

Communications Commission Regular Meeting Minutes

Administrative Conference Room
Meridian Municipal Building, Okemos, MI

August 3, 2016

Present:

Commissioners:	Chair, Walter Benenson; Vice Chair, Patrick Crowley; Commissioner, Tunga Kiyak;
Staff:	Deborah Guthrie, Communications Director, Andrea Smiley, Administrative Assistant
Township:	Trustee, Ron Styka
Counsel:	Mike Watza, Principle for Kitch Law Firm
Comcast:	John Gardner, Regional Director of External Affairs
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:

Introduction provided by Kevin Thatcher. Mr. Thatcher applied to the vacant Commissioner position. He runs an IT business and was referred to the commission by Trustee Styka.

Approval of Agenda:

Vice Chair Crowley moved **TO APPROVE**, Seconded by Commissioner Kiyak.
Voice vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Kiyak moved **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF April 6, 2016**.
Seconded by Vice Chair Crowley
Voice vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Communications/Announcements:

1. MPSC Letter
Director Guthrie provided information about the MPSC office assisting with cable customer service complaints and answering questions for local municipalities.
2. Application for open position on Communications Commission
Commissioner Kiyak moved **TO APPROVE THE NEW COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENT OF KEVIN THATCHER**. Seconded by Vice Chair Crowley
Voice vote: Motion carried unanimously

Director Guthrie will write a memo to the Township Board for the next meeting to have the new Commissioner sworn in and sent packet.

Commissioners discussed having an alternate Commissioner. Vice Chair Crowley made a motion **TO APPROVE ONE ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER**. Seconded by Commissioner Kiyak
Voice vote: Motion carried unanimously

3. MSU Safe Place Sponsorship – Thank you
Director Guthrie discussed HOMTV's media sponsorship for the MSU Safe Place event. She also recommended that the original fee structure be revisited for services performed for outside (of the Township) companies. Director Guthrie also commented on how people continually contact her looking for interns to do work outside of HOMTV. For example, she received a call from Teri Banas for an intern to create a PSA. That intern received state wide recognition. The same intern had also created a voting PSA for the Township Clerk's Office.
4. Meridian Township Asset Brochure & Meridian Monitor Request
Director Guthrie discussed various requests that the Communications Department receives for Meridian Township brochures and print materials. Also, how the department will continue to create the print materials for the Township. She also explained that the look would change a little with the new brand and logo.

Old Business

1. ACD.net Discussion with Kevin Schoen, CEO and Doreen Murphy, Senior Project Manager – Midwest Region
Mr. Schoen provided a background on the company and the DAS systems. DAS systems provide cellular service in various communities around high traffic corridors; 15 in East Lansing, 20 around and in downtown Lansing and also in Grand Rapids, Flint and Bloomfield.

Vice Chair Crowley began the discussion asking about whether 'dummy' poles could be created in order to provide consistency and create a uniform look with the other poles.

Director Guthrie explained that the Township Board is asking for the Commissioners to make a recommendation to the Board on a DAS strategy.

Commissioner Kiyak asked the question whether the location selection was based on providing the maximum amount of coverage. Questions were also asked about the height of the poles, how far apart the poles would be, how many in a row and are there Township ordinances on the quantity? Mr. Schoen commented that ACD.net is only trying to place the towers in high density areas. He also commented that 30' towers are a good height for optimal reception.

Director Guthrie suggested having a meeting with a Communications Commissioner, a member of the Engineering and Planning staff and the lawyer to determine how these DAS towers will fit in with the Township Master Plan in order to make a recommendation to the Township Board.

Doreen Murphy asked for clarification about the formation of a committee and meeting with the planning department. Director Guthrie stated that it would be beneficial for both parties to form a committee to work with the Planning and Engineering departments in order to tie into the Master Plan so there are no conflicts with the design and placement.

Trustee Styka commented that the Township Board had concerns and therefore is looking to the Communications Commission to vet first and develop a strategy that would lead to policies and ordinances to create consistency. He also commented that the main areas the Township was working to develop are the Downtown Okemos area, Haslett Village Square, and the Carriage Hills area.

Commissioner Kiyak made a motion **TO RECOMMEND THAT THE COMMISSION RECOMMEND TO MOVE FORWARD** based on the following criteria:

- The DAS towers are friendly to businesses
- Increase in fiber optics in the area
- Potential to help with Township wide Wi-Fi plans
- The DAS towers are commonly used technology, not controversial

Seconded by Vice Chair Crowley

Vice Chair Crowley commented on the motion stating that he is fine with the poles and boosting cell coverage, but the towers have to be scalable without looking terrible. Meaning, they have to look nice and remain looking nice. Also, how many is too many? He believes that the look and the quantity have to be left up to the Planning Commission and the Engineering Department.

Mike Watzka commented that anything in the Rights of Way is the Township's property. The Township can demand a franchise or licensing agreement or wave it. The Township has the right to dictate what DAS Tower Companies need to provide if using the Rights of Way.

Vice Chair Crowley asked Principle Watzka if there are franchise agreements out there that are similar to this situation. He stated that the Commission wants this type of investment in the community.

Commissioner Kiyak made a motion that **THE COMMISSION AGREES TO MOVE FORWARD WITH A LICENSING AGREEMENT THAT SUPPORTS FIBER FOR BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS, EXPANSION PAST THE MALL AREA, CONSIDERATION OF MUNICIPAL WI-FI AND FIBER FOR NEW CENTRAL FIRE STATION COMMAND CENTER. ALSO, THE POLES WILL BE NO CLOSER THAN 500 FT, OPEN TO COMPETITORS, STRONGLY ENCOURAGE CO-LOCATORS FROM COMPETITION, AND AT A COMMERCIALY FEASIBLE RATE.**

Seconded by Vice Chair Crowley

Voice Vote: Motion carried unanimously

The next step is for Director Guthrie to set up a work committee meeting to work out the logistics of a licensing agreement in order to make a recommendation to the Township Board by the September Board meeting.

Reports

1. Complaints

Director Guthrie commented that she was concerned with the amount of cable complaints received concerning PEG channels being in black. John Gardner responded that many of the complaints are easy fixes. He recommended that the first question asked to the resident/customer is "did you call Comcast?" Director Guthrie also noted that some of the issues were on the fault of HOMTV.

Director Guthrie stated that she would write a Thank you letter to the technicians that have gone above and beyond to help out with HOMTV's signal issues.

2. Video Service Provider

John Gardner discussed the new line up for Comcast, resulting in more channels being available in the lower tier of programming.

John Gardner explained that there was an expansion of the Internet Essentials program. The expansion allows for all residents of Hud Housing eligible for Internet Essentials

whether they have children at home or not. Anyone receiving housing assistance are now eligible.

3. Directors Report – Director Guthrie
 - Branding Campaign – M3Group has designed many seals and logos for the Development Committee to look over. The website project has been on hold until the logos are finalized.
 - Primary Election Coverage Update
Congratulations given to Trustee Ron Styka for winning the Primary for the Supervisor Race.
Vice Chair Crowley offered to volunteer to help with whatever is needed during election coverage.

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

Hearing no objections, Chair Benenson **ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 7:44 pm**.

NEXT MEETING:

The next scheduled meeting is October 5, 2016 in the Administrative Conference Room.