

Present: Bello, Greenslade, Hirsch, Hollinshead, Camp, Laidlaw, Wilson – Birmingham
Borgon, Lacroix, Pfeifer, Woodard – Beverly Hills
Ettenson – Bingham Farms
Anderson – Franklin

Absent: Delaney – Beverly Hills

Also Present: Hagaman - Executive Director
Currier – Attorney for Cable Board
Helwig – Bloomfield Community Television representative
DiMaria - Comcast representative
Martinico – Director of Technology, Birmingham Schools

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. Borgon welcomed two new members representing Birmingham, Carol Greenslade and Bill Camp.

APPROVE MINUTES OF CABLE BOARD MEETING OF JULY 17, 2002

A motion was made at the August meeting to approve the minutes of the July 17, 2002 meeting, but a vote was not taken.

Motion by Ettenson, seconded by Woodard, that the minutes of a Birmingham Area Cable Board meeting held on July 17, 2002 be approved as submitted.

Motion passed unanimously.

APPROVE MINUTES OF CABLE BOARD MEETING OF AUGUST 21, 2002

Motion by Bello, seconded by Hollinshead, that the minutes of a Birmingham Area Cable Board meeting held on August 21, 2002 be approved as submitted.

Pfeifer referred to the discussion at the bottom of page 3 regarding status of Comcast promotions. She asked for clarification as to whether HBO will be offered free for a month to subscribers or if installation only will be offered at no charge.

Currier stated that the question should be clarification of what was said at the meeting so that the minutes will be accurate. Borgon indicated that the minutes as prepared reflect what was said.

DiMaria related that Comcast will offer HBO free for a month to customers without a cable box as part of the promotion. This will be discussed further later in the meeting.

Motion passed unanimously.

NATOA CONFERENCE

Chairperson Borgon informed the Board at the August meeting that he would be attending the Annual National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) meeting in Chicago along with the Executive Director. The expenditure for the Executive Director to

attend the conference is included in the Cable Board budget. Borgon asked the Board to consider action to authorize expenditure of funds for the Chairperson's attendance. Borgon detailed his expenses totaling \$1,217.17, which includes the \$525 conference fee, and requested reimbursement for his expenses.

Motion by Pfeifer, seconded by Ettenson, to approve the expenditure of the Cable Board Chairperson to attend the NATOA Annual Conference in the amount of \$1,217.17.

There was discussion of the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Borgon presented highlights of the NATOA conference and commented on the sessions he attended. Each day there were concurrent sessions focusing on four different categories – competitive markets, multi-media, regulatory, and technical.

A round table discussion with the cable companies was held. Mike DiMaria and other Comcast people were in attendance including Bill Black who served as facilitator. There was an open discussion of problems and opportunities with a major focus on customer service issues. Black was requested to bring information back to the Board on several issues including programming costs. DiMaria and Black were asked to provide more visibility for Comcast's new Vice-President of Customer Service.

Borgon thought that the overall conference was excellent, particularly with respect to PEG programming ideas. He and Hagaman spent time with a technical group that has developed a new computer program to update our electronic bulletin boards. There will be discussions with the PEG committee and BCTV on whether it is feasible to purchase this program.

Borgon was asked to compare the Birmingham area consortium's customer service experience with that of other parts of the country based on what he heard at the conference. He responded that the round table discussion was limited to the Midwest area, but customer service was a primary issue.

Helwig related that she attended a session with a representative from the FCC in attendance as well as the head of a public service commission. She was gratified to know that this consortium's experience and the way it handles issues with its local cable provider is largely representative of what is going on across the country.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PEG Committee

Laidlaw stated that the PEG committee did not meet last month due to scheduling conflicts. A meeting will be scheduled shortly.

Borgon remarked that he would like the PEG Committee to focus on current and future programming and to confirm that Bloomfield Community Television (BCTV) is fulfilling the obligations of its contract with the Cable Board. Copies of the contract will be distributed to all

Board members. Borgon asked that the PEG committee work with BCTV on program ideas to enhance programming on Channel 15.

Laidlaw thinks it is important that each governing body of the consortium communities have an opportunity to provide input and recommendations with respect to government programming it would like to see on the municipal access channel (15).

