

Present: Armitage, Decker, Heldt, McLain - Birmingham
Borgon, Heyman, Woodard, Verdi-Hus – Beverly Hills
Ettenson – Bingham Farms
Goldberg - Franklin

Absent: Abbott

Also Present: Hagaman - Executive Director
Currier - Attorney for Cable Board
Rota - Bloomfield Community Television representative
Martinico - Director of Technology, Birmingham Schools
Valentine - Birmingham staff liaison
Pfeifer – Beverly Hills Council liaison
Johnson – AT&T representative
Gardner – Comcast representative

Chairperson Borgon called the meeting to order at 7:45 a.m. in the Village of Beverly Hills municipal building at 18500 W. Thirteen Mile Road.

APPROVE MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of the June 19, 2008 meeting of the Birmingham Area Cable Board was postponed until next month due to the omission of page two.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Margaret Betts from Birmingham stated that she recently switched to AT&T and would like to view Birmingham municipal programming with her AT&T television service. She mentioned that she does not receive the Canadian station, CBC.

Borgon responded that the Cable Board is waiting to receive written authorization from its member communities prior to representing them in discussions with AT&T to identify the equipment and costs associated with establishing a broadcast of municipal programming. AT&T representative Carmen Johnson added that the company is currently in negotiations to receive the Canadian station.

ELECT BOARD OFFICERS

The bylaws of the Birmingham Area Cable Board require that officers be elected annually at the first meeting of the new fiscal year. Borgon opened the floor for nominations for the office of chairperson of the Cable Board.

McLain nominated Robert Borgon to the position of chairperson of the Cable Board. There were no further nominations. Borgon was elected chairperson by acclamation.

Nominations for the position of vice-chairperson of the Cable Board were accepted. Decker nominated Mel Ettenson. Ettenson accepted the nomination and was elected vice-chairperson by acclamation.

Ettenson nominated Elaine McLain for the position of secretary of the Cable Board. McLain accepted the nomination and was elected to the position by acclamation.

Ettenson nominated John Decker for the position of treasurer of the Cable Board. Decker accepted the nomination and was elected to the position by acclamation.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Hagaman reported that Plante & Moran has begun its annual audit of the Cable Board financial operations. The documentation required this year has substantially increased.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) has sent letters to each municipality stating that they are the designated authority to handle subscriber complaints. Hagaman deferred to Cable Board Attorney Tim Currier to address whether municipalities can continue to take complaints from area residents.

The MPSC has said that it is ready to handle customer complaints under the new Cable Act. Currier stated that it is unknown whether the MPSC will decree at some point that local municipalities cannot continue to take complaints. It is unlikely because the MPSC is not staffed to handle the number of complaints that are received by municipalities on a daily basis. He understood that the MPSC receives complaints primarily from the surrounding Lansing area. It is not worthwhile for a subscriber with a problem to travel 500 miles to Lansing to have the MPSC handle their complaint.

Currier stated that the existing franchise agreement with Comcast does provide a mechanism for handling complaints at the Cable Board level. This Board has worked with Comcast and AT&T in an attempt to quickly resolve complaints. Taking complaints to Lansing would not be in the best interest of the customers or for AT&T and Comcast.

Heldt remarked that most of the complaint adjustment process is communication. The notion that the MPSC would forbid a local cable board to call a representative of the provider and discuss a subscriber's problem would raise constitutional issues.

Borgon proposed sending copies of complaints received by the Cable Board and their resolution to the Michigan Public Service Commission each month. Currier concurred that it is part of the intergovernmental agreement to administer the franchise agreement.

Hagaman reported that there were nine new complaints submitted to Comcast since the last Board meeting. Five of those have been resolved as noted on the forms distributed prior to the meeting. There was one complaint received regarding AT&T service, which has been resolved.

Letters were mailed to each community requesting authorization for the Cable Board to represent them in terms of proceeding with AT&T to identify the necessary equipment and costs for receiving PEG (public, education, government) channels via their U-verse product. Hagaman has received a written response from the City of Birmingham. Beverly Hills Council has authorized the Board to represent their village, and a letter will be forthcoming. The Bingham Farms Council will meet at the end of the month to address this issue.

There followed discussion on a statement from Carmen Johnson that Birmingham Schools would require approval from the municipalities to be included in the AT&T channel line up. Currier stated that the Birmingham School Board has had a liaison attending Cable Board meetings since the inception of the Board. The School District has been entitled to its own channel under the federal act and has not required the approval of municipalities once those entities entered into a franchise agreement. The existing franchise agreement provides for the schools to have a channel. Currier added that the Birmingham School District is the only district that extends to all four communities.

Johnson stated that she will refer this matter to the AT&T legal department to determine how to proceed.

Hagaman reported that the NATOA Annual Conference will be held from September 17-21 in Atlanta. Mel Ettenson and Mark Armitage are registered to attend the conference. Hagaman has registered as Executive Director in order to take advantage of the lower conference fee for early registration. Once the new Executive Director is appointed, the registration can be transferred to that individual.

Hagaman reviewed the updated Third Quarter and Fourth Quarter financial reports and answered questions from Board members.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Cable Action Committee

McLain reported that committee members discussed the Farmers' Market initiative and scheduling at their last meeting. The BCTV crew will be at the Farmers' Market on Sunday, July 20 to coordinate and tape the event from 9 – 11 a.m. McLain related that the Board continues to receive complaints at the booth about the lack of competition, and there is some confusion about the availability of AT&T service and what it provides. Questions are received about the digital transition.

