreement with the company. Director Guthrie stated that if the Township decided on the franchise agreement option, then the Township could at least receive money. This would be an amended franchise agreement that can be shared with the Commission because one has already been drafted by the attorney, Mike Watza, with other communities across Michigan. Director Guthrie offered the draft franchise agreement to the Commission for viewing. Vice Chair Crowley continued to ask questions about the franchise agreement option and how much control or negotiation power the Township would have with the agreement. Trustee Styka read the description of Public Act 48 concerning the citizens' Rights of Way (ROW). This request from ACD.net is unique in that they would like to utilize the DAS system, placing six micro cell towers around Meridian Mall, which actually when looking at the map, it's really central Meridian Township. DAS structures are not regulated under the permit and their installation and placement must be authorized by the Township ROW or SUP. Vice Chair Crowley asked the question how the Township would generate revenue from the franchise agreement option and how much is anticipated. Director Guthrie stated that she would have to go back and look at the draft, but believes it could be a sizeable amount of money. Vice Chair Crowley stated that his recommendation would be based on a number of things, for one the look of the towers, but if Meridian Township can govern the looks and determine placement and make a suitable amount of money, then that would sway his recommendation.

Chair Benenson asked the question why this issue is being brought to the Commission. Trustee Styka explained that the Township Board is looking for input and a recommendation from the Communications Commission because encompasses all communications for the Township. Chair Benenson stated that the streets and skyline are already so cluttered, so if these towers bring in revenue then it isn't necessarily a bad thing. Trustee Styka suggested that maybe the attorney, Mike Watza, make a presentation. Vice Chair Crowley asked for a copy of the map for placement of the poles. Director Guthrie stated she would forward the map to the commissioners.

Director Guthrie stated that ACD.net has been pursuing this for over two years and when Assistant Township Manager Derek Perry came on board, Director Guthrie presented the issue to him.

Chair Benenson asked if the Township could determine the shape and size of the cell towers. Director Guthrie explained that the towers could be disguised in many different ways.

Director Guthrie offered other meetings and webinars to the Commission to discover more information on the topic. Vice Chair Crowley stated that for over a year now there has been conversation about Municipality based Wi-Fi. Chair Benenson stated that Director Guthrie had said Michigan law doesn't allow and that there are a lot of loop holes to jump through to provide free Wi-Fi. Trustee Styka asked about the Sebewaing Community and how they are providing broadband to residents. He inquired about a presentation that he sat in on at a previous conference. Director Guthrie suggested that she present at the next Commission meeting explaining what they did and how they did it. It is a smaller community but it would still be a great presentation. Vice Chair Crowley asked if the agreement with ACD.net was built into a franchise agreement, would it help to then lead to a Wi-Fi based community.

Director Guthrie stated that she has had conversations about future planning in the Township and the consideration of starting to build the infrastructure and laying the foundation so when the time came the ground work was already in place. She stated that she had recommended that broadband fiber be installed in the new parking lot lights; however because of time constraints it didn't work out. The infrastructure should be put in to the master development plan, so even if it isn't currently being used, it is available for the future.

Director Guthrie stated that ACD.net was approved for the fiber in the ground over a year ago.

Chair Benenson stated that the ACD.net topic should appear on the agenda for future Commission meetings until a recommendation can be made. Should the Township do a franchise agreement and what parameters should be included? Director Guthrie stated that all PEG Revenue has to be spent on equipment, so with the additional money from PEG Fees, the Commission has to decide on what the money will be spent on. A percentage of that could be designated as money for the fiber in the ground in order to develop the Wi-Fi community. The money could also be saved over time for a new multi-media building, visitor center, etc.

Director Guthrie will invite Mike Watza and the Sebewaing Community to the next scheduled Commission meeting to make a presentation on broadband.

6. Programming:
7. Viewership/Promotions:

Andrea Smiley, Administrative assistant discussed how the Communications Department teamed up with the Clerk's Office on the Township Voter Registration Campaign. Clerk Dreyfus has set up two Voter Registration Drives, one at Okemos high school and one at Haslett high school to try and get seniors registered to vote. The Communications Department created a PSA to air on the Okemos and Haslett High School Channels, as well as on HOMTV. The Communications Department also registered the Voter Registration Drives with RocktheVote.com, created a tri-fold display board for the events and promoted through social media and the website.

Vice Chair Crowley suggested using the school app and notification system, Remind, to create awareness of the Registration Drives and "Remind" students of the events.

Smiley also mentioned that HOMTV would be sending an intern reporter to interview the students about election topics and take photos of the event. All of that footage will be used for the election shows the will begin airing in July.

Director Guthrie complimented Smiley and Coty Kenneth, Communications Assistant for all of their marketing efforts and work put into creating a successful Voter Registration Campaign. Clerk Dreyfus' goal is to get at least 20-25 new registrants, but the Communications Department has set a goal of 100 new registrants.

Trustee Styka suggested that we reach out to Rachel Freeman, teacher at Okemos High School to see if her student group could help get the word out.

Andrea Smiley also discussed that the most recent issue of the HOMTV Alumni Newsletter, the "Scoop" was sent out through mail and email for those that select it. A copy was included in the packet.

8. Finance:

Lynn Meikle, Graphic Designer & Equipment Specialist discussed the HD upgrades and the camera's being the last upgrade to HD. She discussed how AVI arranged demonstrations of the HD cameras for purchase. She explained that the new cameras would be Hitachi. She also explained all of the new features of the new cameras. She stated that the cabling was the most expensive considering the amount of camera drops that are needed around the Township building. The budgeted amount for the total project was \$220,000. The preliminary numbers are currently at \$225,000, but she is looking to sell the old cameras to either vendors or other PEG centers. She is anticipating capturing additional \$5,000 at this point so there isn't a need for a budget amendment at this time.

Director Guthrie announced that the Branding & Website for the Township are both right on schedule. She also announced that the new Video Programmer, Ben Makulski is a good asset to the team. It seems like he has been with the Communications Department longer because he catches on fast and jumps

right in. He has a lot of technical experience and is the first Video Programmer that is excited about CAMTV.

Other Business & Announcements:

Public Remarks: No public present

Adjournment:

Vice Chair Crowley moved **TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**. Seconded by Chair Benenson.

Hearing no objections, Chair Benenson **ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 7:30 pm**.

NEXT MEETING:

The next scheduled meeting is **June 1, 2016 in the Administrative Conference Room.**