Borgon agrees that there should be communication between a representative of each community and BCTV to ensure that events and meetings that are of interest to their communities are conveyed to the contractor. He suggested that the PEG committee communicate with the municipal administrators regarding events that their governing bodies would like covered. The contract allows for a certain amount of programming hours to be aired without extra cost.

Laidlaw recommended that the Board authorize Executive Director Hagaman to facilitate re-establishment of the program formerly known as *Franklin-Bingham 48025*. Laidlaw is also attempting to re-establish the Birmingham program previously produced by Bob DeLaura.

Logo Committee

Hirsch is working with the committee to design a Board logo. He intends to contact the design department of the Detroit Center for Creative Studies relative to initiating a competition among students to design a logo with a possible monetary incentive. Hirsch was authorized to pursue this approach.

COMCAST RELATED TOPICS

Comcast Performance

Status of Promotions

Borgon related that he contacted a Comcast customer service representative (CSR) yesterday in an attempt to receive HBO for a month at no charge as part of the promotions offered to the consortium communities as part of the recent settlement agreement. It was indicated at the August meeting that this offer was available to customers who do not have a cable box because they could not use the pay-per-view movie coupons without a box. Borgon spoke on the phone with a CSR who did not know about the promotion. He then went to the Comcast Eton Street office and talked to staff who informed him that subscribers in this consortium cannot receive any premium channels including HBO without a cable box. DiMaria contacted Borgon to discuss this situation.

DiMaria explained that he received incorrect information about subscribers without a cable box being able to order premium channels by removing the trap. This can be done in every other market that traps signals except this one because the signal is scrambled. The decoder in the box is used to unscramble the program. DiMaria apologized for the error.

DiMaria is authorized to offer two alternatives to customers who do not have a cable box: 1) Use of a free digital box for two months. The PPV movie coupons can be used with this box. The customer must pick up and return the box at the Eton Road office; 2) Customers who do not want to pick up a box can call DiMaria's office directly to be issued a credit. The number is 734/420-4751.

This new offer will be posted on the BACB web site and on the Channel 15 billboard.

Hollinshead reviewed that there was discussion at the last Cable Board meeting relative to issuing a press release to remind the affected members of the consortium communities to take advantage of the offer extended as a result of the settlement with Comcast prior to the end of the year. There may be an opportunity to incorporate into the press release the substitute offers by DiMaria and Comcast as a result of these problems.

Hagaman responded that she and Hirsch are drafting a press release in a format that will be used for future press releases issued by the Cable Board. Beverly Hills residents were informed of the offers from Comcast in the recent Villager newsletter mailed to each resident. Hagaman received phone calls from Beverly Hills staff regarding customers who were unaware of the coupon in their cable bills. These calls are being addressed.

Ettenson commented that this should be a lesson for Board members to try out these types of offers in the future to determine if they are successful.

Status of Survey

DiMaria distributed a handout indicating survey results on returned cards as of 9/17/02. Cards were mailed to all Birmingham residents. The remainder of the survey cards for Bingham Farms, Beverly Hills, and Franklin were mailed on 9/17/02. DiMaria reviewed the rating chart outlining the results of survey cards returned by Birmingham residents and those from other communities who have received the cards. Areas rated were cable television picture quality, channel availability, high speed Internet, service from the call center, service from field technicians, and telephone access. DiMaria noted that telephone access is a major area of concern. Comcast's focus currently is with the vendor it uses for interactive voice unit and switching and how to render it more effective.

DiMaria stated that the Board will be updated on survey results next month as more information is received. He noted that 12 trucks were rolled out to make repairs as a result of 287 surveys returned by Birmingham subscribers. Some of the issues reported were billing concerns that were rectified over the phone. Others issues were Internet related.

Customer Log

A copy of the customer log was distributed today. DiMaria stated that he and Hagaman will go through and reconcile the log to ensure that all complaints are recorded. The log incorporates complaints received from April 1 through August 6 and includes information on who the complaint is from, who it was assigned to, the problem and resolution. DiMaria stated that this is a log that Comcast advocates keep for each community to record each time they talk to a person. The log will be provided to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Subscriber Complaints

Complaint #02-99: Mark McGillivray of Birmingham indicated that Comcast Internet service does not allow him to access his e-mail account from a remote site. DiMaria stated that web mail has been available for about two weeks now. Customers can log in at Comcast.net and can access their e-mail remotely.

