

Cable Advisory Meeting  
Thursday, December 3, 2016, 6pm  
Cape Ann TV Studio, Blackburn Industrial Park

**Present:**

Sal DiStefano/Gloucester  
John Dunn/Gloucester CFO  
Mitch Vieira/Rockport  
Monty Hitschler/Rockport IT  
Barry O'Brien/Essex

Greg Federspiel/Manchester  
Bill Hewig/Kopelman & Paige  
Tom Manning/Gloucester  
James Pope/Gloucester  
Erich Archer/CATV

- Approval of Minutes: B. O'Brien moved to accept the minutes from the August 25, 2015 meeting, seconded by M. Vieira, all in favor.
  
- Surveys/Public Hearings: E. Archer/C. A. Cable meeting with representatives from each town to assess communication and technology needs for operating budgets. Also in communication with Executive Directors of media stations that have already gone through this process.

A survey of six local communities was conducted, Seekonk, Holyoke, N. Andover, Lynnfield, Salem, and Peabody. Every community's percentage increased. Holyoke was 1% previously; their new rate was 5%. Everyone wanted to collect what they could and not leave anything on the table. The projection is ten years out.

E. Archer said he can provide some positive messaging. He said Comcast hasn't been doing surveys or calls; Peabody is wrapping theirs up this week.

We need to ask in the survey "if you are going to get something better, how much more are you willing to pay?".

Bill Hewig said there was discussion that the technology fund issue was illegal. Money that is negotiated must be spent for cable related purposes. A lot of communities had technology funds; some communities didn't spend it on technology. The law hasn't changed; Comcast is taking a tougher stance. Comcast doesn't want to support a high speed internet with a system that competes with them. The technology fund has to be technology relating to cable. What you have all been talking about here is related to cable. End user equipment, if it goes through a line constructed through a cable. He said it can be internet, TV, eventually connecting to cable.

Bill Hewig said there is a certain amount of money for Cape Ann; each separate community will have their own cable related needs.

Bill Hewig said Verizon only wants five year licenses now. They are worried about losing subscribership. It's good to know that Comcast is giving larger percentages. We will have surveys and public hearings. When it's time to sign the cable license, if residents complain about an increase, we can say we had public hearings and surveys.

Bill said getting people to come to the public hearings is very important. It is a requirement (state regulations), it benefits our negotiating position and it benefits the town by providing a forum with 2-way communication with the provider. He said this is an important communication forum.; we can't lower rates and we can't do anything about programming. It's important to communicate to residents what we can and can't do.

Bill said we should encourage people to come; we want their feedback. Signal quality and what they want in the future is what we want to know. We want to be sure that Comcast is complying with regulations in your community.

Bill said Erich's video from the August meeting is very valuable to show at all the public hearings; show people the quality of the product. It's a high quality access studio; tell them how much more they can get.

The meetings should be held as follows: Essex in December of 2016, Rockport in June of 2017, and Manchester in July of 2017. Bill said this will propel us into negotiations. The hearings ought to be held after the surveys, and after we have ascertained what each community needs and what we're going to negotiate for E. Archer. The best time for public hearings is the fall, every town/city has to have their own; September or October of 2016. At least one meeting in each community is recommended. Gloucester may want to consider more than one; some larger communities hold two or three. Leading into the public hearings we will have survey information. We have this January through next August for surveys; and to put together the lists of equipment.

B. O'Brien said Essex is breaking it up into smaller groups (merchants, etc.). Brookline took it on as if they were a company that was going public. They asked people individually if they wanted to get involved, they would coach people.

Bill said getting the public to come is critical. Explain what Cape Ann TV provides, bring school children; get senior citizen volunteers to attend.

Prior to the next meeting, it would be helpful if we had at least one sample survey so each community could come up with a draft of their own. Bill has sample surveys and will send them to the meeting participants.

M. Vieira said highlighting the importance that cable TV plays in the community is important. Encourage residents to attend the public meetings, get good crowds, and a lot of preparation will be worth the time and effort. At the January, 2016 meeting we could share information and hopefully finalize the surveys in February.

S. DiStefano said the surveys need to be simple and easy to complete (survey monkey). It would be helpful to have a link on each town/city website. Ask fewer questions, how frequently they watch, etc. Bury information in the questions you ask.

E. Archer is working on a business plan with funds needed. This will be needed this spring with the budget; capital and equipment grant needs for Cape Ann for the next 10 years. Each community's equipment needs (cameras, etc.); there will be four separate negotiations, one for each community. The fund for E. Archer will be the same for each community; each community can have their own percentage. Be sure each community's leadership (Mayor, Town Administrator) supports the plan.

Bill said the business plan should say "for the next ten years we want the following (lights, cameras, editing machines, etc.)". There should be a price associated with the equipment; E. Archer can assist with that. Give a serious list based on a thoughtful evaluation of your community's needs. Figure out what percentage that represents in your community. The plan should say each community wants this amount in dollars with an equipment list and this translates into a percentage. It was stated that there is no benefit in combining the four communities.

Bill said communities should list their equipment and cable related expenses for Comcast to pay for, detail that all out with a 10 year projection, maybe so many dollars in year #4 and so many in year #8. Express gross annual revenues for your community. That's the business plan we need. We take E. Archer's number and we add the individual communities.

- Next meeting: Thursday, January 7, 2015 at 6pm at Blackburn Center. Each community should bring a draft survey.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.