

BIRMINGHAM AREA CABLE BOARD MEETING MINUTES – October 19, 2016

Present: Bozell, Eick, Heldt, McLain – Birmingham  
 Gugni, Maly, Verdi-Hus – Village of Beverly Hills  
 Ettenson – Village of Bingham Farms  
 Stakhiv – Village of Franklin

Absent: McAlear – Birmingham  
 Borgon – Village of Beverly Hills

Also Present: White – Executive Director  
 Currier – Attorney for Cable Board  
 Rota – Bloomfield Community Television

McLain called the meeting to order at 7:45 AM in the Birmingham Public Schools' Education & Administration Center, Evergreen Room, 31301 Evergreen Road, Beverly Hills, MI.

**APPROVE MINUTES OF CABLE BOARD MEETING HELD September 21, 2016**

White advised the Board that Ellen Marshall, Assistant Manager/Clerk, Village of Beverly Hills was not present at the September 21, 2016 Board Meeting. Her name should be stricken from the list of those in attendance.

Motion by Heldt, seconded by Stakhiv to approve the minutes of the Regular Cable Board Meeting on September 21, 2016, as amended.

Motion passed.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Cable Action Committee**

Verdi-Hus stated that there was no meeting last month. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 3, 2016 at 5:30 PM upstairs in the Baldwin Public Library in Birmingham. The meeting is open to the public. McLain noted that following this meeting White would share with the Board several items which would be on the agenda.

**PEG Committee**

McAlear, Chairman, was not able to attend the meeting today. There will not be a PEG meeting following the BACB meeting this morning. There are two items the committee is currently working on: a list of equipment that Rota and Black are compiling for the truck and a new form for any community organization that has a program proposal.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

White referred to her monthly report dated October 14, 2016. One complaint which is not in the report due to timing, involved a pending complaint from a Birmingham resident who stated that Comcast was not honoring the monthly rate she had been previously quoted. The Escalation Team spoke with her and gave her a prorated adjustment. Hopefully her November bill will be correct, reflecting all the commitments Comcast has promised. This complaint is now resolved. Another pending complaint that was from a resident who wanted the providers to protect their

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lines so he could cut down a tree on his property has been resolved. Comcast removed its drop at the end of September.

Since the last meeting there have been three (3) complaints: a Franklin resident who was experiencing problems with his Comcast internet service but was resolved before Comcast contacted him. (The complaint is closed.); a Birmingham resident complained about a low hanging line originally thought to belong to Comcast but later discovered to be owned by AT&T has been resubmitted. (The complaint is pending.); a Birmingham resident was very frustrated with the poor customer service he received from Comcast when trying to get repairs scheduled and porting a telephone line. He has since spoken with a nice and capable customer service representative who resolved the issue but he was still interested in pursuing the complaint about Comcast's communication problems, i.e. being placed on hold repeatedly, being given conflicting information, and a serious language/accent barrier. (The complaint is pending)

The account balances for the MBS, BBCU, and Beverly Hills accounts were provided to the Board, in addition to the Revenue and Expense Budget reports for the month of September, 2016..

Since her last report, White has written five (5) checks which included two (2) large ones to BCTV both for quarterly payments on behalf of the BACB to the Charter Township of Bloomfield for April-June 2016 and July-September 2016 and one (1) to Village of Beverly Hills for the three (3) municipal support services grants.

Additional Notes:

White read the Thank You note received from the Franklin Public Library Board of Trustees regarding the PEG grant from BACB to pay for technology upgrades, brand new computers for the patrons and staff, and new A/V equipment.

Also in her notes, White stated that in mid-September the Free Press reported that Comcast would be offering its own wireless service by the middle of 2017. The plan is to deliver connectivity over the Verizon Wireless network and Comcast's own millions of Wi-Fi hotspots around the US.

From Tim Currier came an article from Crain's Detroit Business which on October 11, 2016 reported that government regulators are fining Comcast \$2.3 million, saying the company has charged customers for equipment and services they never ordered (i.e. premium channels or extra cable boxes). The FCC stated that this was the largest civil fine it has ever imposed on a cable operator. Comcast must clearly ask customers before charging them for new services or equipment and must make it easier for customers to fight charges they think are wrong. Regardless of whom their carrier is Currier encouraged subscribers to check their bills and if they have received inflated bills for services they never ordered to please contact White.

Lastly, Frank Maly shared an article from the Washington Post (October 7, 2016) which indicates that at least a dozen new states are about to get data caps on their Comcast home-internet services. White detailed the new program and additional fees, if applicable. Those customers wishing to opt out of the data cap can pay an extra fee for unlimited data or by

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switching to a lower-end budget plan which offers a slower service but avoids the cap. Beginning November 1, 2016 the data cap rollout will include Michigan (Grand Rapids/Lansing, Detroit, and eastern Michigan). Hopefully this information will be on residents' bills. If it is not, McLain advised residents to call and ask for the specifics of this plan and how it might affect their account. She also reminded subscribers that if their questions are not answered satisfactorily to call White directly and leave a voice message about your concerns so they may be shared with Comcast. White added that normally the Board receives information which would be included on the bills, but as of now she has not received anything about this. She will contact Mazurek, Comcast representative, and request a formal notification.

White encouraged anyone who sees an article which might be of interest to the Board to please send it to her.

McLain added that the Audit had been completed and the Auditors would give the Board the formal results at the November Board meeting. As soon as that is calculated, the Administrative Grants would be given back to the communities. That would also be reviewed in the next Cable Action Committee meeting.

