

Cable Communications Commission Regular Meeting Minutes

Administrative Conference Room
Meridian Municipal Building, Okemos, MI

April 1, 2015

Present: Commissioners: Chair, Walter Benenson, Brian Seipel, Andrew Lathrop and Ron Styka
Staff: Deborah Guthrie, Communications Director; Andrea Smiley, Administrative Assistant
Township: None
Comcast: None
AT&T: None
Haslett Schools: None
Okemos Schools: None

Call to Order: Commissioner Benenson called the meeting to order at **6:10 pm**.

Public Remarks: No Public Present

Introductions: None

Approval of Agenda:

Commissioner Benenson moved TO APPROVE AGENDA AS SUBMITTED. Seconded by Commissioner Seipel.

Voice vote: Unanimous

Approval of Minutes:

Township Board Liaison & Trustee, Ron Styka began the discussion by asking who requested the transcribed minutes. Director, Guthrie responded that because of some concerned emails about the meeting, it was decided best to transcribe the minutes and include in the packet.

Commissioner Benenson moved TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF January 14, 2015. Seconded by Commissioner Lathrop.

Voice vote: Unanimous

Director, Guthrie asked if the January 26th minutes were the minutes that Commissioner Kiyak had emailed about some discrepancies. Director Guthrie asked Trustee Ron Styka if that is the way the Township Board would handle a similar situation. Styka responded that since the concerns were in writing, the Commissioners could vote on any changes to the minutes.

Commissioner Benenson moved TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF January 26, 2015. Seconded by Commissioner Lathrop.

Voice vote: Unanimous

Commissioner Seipel requested to comment on the transcribed minutes stating that it appeared a lot of people to be talking over each other and the challenge involved to transcribe, so he was commending whoever was responsible for the transcription. Trustee Styka commented that the transcribed minutes are not the true minutes; they are only used to vote on changes to the original minutes. Commissioner Seipel asked if they could be revisited at a later date.

Director, Guthrie clarified the motion and vote.

Commissioner Lathrop moved TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF February 3, 2015. Seconded by Commissioner Benenson.

Voice Vote: Unanimous

Communications/Announcements:

Director, Guthrie started discussion by announcing the new Township Asset Brochure that was printed as a result of a request by the Township Treasurer, Julie Brixie. Graphic Designer, Lynn Meikle helped design and put together the brochure. Commissioner Benenson moved TO MAKE A MOTION to commend the department on its efforts. Seconded by Commissioner Seipel.

Director, Guthrie continued the discussion by stating that currently these print materials are being charged to the Communications Department; however, moving forward she would like to see more of a Township General Fund for these items. While print materials, like the Asset Brochure, are good for the Department and the Township, each amount adds up. Director, Guthrie would like to have more discussion during the budget review to include a Communications/Marketing line.

Trustee Styka asked if there was something Director Guthrie needed him to take to the Board. He also asked if she had discussed with the Township Manager. Director Guthrie stated that she will discuss moving forward, she just wanted the Cable Commission to be aware and to start thinking about.

Old Business:

1. Audit Updates

Commissioner Benenson asked for discussion on the updates. Director, Guthrie began by stating that the deadline for AT&T to pay the communities involved in the audit is the middle of May. Currently the auditor, Garth Ashpaugh, is negotiating the amount that each community will receive; however, AT&T is giving push back on some items that show money owed. The main discussion is about where customer service money credits go; to

cable, to AT&T, etc. Meridian Township organized and have been collecting the fees from the other communities and paying the attorney fees.

Commissioner Benenson asked the attitude of AT&T; have they been hard to deal with? Director Guthrie responded that AT&T is willing to pay the communities for some of the items on the audit, but not all items. So, the communities, in the future, will need to decide if an audit every two years is worth the time. AT&T has admitted that their calculations are off, but will not redo. Commissioner Seipel asked if a cost benefit analysis had been done in order to see the extent the audit would be worth. Director Guthrie stated that no community would pay for an analysis. Trustee Styka asked what the preliminary numbers show. Director Guthrie commented that AT&T owes Meridian Township approximately \$14,000; however, total costs are approximately \$5,500 plus staff time, coordinating meetings, correspondences, conference calls, etc. Bottom line is that it is beneficial to perform an audit, but not all the time and you can only request to go back two years.

