

**DANBURY, BETHEL, RIDGEFIELD
CABLE ADVISORY COUNCIL
3 Fox Den Road, Danbury, CT 06811
Telephone: 203-792-2436**

MEETING MINUTES September 20, 2007
Town Hall Annex
Ridgefield, Connecticut

MEETING OPENED: 7:10 pm by Dianne Eppinger, Chairman

Attendance: (A=Absent, EA=Excused Absence, L=Late, LE=Left Early)
Ridgefield: Anne-Marie Surfaro-Boehme, (EA), Cary Nadel, Melinda Violante, (EA)
Danbury: Dianne Eppinger, Lynn Waller, Greg Scalzo (A),
Bethel: Anne Bissell Freestone; Robin Renner); Robert Pitt
Comcast: Sharon Codeanne, David King

Call to Order:

A quorum is present for the meeting. Anne-Marie Surfaro-Boehme and Melinda Violante, educators at Ridgefield's Scotland School are absent due to open house at the school.

For the record, the meeting was videotaped by two different individuals for airing on public access television.

Public Comments

Thomas E. Bennett, of Danbury, CT. and producer and host of *Big T Talk & Variety Show*, addressed the Council and complained that action was taken to move his show to a later hour without his knowledge. Mr. Bennett stated that his freedom of speech and civil rights were violated. He also claimed that his show was harmed because it no longer airs live. He is of the opinion that he has said nothing wrong during his shows and that he has the right to say anything he wants and rules don't mean anything. Mr. Bennett stated that the ACLU is working with him and a lawsuit will be filed against Comcast and the Council if his show is not returned to the 9:00 p.m. hour.

Mr. Bennett was advised that at the June 21st Council meeting, the Council reviewed clips of his show and determined that the content was of an adult nature and authorized Comcast to move the show to a later hour based upon Connecticut General Statutes. Mr. Bennett was further advised that Comcast determined the airtime for the show and that the Council has no authority in that regard. The Comcast Legal Department is in possession of programming tapes and will determine any further action to be taken. The issue is in the hands of Comcast and they continue to monitor the show.

John McGowan, of Bethel, CT addressed the Council and questioned the validity of the Community Access rules stating that they violate the Constitution and Mr. Bennett's civil rights. He spoke in support of Mr. Bennett's show.

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Bill Gulya, of Bethel, CT addressed the Council and complained that commercials aired on Comcast are out of line. Cary Nadel explained to Mr. Gulya that advertisers pay for commercials and that commercials are subject to an FCC advertising review board and network review before airing. Neither the Advisory Council nor Comcast have the authority to tell networks not to air commercials. Mr. Gulya spoke in support of Mr. Bennett's show and indicated that he prefers to watch it on television rather than going to the studio to watch it live. He also stated that he would like to have the religious programming returned to its former channel location where CT-N is now located.

Albert George Bruhn, of Ridgefield, CT addressed the Council and spoke of his longevity as a community access producer. He is hopeful that the issue regarding Mr. Bennett's show will be resolved. He does not always agree with Mr. Bennett but supports freedom of speech. He stated that the Ridgefield Republican Town Committee was attempting to get Ridgefield Board of Education meetings aired. The Chairman stated that she was aware of the issue and had been in communication with Mr. Thomas Watson of the RTC and the First Selectman's Office. The First Selectman's Office and the Board of Education are working together to get this accomplished. The meetings would air on Governmental Channel 24. Mr. Bruhn supports what Comcast has done for Community Access producers and complimented Dave King for his work.

Al Robinson, of Danbury, CT thanked the Council for taking the action it did at the June 21st meeting in deeming the program content of Thomas Bennett's of an adult nature and moving the show to a later hour. He indicated that Mr. Bennett continues to violate his contract with Comcast by continuing to violate the Community Access rules and regulations by making slanderous, libelous and defaming remarks. Mr. Robinson questioned whether or not the show was being reviewed prior to airing and was advised that it is reviewed as it is being recorded. Mr. Robinson also requested that the rules for Channel 24 be reviewed to insure that the channel is not used by elected officials to advance their own political agenda during the campaign season.

Ivon Alcime, of Danbury, CT addressed the issue of equipment provided by Comcast for Community Access. He stated that other Comcast studios have digital equipment and Danbury continues to use outdated equipment. He asked that Comcast be more accommodating to producers because most of them work and must tape in the evening. He stated that Charter Cable provides studio time on Saturdays. Mr. Alcime was advised that producers must become more vocal in their complaints about the equipment. The Council recently obtained a list of equipment currently in use in the Danbury studio and is looking into having an assessment performed.

Mr. Alcime was asked to provide the Council with his own assessment of the equipment as well as his proposal to upgrade and the estimated cost. The Council has no authority to demand that Comcast replace equipment but would be supportive of producers in their efforts to request funding from Comcast for upgraded equipment.

Chairman's Report:

The Minutes of the June 21, 2007 meeting were approved on Motion by Anne Freestone, seconded by Lynn Waller.

The Chairman reported that two email communications received from subscribers were forwarded to Comcast. Sharon Codeanne reported that both customers were contacted personally by the Executive Customer Care Department and their issues were resolved.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer reported an opening balance of \$9,941.49 and ending balance of \$9,751.06. Report approved unanimously on Motion by Lynn Waller, seconded by Cary Nadel.