**PROVIDER RELATED TOPICS****a. Comcast**

There was no representative present. However, White will speak with Kyle Mazurek about the specifics in the Washington Post report.

Stakhiv commented that Comcast has changed customers' account numbers and suggested that in the future it highlight in red, or another different color, the new numbers so as to avoid any confusion when the customer is paying the bill. She also mentioned that Customer Service had advised her that it had built in a safeguard process which would automatically transfer payments from the old account to the new if a resident accidentally referenced the wrong number. Her second issue concerned the Franklin resident's complaint involving his internet service. Comcast did call him a couple of times and left a message for him to call them back. The resident called them back and it went to voice mail which had a message stating the mailbox was full so he couldn't leave a message. The next day he was able to leave a message but Comcast was unable to reach him. After two (2) tries Comcast sent him a letter which upset him more than being without his email for a week. The resident felt the letter was very derogatory and wanted her to point this out at the Board meeting as well as advise Comcast that Customer Service needs to make an effort in reaching customers: a full voice mailbox is unacceptable and making only two (2) attempts by phone to reach the customer before sending a letter isn't enough. McLain explained that the "two call attempt and then send a letter" system is now the norm.

**b. AT&T/Uverse/Direct TV**

There was no representative present. White will speak with Robert Jones, AT&T representative.

Currier updated the Board on the approval progress of the renewal of AT&T's video franchise service local agreements with all four (4) communities. For the public's benefit, McLain gave a brief background of this issue.

**c. WOW**

There was no representative present.

Stakhiv commented that in the last couple of months no one from the three (3) Cable Providers attended the Cable Board meetings. She pointed out that a couple of years ago all three would send representatives and now she hasn't seen anyone in months. This was an issue for her. McLain explained that the Board has reached out to all of them. Representation and participation at a Board meeting is voluntary and at the moment redistricting of territory and other events are currently occurring. Now after PA 280 the companies don't recognize the Cable Board's authority or connection to them or to the community. The Board can encourage that, request that, and continue its outreach. The Cable Board's goal is to keep an open dialogue so that when subscribers have complaints they can be resolved within 24 hours with the help of the escalation teams. That is about all the Board can do at this point. After speaking with others in Michigan our Board has more open communication and exchange with our three (3) provider representatives than anyone. Some of those Boards have not seen representatives from any provider in two (2) years. White stated that she personally had reached out to Mazurek about attending this meeting but he had a prior commitment. He will try to come to the November meeting.

In connection to this discussion, Ettenson did some research and found a website that White might want to put on our own home page. It is a consumer advocate organization led by Christopher Elliott (Elliott.org) that lists personal email addresses for top executives of many companies, including a category called "cable", along with the names and addresses of the top Customer Care executives at all carriers. He gave an example for AT&T. He even tested it out after experiencing some reception problems with his Sirius XM satellite. He had made several calls during the week and, not getting any satisfaction, on Saturday he sent an email to the CEO about the problem. On Sunday he received an immediate response acknowledging the problem and on Monday morning he received a personal phone call as promised. The problem was resolved.

On behalf of AT&T, McLain noted that their business model is that they do not participate with local Cable Boards and, in fact, on Wednesdays they are in Lansing. That has been their position but they are always available by phone or email. White always follows up with them. Mazurek from Comcast now covers a much bigger territory than the previous representative. He is not able to be here every month but is consistent about being here once a quarter. As for WOW! they are local and she is not certain what its representative's responsibilities are in terms of Cable Boards. McLain stressed the importance of tracking every single complaint and concern so the process can be improved and the consumer gets a response. This is done by communicating directly with White or leaving a recorded message on the Cable Board phone line.

**BAPA/BAMA REPORT**

Steve Rota referred to his memo to BACB, dated October 11, 2016, and pointed out the six (6) completed BAMA Programs which were regularly scheduled municipal meetings, Board of Zoning Appeals meeting, the BACB meeting, and the Baldwin Public Library Board meetings.

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Last night he was informed that the Birmingham Advisory Board meeting which he had listed had been cancelled.

For the **BAPA** Programs, from the BACB area individual producers and organizations, twenty-three (23) programs were taped. He listed all the programs. Next week there is a Girls' volleyball game and a Girls' swim meet which would complete the fall's sports coverage. In November he will bring the Board the dates for the winter sports coverage.

Regarding the **PRODUCER WORKSHOP**, Rota reminded the Board that one-on-one sessions are offered for those who are interested in producing their own show and to those who want to learn how to run the equipment. This change in format seems to be working out better. Residents can contact BCTV at 248-433-7790 to schedule an appointment date and time. There is no fee for those living in one of the four BACB communities.

The Program Development Committee met a couple weeks ago and approved two (2) new shows: one (1) will highlight non-profit organizations and the other will highlight financial planning. The first one will be in production in late November and both should be on air late December or at the beginning of the year.

Rota was pleased to report that The Metropolitan Christian Council – Detroit presented his Staff the Carlyle Rees Award at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Herald Award Ceremony. He wanted to congratulate and thank the Staff, part-timers and volunteers for all the hard work they have done, as well as their dedication to the station. A job well done! They received a nice plaque which is hanging on the wall in the station.

Rota emphasized that there is always a need for volunteers from the community. He also wanted to thank Dan for covering the League of Women Voters School Board Forum and sending a copy over to the station for playback on the BAPA, BAMA, and probably the Schools' channels.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None

**NEW BUSINESS**

None

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**BOARD COMMENTS**

McLain noted that Borgon has been re-appointed to the Cable Board, as he is leaving the Beverly Hills Council. He will be at the November meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 AM.