2. Comcast Transfer of Control

Director Guthrie started the discussion stating she received a list from Attorneys, Mike Watza and Joseph VanEaton to send out via snail mail, the signed transfer agreement. Discussion about whether the commissioners received; the signed agreement is in the packet. Commissioner Benenson asked Director Guthrie if she thought the transfer process went well. Director Guthrie stated that she was concerned, now, about the franchise agreement negotiation process. Meeting dates have been proposed and Director Guthrie feels a meeting will be arranged by the end of April.

New Business:

1. Franchise Renewal
2. Internet Service in Meridian Township

Director Guthrie led the discussion by commenting about a resident, Wayne Beyea, who needs service at his home located on Meridian Road. His area does not have access to high speed internet. Director Guthrie communicated the concerns to John Gardner, Comcast Representative, who will have a survey done to determine costs in extending services down that part of Meridian Road. The Commission is concerned with Internet service to the residents in the Township. Commissioner Seipel proposed that Director Guthrie ask Comcast, even though they aren't required, to provide a map and look for the holes in service for Meridian Township. Commissioner Benenson asked about other options for those residents without Comcast service. Director Guthrie stated that she will follow up and ask for a map, as well as

areas that Comcast doesn't service. This will be helpful for the Communications Needs Assessment, as well.

Commissioner Benenson asked about Doris Swartz and whether she ever submitted her application for At-Large Commissioner. Trustee Styka stated that she attends Township Board meetings periodically and he would discuss with her next time she attends.

Director Guthrie received text message from John Gardner stating that he will not be able to attend April or May's meeting because he is and will be chaperoning 4th grade camps. Director Guthrie stated that she will ask if he would like the May meeting changed.

Reports:

1. Cable Compliments/Complaints: Commissioner Benenson began the discussion asking about a complaint involving cable running above ground across a customer's back yard. Director Guthrie explained that a resident posted a photo on Facebook showing the cable extending across their yards near children play areas. John Gardner was contacted and the issue was resolved. However, there is a continued concern about Comcast customer service now that the transfer is signed; making sure the residents continue to receive good service.
2. Video Service Provider(s): No discussion.
3. Communications Director's Report: Director Guthrie discussed Meridian Township's goals for the Communications Department; increasing engagement with staff and public and making a connection. The report is due by April 15 and the department staff began collecting information. The department staff will take a look at analytics to compare and contrast from month to month and year to year. Director Guthrie provided examples of how the department is working to increase engagement such as employee milestones, social news hour, pet of the week, showcasing Interns, feature stories on employees (based on Humans of New York story) and renewed programming.
4. Chair's Report: No discussion or report.
5. Township Information: Commissioner Styka discussed developments and events within the Township; Jimmy Johns/Mattress Store, Apartment Complex at Jolly and Okemos Roads, Fire Station Groundbreaking, Police awards/Citizen awards, property in downtown Okemos going up for sale and the Pedestrian Bridge. The Township continues to look for development areas in Haslett. The Township Board is concerned about developing in a sensible way. Biggby Coffee will be coming to Haslett with a drive-thru.

With all the developments the Township needs to make sure that good cable service is provided to the businesses. All new apartment complexes need cable service.

Commissioner Lathrop asked if HOMTV has an app. Director Guthrie responded that is something in the works, possibly next year.

6. Programming: Director Guthrie discussed how programming is down but with higher quality.
7. Viewership/Promotions: No discussion
8. Finance: Director Guthrie referred back to adding a Communications/Marketing line to the budget so that all communications, events and print materials for the Township aren't charged to the department. The budget will be submitted in June for approval.

Other Business & Announcements:

Director Guthrie restated the success of the Fire Station Groundbreaking Ceremony. She also spoke about the Media Central Conference that HOMTV sponsored and Trustee Styka commented that he attended and thought it provided great information and was very well attended. Director Guthrie stated that the conference netted \$4,000, split between MI NATOA and ACM.

Commissioner Lathrop asked a question about the progress with the new website; he recommended 3m company for branding and website redesign, stating that he would forward the proposal that his company received.

Public Remarks: No Discussion

Commissioner Seipel moved TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. Seconded by Commissioner Lathrop.

Hearing no objections, Chair Benenson ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT **7:25 p.m.**

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting is scheduled for the **May 6, 2015 in the Administrative Conference Room.**