Complaint #02-100: Ray O’Keefe of Birmingham had a problem with his cable modem. DiMaria explained that the customer’s software problem was resolved and he was issued a \$13 credit.

Complaint #02-101: Irene Davis of Beverly Hills was experiencing lines through channel 14. DiMaria stated that wiring was replaced in the home and external repairs were made. The customer has been contacted, and the problem is resolved to her satisfaction.

Complaint #02-102: John Nebbia of Bingham Farms wrote a letter relative to problems with his “picture in a picture” function and the inability of a Comcast technician to resolve the problem. The subscriber requested and received a two week credit. This complaint will be revisited next month awaiting a response from the field supervisor regarding the service call.

Birmingham Link

DiMaria reported that all mapping requests from the City of Birmingham have been completed and work should commence shortly to complete the link.

Monthly Subscriber Statistics

There were no comments on the system statistics for August 2002.

Comcast Price Increase

Comcast sent a letter dated September 1, 2002 to the municipal clerk of each consortium community informing them of a price increase for basic cable service effective October 1, 2002. Customers have been notified with a message in their September bills. The letter indicates that a significant cost factor is the cost of programming.

DiMaria stated that programming costs were a topic of discussion at the NATOA conference. Comcast was asked to provide information to the Board that substantiates its programming costs. A break out of these costs will be provided in the next couple of weeks. DiMaria stated that the average increase in this area has been 12% per year during the last four years.

DiMaria remarked that programming is better now than it was five or six years ago. Programming costs is the biggest factor in the price of cable service and it is reviewed on an annual basis. He noted that what Comcast is paying for individual channels is proprietary information.

Ettenson stated that the letter says that prices in the Detroit metropolitan market are significantly lower than prices for equivalent levels of service in other parts of the country. He requested examples of this.

DiMaria concurred that it would be helpful to provide the Board with information to disseminate to its constituents. Cable rates are not under the control of the Board, but he will provide material on the price increase and market comparisons.

Hollinshead commented on the number of alternatives available to the subscriber base for receiving similar programming. He contends that people will defect to satellite dish service if they are not satisfied with their cable service or if they believe that there is another viable alternative. Hollinshead thinks that prices for cable television service should reflect the reality that there is a large market.

DiMaria maintains that there is not a substantial difference in what the average satellite customer spends compared to the average cable customer's cost of service, disregarding the initial discounts offered for satellite service. The same is true of Wide Open West, the cable company that competes with Comcast in about 43 markets. The price differential is minimal. DiMaria mentioned the fact that there are more programs available since the upgrade of Comcast's system, and the system is more reliable.

A suggestion was made to hold an evening meeting of the Cable Board to present information to the public on the rate increase and receive public input. It was thought it may be more convenient for some members of the public to attend an evening meeting.

Motion by Laidlaw, seconded by Bello, that the Cable Board meet in the evening on Thursday, October 24 at 7:30 p.m. in the Beverly Hills Council chambers.

There was discussion of the motion. There was support from a majority of the members to hold an occasional evening meeting in an attempt for more attendance. It was suggested that the Board gather and review material on the rate increase and schedule an evening meeting in November.

Ayes - 4
Nays - 9
Motion fails.

Motion by Woodard, seconded by Pfeifer, that the Cable Board hold its November meeting on Wednesday, November 20 at 7:30 p.m.

Ayes - 10
Nays - 3
Motion passed.

Changes in Channel Lineup

The Board received copies of a letter dated September 5, 2002 from Comcast regarding a change in the analog channel lineup for customers in this consortium effective October 8. Along with notifying customers at least 30 days in advance via notice in the appropriate newspaper of record, Comcast is also providing customers with a new channel lineup card and information on these changes in their September bill.

DiMaria stated that a reason for channel changes is to make availability for high definition television. He noted that customers who receive a fuzzy picture on channel 2 due to the location of some of the broadcast towers should call Comcast to have their fittings tightened or lines replaced to avoid that interference.

Bello remarked that Comcast is initiating a price increase and a channel line up change at the same time. These are both events that drive an increase in calls into the call center. He asked DiMaria if Comcast has planned for this and what action will be taken to handle the increased call volume and maintain the service level.

