



Cable Television Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2022

(Reschedule from 1/5/2022)

Held Virtually via WebEx

Convened: 7:00 P.M.

Adjourned: 7:54 P.M.

1. Call meeting to order

7:00 P.M.

Roll Call

Present: Jeff Levering, Steve Quist, Sergio Bacelis, Marie DiCardy (via WebEx). Judith Warren (Director of Cable Services, City of Worcester).

Approval of minutes from 9/15/2021 Moved by Levering; Seconded by Quist; Roll Call (4 Yes, 0 No)

2. Public Comment pertaining to items on the agenda

Mauro DePasquale (WCCA, resident of Worcester) spoke to items 3, 4, 6 and 7. Regarding item 3, suggested CTAC and City look into using money from cable franchise fees that the City typically allocates to administrative costs upstream of PEG funding, to better serve community media needs (including hiring a consultant). Regarding item 4, recommended 10 year contract length with escape clauses. Regarding item 6, suggested CTAC conduct its community needs assessment prior to WCCAs planned community survey. Regarding item 7, suggested PEG channel input to CTAC should follow CTAC's community needs assessment.

Michael Coogan (WCCA), spoke to item 3. Asked if moving WCCA back to Channel 13 was within the power of the CTAC/City. Requested clarification regarding annual drawdown from franchise fees by City.

3. Chief Financial Officer response to funding (All)

Quist expressed satisfaction with information received from CFO regarding funding for CTAC projects.

4. Councilman Rosen's Motion (Warren)

Levering requested clarification regarding orders CTAC receives from City Council sub-committees. Warren explained that the orders serve an advisory purpose and may be included in the ascertainment documents among comments received, and that the CTAC does not need to respond directly to the issuing sub-committee regarding these orders. In



the report, CTAC may clarify if it agrees with comments it has received, or offer counterarguments to them. Warren also clarified that not all suggestions received, in this case, are things that are able to be negotiated as part of the cable contract.

5. Update regarding additional members (Warren)

Warren reported that she spoke with the Citizens Advisory Committee regarding finding additional members for the CTAC, and will follow up with the CTAC upon completion of the upcoming CAC meeting. Warren clarified appropriate pathways for requesting additional board participants.

Motion to create Public Service Announcement and distribute through the City's three PEG channels for the purpose of acquiring additional members for the CTAC. Moved by Levering; Seconded by Quist; Roll Call (4 Yes, 0 No)

6. Timeline – Plan of Action for Ascertainment a. Status, Review, Modify draft Timeline (Quist)

Quist explained his intention to hold two meeting times per month for the purpose of holding site visits to PEG channels and subsequently conduct public meetings/hearings. Board discussed logistical limitations to proposed meeting schedule. Quist suggested board continue meeting once per month, advised focusing as a team on clarifying priorities.

Discussion regarding PEG site visits and reports to CTAC on their needs/requirements. Motion to request reports from PEG channels. Moved by Quist; No Second. Motion withdrawn from table.

Warren clarified deadline for ascertainment report. While the final report is due in March, CTAC should strive for a working draft by December, to allow time to make adjustments prior to submission.

7. Survey / Public Feedback meetings, what does the Committee want to know? (Levering)

Levering suggested CTAC request meeting with Spectrum representative for contract compliance review and to discuss anticipated needs. Warren clarified that only contract compliance could be discussed in these meetings.

Levering requested clarification regarding RFP process to hire a consultant.

Warren explained that CTAC must outline minimum requirements, and ideal qualifications, from which the Purchasing Department will draft an official RFP for the CTAC to review and approve to be publicized. Discussion of if City can issue RFP to seek a new cable television provider in City, and its inclusion in the ascertainment report. Quist encouraged utilization of consultants to help CTAC with details, allowing board to focus on the public at large during ascertainment.



The City of
WORCESTER

CABLE TELEVISION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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cableservices@worcesterma.gov

8. **Next Meeting: February 2, 2022**
Confirmed

9. **Adjournment**
Moved by Levering; Seconded by Quist; Roll call (4 Yes, 0 No)
7:54 P.M.

cm2021oct14125139

CITY OF WORCESTER

Pursuant to a vote of the Committee on Public Service and Transportation, be it

ORDERED: That

That City Council does hereby recommend that the Cable Television Advisory Committee incorporate in its contract renewal negotiation with Charter/Spectrum the following needs of City Cable TV subscribers: 1) Instead of paying a monthly rental fee per cable box, cable TV subscribers be allowed to make a one-time payment to purchase cable boxes either from Charter/Spectrum or private vendors; 2) All cable TV subscribers over the age of 60 be given a seniors-specific discount plan; 3) Long-time cable TV subscribers be given the same discount offers as new customers are given; 4) Customer service and efficiency be greatly improved at Charter/Spectrum Grafton St. store front; 5) The next contract between City of Worcester and Charter/Spectrum be 5-year contract.

In City Council

December 21, 2021

Order adopted by a yea and nay vote of Ten Yeas and No Nays

A Copy. Attest:



Nikolin Vangjeli
City Clerk



The City of
WORCESTER

Administration & Finance
Timothy J. McGourthy, Chief Financial Officer
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December 2, 2021

To: Members of the Cable Television Advisory Committee
From: Timothy J. McGourthy, Chief Financial Officer
Re: Ascertainment & Cable Funding

I write to offer a brief formal response to the Cable Television Advisory Committee's (CAC) request for information related to cable funding and Ascertainment. I apologize as I understand there was some initial confusion around the request and response.

The question originally posed to me was whether a budget existed for Ascertainment. My response was that a budget does not exist, but if the CAC is looking for resources to complete its work it should identify the specific tasks/costs and put forward a proposed budget. (This is the same guidance given to any City department or board.) As required under the Charter, this proposal would be submitted to the City Manager for consideration, and depending on the outcome of his review, he could submit a request to City Council to appropriate the necessary funds. Under the Charter, only the City Manager may submit a budget and make a recommendation for funding to the City Council.

I later understood that you are really requesting information on how much funding is available for Ascertainment. To be clear, there is no dedicated Ascertainment fund. Instead, funding for this purpose would come from the general administration account for Cable. Each year, 15%¹ of the cable license fee goes into the PEG – Cable Administration account. This account provides support for activities related to the management of the cable contract and is generally used for a portion of staff costs in the Cable and Law departments. As of December 1, 2021, the PEG-Cable Admin reserve had \$304,497.75 available. We assume an annual draw of approximately \$200K on the fund for the above listed purposes. Approximately \$100K has been drawn this fiscal year to date, so we can assume approximately \$100K more will be drawn down prior to June 30, 2022. Therefore, the PEG-Cable Admin reserve has approximately \$204K remaining that could potentially be used for Ascertainment purposes. I will caution, though, that doing so would eliminate the reserve and leave the fund unprepared for future challenges. (In the last ten years, the 15% License Fee contribution hit a high of \$280K in FY16, but has been steadily decreasing ever since and totaled just over \$240K in FY21.)

I hope this provides the information requested and, again, my apologies for any confusion.

¹ Please note, this number is a correction from an email exchange that erroneously listed the administration fee as 10% of the cable license fees. The fee was changed from 10% to 15% in FY10.