The Cable Board website was a topic of discussion at the last Cable Action Committee meeting. There was agreement that the site needs renovation and updating.

McLain received a phone call regarding a digital converter purchased by a resident who was delighted with the reception received with an older television. Residents were reminded that coupons for a digital converter have a 90 day expiration date.

Borgon asked that every Board member be provided with a packet of all the material handed out at the Farmers' Market booth.

PEG Committee

Heldt reported that the contract extension with Bloomfield Community Television has been signed and is in place. The target date for receiving the new production van is September 15.

Search Committee

Ettenson reported that the Search Committee met for the second time on July 9 to conduct interviews. The advertisement for the position was posted on craigslist, monster.com, and on a

list serve from Michigan NATOA. There were about 17 responses received. The committee interviewed a total of eight people and has selected two finalists. Both people are experienced and qualified in terms of cable and governmental experience. The Committee will make a final recommendation at the August meeting at which time the Board will be asked to vote on the recommendation and approve the salary.

COMCAST RELATED TOPICS

Subscriber Complaints

Board members have received copies of resolved complaints from June. Board members followed up on specific complaints.

Goldberg mentioned complaint #08-33 dealing with the bundling of Internet with basic cable service. John Gardner from Comcast explained that it is possible to purchase a single product. It is more cost effective for a customer to subscribe to basic cable and Internet if they are interested in both products, but it is not required. There may have been a misunderstanding between the customer and CSR.

McLain referred to complaints #8-44 and #8-45, which contain written grievances outlining frustrating service contacts. These are examples of miscommunication on every level. McLain hopes that Comcast escalation people will respond to these complaints.

Complaint #8-40 involves an individual who has called four times asking Comcast to close a cable box in the front yard. Gardner was asked to look into Comcast's response to this complaint.

Comcast Updates

John Gardner announced the addition of the Big Ten Network to the channel lineup.

Gardner commented that, as part of a national reorganization, the Comcast divisional level has been consolidated from five divisions to four. The Midwest Division will be consolidated into two other divisions, north central and west. With this reorganization, Comcast expects to have more Comcast employees at the end of the year than they did at the beginning. In response to an inquiry, Gardner stated that the Board's contacts and escalation teams will not change. The people affected directly by the reorganization are not customers, Board contacts, or the escalation team at the call center.

Gardner clarified that the price change that becomes effective August 1, 2008 involves the promotional rate for the Sports & Entertainment Package, which will change from \$5.99 to \$7.99. Gardner informed the Board that Comcast TV is available on Channels 900 and 901.

Borgon referred to a community report distributed by Comcast entitled, "Comcast Michigan At A Glance". He took offense that Comcast is taking credit for giving \$54 million in franchise fees back to the municipalities for public education and government access when it is money paid by subscribers.

Ettenson stated that he recently subscribed to Comcast cable service for his business. He reported that he was pleased by the installation, service, and billing. Ettenson mentioned that he looked for the franchise authority information on the back of his bill and saw that the information was

given as “Greater West Bloomfield Cable Advisory Board”. The bill should have referred to the Birmingham Area Cable Board. Gardner will look into this.

AT&T RELATED TOPICS

Carmen Johnson from AT&T reported that the company is rolling out heavy in the Grand Rapids area. They are reaching out to new neighborhoods weekly.

Woodard reported that there are AT&T trucks on the west side of Beverly Hills. A service technician informed her that there should be product available within 6-8 weeks of seeing trucks in your neighborhood.

Armitage questioned if there were plans to improve the quality of the PEG signal. Johnson responded that there have been five updates to the PEG transmission within the last year. Borgon commented that the Clinton Township PEG reception has been upgraded to a high quality product.

McLain commented that the Board representatives who attend the NATOA conference should be aware that there is some controversy over the technology used to transmit the U-Verse product. Board members may want to seek further information on this matter.

MLTV15/ PA18 REPORT

Steve Rota from Bloomfield Community Television reported on programming taped for Municipal Channel 15 (BAMA) and PA Channel 18 (BAPA) during the last month and noted upcoming programs of interest (information included in BCTV monthly report for June 19, 2008 through July 16, 2008).

Rota referred to the letter dated July 10, 2008 from Roscor, which explains the delay in the completion of the production truck. The truck is scheduled to arrive in September. Roscor has sent pictures of the truck chassis in construction. Zack Florance has been meeting with Roscor engineers to review preliminary drawings of the truck’s interior in order to assess and expedite the installation of equipment.

Florance has been working with technicians on the bulletin board to get it up and running by next week. He has been obtaining estimates on equipment needed to proceed with taping meetings from the Village of Bingham Farms facility.

Rota and intern Richard Green have been working with producer Rita Battocletti on editing the Beverly Hills 50th anniversary celebration. The program is in post production and will be aired soon.

The next volunteer workshop for BCTV is scheduled for July 29th. Bloomfield Community Television’s new office hours are 7 am to 5:30 pm Monday through Thursday. All Bloomfield Township offices will be closed on Fridays. The new hours will not effect playback or on-location shoots scheduled on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The July 9th Birmingham Planning Commission meeting was canceled. The Farmers’ Market shoot that was scheduled for Sunday, July 13th has been rescheduled for Sunday, July 20th.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

BOARD COMMENTS

Ettenson referred to an article from the Michigan Township News entitled, “Still Broken: Michigan’s Video Franchise Law 18 Months Later”. He recommended that Board members read this good summary.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.