DiMaria responded that what is done when the cable company initiates these changes is to have groups of eight CSRs go through training individually before they start taking phone calls. Volume is managed by having more people available in the call center when bills are received.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Hagaman reported that Plante & Moran has begun the franchise fee audit. Information requested from the Cable Board has been forwarded to the auditors. DiMaria is acting as liaison with the cable company to facilitate the audit. The firm has agreed to extend the period of the franchise fee audit from 12 months to 18 months at the cost provided in the proposal. Plante & Moran will also be conducting an audit of the financial statements of the Cable Board and the Franklin Bank money market account in conjunction with the Beverly Hills annual audit.

There was discussion last month of a subscriber's recommendations on how to make Board meetings easier for cable television viewers to follow. It was suggested to post the agenda item being discussed intermittently during the course of a meeting. The Board was informed that this was being done at today's meeting. It was also suggested to use a crawl on the bottom of the screen to identify the agenda item on taped municipal meetings that are replayed whenever possible.

Hagaman commented that it is usually assumed that Comcast is at fault if the TV guide channel stops working. She has been informed that this is a feed directly from the TV guide programming supplier. Customers could call the cable company to report the problem, but Comcast does not have the ability to fix it.

MLTV15/PA18 REPORT

Helwig reported that eight municipal meetings were produced for the MLTV15 channel in the last month. Nine other programs were produced and aired including Birmingham Concerts in the Park, a Beverly Hills concert in the park, two "Summer in the City" concerts, the Franklin Labor Day Parade, and a meeting of the Presidents' Council of Homeowners Associations.

A call was received from a Birmingham resident with a concern that the replay of a Birmingham Commission meeting ended before the conclusion of the meeting at which time other scheduled programming began. Another option for scheduling and playing meetings that exceed four hours in length could be to bump the next scheduled program, which would inconvenience viewers expecting the scheduled program. Meetings can sometimes be scheduled to play in an open-

ended time slot avoiding this problem. Helwig asked the Board to consider this situation and provide direction to BCTV.

Methods for addressing this switch-over situation were discussed. It will be a topic for further discussion by the PEG Access Committee.

Helwig informed the Board that a program about the Birmingham Historical Museum won an honorable mention at an awards banquet held as part of the NOTOA conference. She noted that there were more than 1,000 entries for programming awards. Borgon congratulated BCTV on the honorable mention.

Helwig informed the Board that the October 7, 2002 Beverly Hills Council meeting will be held at Berkshire School and will not be aired live.

BCTV produced ten programs for Channel 18 this past month. Two were “Talk of the Town” produced by Jim Lane. It was mentioned that this program might be a good medium to talk about the recent cable rate increase.

Helwig commented that the mobile production van has been working well. A new headset was purchased for the van.

Laidlaw thanked BCTV volunteer Hal Patrick for his work as a cameraman. Laidlaw mentioned that there has been some concern about the video and audio quality of the Franklin Council meetings. The PEG Access committee will follow up on this. Laidlaw asked for suggestions from BCTV.

Borgon commented on the limitations posed by the unique chambers in which Franklin holds its municipal meetings. The nature of that historic building affects the replay ability. He noted that sound upgrades were made to the facility last year.

BOARD COMMENTS

Pfeifer suggested that representation on the PEG Access Committee from each municipality would promote communication with the four communities relative to their programming needs. She offered to serve as the liaison to the Beverly Hills Council in that respect.

At Pfeifer’s suggestion, the two new Board members from Birmingham, Carol Greenslade and Bill Camp, introduced themselves. Greenslade has a background in public relations and an interest in broadcast. Camp’s background is in Internet development and marketing communications.

Woodard related that she had high speed Internet installed in her home since last month’s meeting. The installation went well, and the technician was competent. She is impressed with the speed of the service.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Edward Missavage of 30001 Lahser Road in Beverly Hills understands that senior citizens in Sterling Heights and other communities in the area enjoy a 10% discount on their Comcast cable television service. He is troubled that this consortium does not offer a senior discount.

DiMaria responded that senior rates are not offered unless there is a contractual obligation. Some of the senior rates offered by communities were grandfathered into the contract with the cable company.

Borgon suggested bringing the senior discount up in future discussions with the cable provider. Hollinshead supported the spirit of this request and thinks it is an issue the Board should seriously investigate.

Laidlaw suggested that an agenda item for the next meeting be a report on the September 10th meeting attended by some Board members at the Comcast offices on Telegraph.

Motion by Woodard, seconded by Etnenson, to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 a.m.

Motion passed unanimously.