

Cable Television Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
January 9, 2012

In Attendance (Absent member marked by "X")

Victory Chase, Chair  
Naomi Nierenberg  
Mary Juzwin  
X Tom Lewis  
X Randy Haviland  
Amanda Johnson  
Councilman James Vassanella  
Joyce S. Miller, Secretary

- The meeting was called to order at 7:07. Roll was called.
- The minutes of the December 5, 2011 meeting were approved. Mary abstained. Councilman Vassanella arrived after the vote.

OLD BUSINESS

- Guideline update.
  - Councilman Vassanella reported on the guideline update. The Township Attorney told the Councilman that he is using the committee's proposed guidelines to prepare a policy, perhaps in ordinance form. The attorney was advised that the committee would like the guidelines to be as flexible as possible. The document should be ready by the end of January. Joyce was going to e-mail the attorney requesting that the committee receive a copy of the proposed policy when it was complete.
- Volunteer videographer two-year pilot program update.
  - Victory reported that the Township-owned camera is a high quality camera and suitable for the volunteer's purposes. The upgrade to this camera is for high definition, and the access channels are in and will remain in the standard format.
  - Victory met with Assistant Township Manager Donna Vieiro in December.
    - The IT Department does not edit completed tapes for content or quality.
    - It may take two to three days to get a program aired.
    - The Township has no editing facilities.
    - The studio in the back of the Council Chambers is used for live broadcasting of meetings but not for use by the volunteers.
    - Volunteers' credits or names could be put on a scroll across the bottom of the TV screen.
    - There can be no music due to copyright laws and the high cost to obtain permission to use 'canned music.' The Township may at some time look at this again to see if the price was reduced and there is a way to use a volunteer's original composition. Victory was going to check with Tom to see how the Bd. of Education was able to legally broadcast music.

- The volunteers will pick up and return the camera to the Recreation Department.
  - The committee might want to consider training a trainer.
- The volunteers will complete a form for insurance coverage. It was presumed that the camera was covered by insurance.
- Victory reached out to 12 volunteers in December and heard back from five.
- Victory was hoping to have the first training in January, with a second in the Spring. Joyce e-mailed but had not heard back from Comcast's Dave Kennan about training dates.
- Resident Complaints:
  - Joyce forwarded a resident's complaint (see November's meeting notes) to the Office on Cable Television (OCTV). They responded saying they received the complaint and informed Comcast's representative Rob Clifton. Ms. Lederman called Joyce to tell her that she had a voice message from the Comcast Executive Office, but she did not intend to return their call.
  - Amanda had trouble getting both Comcast and Verizon for a new installation. Comcast sent equipment but expected her to do the installation herself. Verizon was the first to finally send out a technician. She did have problems with billing.
  - Naomi brought in an article from the January 5, 2012 *Star Ledger*. It was written by Karin Price Mueller about the Toms river senior community who had frequent phone and television problems with Comcast.
  - The Committee said it was important to let residents know they could contact OCTV with their problems, and the Township will support them in their efforts.
  - Complaints unresolved by the OCTV should be sent to Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula.
- Preparation for the ascertainment period—public survey:
  - Naomi reported on her contact with the non-profit Eagleton Institute regarding their conducting a survey of residents as part of the ascertainment study.
    - Director David Redlawsk said a telephone survey was most effective. The calls usually last about 10 minutes.
    - They were familiar with surveys conducted for the ascertainment period with cable companies.
    - He thought a sample of 400 to 500 residents would be sufficient.
  - Victory was going to follow up with Eagleton to see if they could provide the names of other communities who had completed a survey. It was felt that this might be helpful in proving the value of the survey when it came time to request the Council to provide the funding.
  - It is important that the funding for the survey be in place before any request for proposal is sent out.
- Preparation for the ascertainment period—general:
  - Nancy Wolf, 609-341-9170, from OCTV called Joyce after receiving a copy of the Township's resolution to enter into the ascertainment period.
    - The ascertainment packet from OCTV will be coming shortly. But the committee already has most of the contents: *Guide to Franchise Renewal* and a suggested survey (duplicated from the

*Guide*). Only other items in the packet are a sample of the final report and acknowledgement letter.

- Nancy is available at her Trenton office Monday to Friday, 9 to 4, if members of the committee want to come down to discuss the ascertainment period.
  - Nancy admitted that the municipalities negotiating ability had become more limited.
  - She suggested the Township look at its current agreement, list what they want from the cable company and document any service problems.
  - Of the state's 566 communities, 351 have competition.
  - When asked about communities who had problems with renewal contracts, Nancy said Franklin's last agreement process might be worth looking into.
- Joyce contacted former Township Manager Kenneth Daly regarding his thoughts on the last negotiation.
- He had vague memories of the negotiations because another former employee had taken the lead.
  - RCN (the original company who held the current agreement) dragged their feet with the application.
  - Franklin asked for and received most of their requests: connecting the municipal buildings to the network and pulling the dark fiber and getting equipment and help with the access channel.
  - One of the big issues was how many public channels there would be. He recalled that the franchise had a trigger number of locally produced programming that would require another public channel. With enough public meetings being broadcast, it could trigger the need for another access channel. The current agreement would have to be reviewed to confirm this.
- It was recommended that committee members come to the February meeting with thoughts on the following;
- Read the *Guide to Franchise Renewal*.
  - Review the survey in the *Guide* and make recommendations.
  - List the steps that might be followed during the ascertainment period.
  - List what the Township should be requesting as part of the of the negotiations (points that would help both the Township and the residents).
- It was suggested that the inquiry be made of the Council just what and how the Committee should be involved in the ascertainment period before they spend unnecessary time.
- Joyce made copies of an article by Brian T. Grogan, Esq. *Protecting Your City's Rights During Franchise Renewal*.

## NEW BUSINESS

- Naomi submitted her resignation, effective immediately. The committee thanked her for her valuable service over the years.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m., Monday, February 6, 2012.