Comcast's Report:

Sharon Codeanne reported the following:

Community Relations:

CN8 will air the September 21st football game between Wilby and Ansonia on September 22nd at 12:00 p.m.; the October 19th game between West Haven and Xavier on October 20th at 7:00 p.m.; and the CIAC Championship game live at noon on December 1st.

Comcast is partnering with "Partnership for a Drug Free America" by investing \$55 million in cross-channel advertising. On Demand service and the Internet portal www.comcast.net to support programs to help parents with the resources they need to help their children live drug-free lives.

Community outreach – Kristen Roberts, Senior Director, Community & Public Relations was scheduled to attend the meeting but will reschedule to the October meeting to explain and discuss Comcast's Community Outreach program and describe nonprofit and charitable groups supported by Comcast.

Marketing:

On July 12, 2007, the "NFL Network" was deleted from the Canales Selecto Tier and the Digital Preferred Tier; however, it will remain available as part of the Sports Entertainment Package.

On August 29, 2007, WWOR-DT HD(MY9TV-NY-HD) was launched on channel 236; Bravo moved from channel 73 to 67 on the Expanded Basic tier; CMT moved from channel 67 on the Expanded Basic tier to 146 on the Digital Classic tier.

On September 3, 2007, the price for DVR service increased by \$3.00.

On September 18, 2007, Music Choice relocated the channel positions of their channels on the digital lineup.

David King reported that Comcast has implemented a new method of tracking information for the annual DPUC report. As a result a new sign-up sheet is being used for everyone visiting the Comcast facilities.

The *Big T Talk & Variety Show* was moved to a new time slot effective August 17, 2007. Instead of airing LIVE, the program is now pre-taped and aired at 11:30 p.m. on Friday evenings.

A six-week Video Production Training Course begins Friday, October 5th.

Several items are currently out for repair, which include two camera headsets and two lavalier microphones.

New programs appearing on Channel 23 include: John McGowan Presents...
Dolly Curtis Interview...
Stand Up Connecticut.

The *Time Out with Kevin Gallagher* program will be presenting LIVE local election night coverage on Tuesday, November 6th beginning at 8:00 p.m. The program will concentrate on local elections.

Old Business:

New Business:

- a) State of Connecticut, Department of Utility Control, Notice of Written Comments and Reply Comments re Docket No. 07-05-23 dated July 17, 2007; DPUC Review of AT&T Connecticut's Community Access Funding Obligations.
 - b) Robinson & Cole LLP, July 27, 2007 letter to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control re Programming & Rate Changes and Revisions.
 - c) Robin Renner August 7, 2007 letter to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control.
 - d) Robinson & Cole LLP, August 10, 2007 letter to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control re Docket No. 05-06-13 – Joint Application of Adelphia Communications Corporation, Time Warner Cable Inc. and Comcast Corporation for Approval of a Transfer of Assets and Subsequent Change of Control – Compliance (Order No. 2).
 - e) Robinson & Cole LLP, August 13, 2007 letter to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control re Docket No. 07-05-23 – DPUC Review of AT&T Connecticut's Community access Funding Obligations.
 - f) AT&T, August 13, 2007 Written Comments to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control re Docket No. 07-05-23 – DPUC Review of AT&T Connecticut's Community Access Funding Obligations.
 - g) State of Connecticut, Office of Consumer Counsel Written Comments to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control re Docket No. 07-05-23 - DPUC Review of AT&T Connecticut's Community Access Funding Obligations.
 - h) Comcast, August 14, 2007 letter to Thomas Bennett re Big T's Talk and Variety Show.
 - i) Comcast, August 20, 2007 letter to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control re Big T's Talk & Variety Show.
 - j) Robinson & Cole LLP, August 16, 2007 letter to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control re Comcast Programming Changes and Channel Additions.
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- k) AT&T, August 27, 2007 Reply Comments to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control re Docket No. 07-05-23 – DPUC Review of AT&T Connecticut’s Community Access Funding Obligations.
- l) Murtha Cullina LLP, August 27, 2007 Reply Comments of Cox Communications to State of Connecticut, Department of Public Utility Control Docket No. 07-05-23 – DPUC Review of AT&T Connecticut’s Community Access Funding Obligations.

All of the above Agenda items were reviewed and discussed by the Council and Comcast representatives.

Cary Nadel explained the differences between cable television service and the new AT&T U-Verse service being rolled out in Connecticut. Verizon and AT&T have been successful over the past few years in getting the FCC to bypass franchise agreements for phone companies. FCC has ruled in favor of statewide franchises in order to make phone companies competitive more quickly with cable companies. The DPUC has determined that the AT&T U-VERSE service will not be subject to cable franchising agreements as required of cable operators. AT&T has indicated that it will provide community access funding but the amount and method have yet to be determined.

The main concern for the Council is how AT&T’s entry into this market will affect community access funding and community access facilities. It is imperative that AT&T be subject to the same requirements for community access (public-educational-government) as are cable operators. The Council will monitor this issue.

m) Election of Officers.

Dianne Eppinger, Chairman, Cary Nadel, Vice Chairman and Anne Freestone, Treasurer were unanimously re-elected to their respective offices upon motion by Robin Renner, seconded by Robert Pitt.

Public Comments - follow-up:
No follow-up public comments.

Motion to Adjourn: Anne Freestone
Second: Cary Nadel
Vote: Unanimously Approved

Meeting Adjourned: 8:50 pm. by the Chairman

Minutes as recorded by Dianne Eppinger, Chairman and presented subject to approval, on October 18, 2007.

(Signed) _____
Dianne Eppinger