

Present: Camp, Greenslade, Hollinshead, Wilson - Birmingham  
Borgon, Delaney, Woodard – Beverly Hills  
Ettenson – Bingham Farms

Absent: Bello and Hirsch - Birmingham  
Lacroix – Beverly Hills  
Anderson – Franklin

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

Borgon called the meeting to order at 7:49 p.m. in the Village of Beverly Hills municipal building at 18500 W. Thirteen Mile Road.

### **APPROVE MINUTES OF CABLE BOARD MEETING OF NOVEMBER 20, 2002 AND CLOSED SESSION**

The closed session minutes were corrected to reflect that only Hagaman and Currier should be listed as “also present”.

Motion by Wilson, seconded by Delaney, that the minutes of a closed session held on November 20, 2002 be approved as amended and the minutes of the November 20, 2002 Cable Board meeting be approved as submitted.

Motion passed unanimously.

### **APPROVE 2003 CALENDAR YEAR MEETING DATES**

Motion by Ettenson, seconded by Wilson, to approve the 2003 calendar meeting dates as follows noting that meetings will be held at 7:45 a.m. in the Village of Beverly Hills municipal building: January 15, February 19, March 19, April 16, May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20, September 17, October 15, November 19, December 17.

Motion passed unanimously.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **PEG Committee**

Hollinshead reported that the PEG Committee met on December 12 and considered a number of matters that will ultimately come before the Board. The Committee further reviewed the TargetVision proposal for electronic bulletin board software. The software would be used on BACB channels to provide continually updated programming information and scheduling. The Committee also discussed a recommendation from Bloomfield Community Television (BCTV) to replace the Board’s ¾” playback equipment because of its age and state of disrepair. In addition, the equipment should be replaced because the cable industry is moving away from this format.

The PEG Committee will be considering programming alternatives for the near future. The efforts of Leslie Helwig and BCTV staff to help fill programming gaps on BACB channels are appreciated by the Board. Hollinshead affirmed that it is the intent of the PEG Committee to meet on a regular basis and assume a leadership role in programming matters.

The PEG Committee also reviewed a draft document prepared by BCTV outlining processes and procedures for utilization of its studios, equipment, and access to the channels. Committee members suggested minor modifications to the draft. Board members have been provided with copies of this material. Borgon commended Helwig on drafting a comprehensive procedures document and noted that it coordinates with the guidelines of the Board's contract with BCTV.

Hagaman related that she contacted two companies in an attempt to solicit bids on an electronic bulletin board package. She received no response from one company and is anticipating receipt of a proposal from the other company. She will pursue these contacts so the Board will have other proposals to consider.

Hagaman also had further discussions with representatives from TargetVision regarding their proposal with respect to the cost of annual maintenance and revisions to their software packages as well as training and installation service. The Board viewed those areas of the quote to be excessive based on Board members' experience with downloading software updates. The proposal will be discussed further with TargetVision. Hollinshead commented that the Board is attempting to provide the greatest level of enhancements at the lowest possible cost for its viewers.

Borgon referred to a memo dated December 11 from Jim Gills from BCTV regarding ¾" decks used for MLTV playback. The memo indicates that the current playback equipment is no longer made and is in need of repair. Gillis suggests that the Board scrutinize the cost of repairs and consider a transition to digital tape playback. Both mobile vans and the BCTV studio use digital, and playback with DVCPRO decks on MLTV will increase the quality of the playback of non-meeting productions and give BCTV the ability to play a two-hour format tape instead of the one hour it is limited to with the ¾" equipment.

Hollinshead stated that the PEG Committee concurs that it is time to look at replacing our playback equipment with a digital system. It is the Committee's thinking that, in addition to the playback equipment, the Board should take an overall look at the Board owned equipment at BCTV as it affects the programming for BACB channels 15 and 18 and the delivery of those programs. The Board may want to consider an overall package to update the equipment at one time. Hollinshead stated that the PEG Committee would like to work BCTV on this. Borgon requested that Jim Gillis of BCTV be asked to provide a recommendation to the Board on equipment needs.

### **Logo Development**

Hagaman reported on the progress of applying the new logo to the mobile production van. A suggestion was made to request the assistance of the Birmingham Fire Department to wash the van prior to applying the logo materials. The City of Birmingham has offered the use of a garage on Thursday and Friday to perform the logo work.

Hagaman is working with the logo designer on the letterhead configuration. It was noted that the new logo as displayed on Channel 15 looks great.

## **EQUIPMENT PURCHASES**

### **Production Van**

The Board discussed equipment purchases for the mobile production van at last month's meeting. Hagaman was asked to update a May 2002 quote from ProVideo for Board consideration. She related that the cost has increased by approximately \$100 from the time of the original quote. Hagaman requests Board approval to spend \$3,902.00 plus shipping to provide three TBC/Frame Synchronizers and a 1.5" ENG Viewfinder.

Motion by Delaney, seconded by Hollinshead, to approve an expenditure not to exceed \$4,500 for the purchase of three TBC/Frame Synchronizers and a 1.5" ENG Viewfinder for use in the BACB mobile production van.

Motion passed unanimously.

### **Playback Equipment**

This was discussed as part of the PEG committee report. Hagaman mentioned that BCTV is in the process of soliciting quotes for ¾" playback equipment for Board consideration to insure continued playback on the MLTV channel. This will be an agenda item next month.

Questions from Board members on the equipment and repairs were addressed by Helwig and Hagaman. Board members asked to be provided with more than one quote. A suggestion was made to look at all MLTV equipment in terms of a long term plan.

## **COMCAST RELATED TOPICS**

Mike Cleland, Senior Vice-President of Comcast's Detroit Region, addressed several issues regarding customer service. He referred to a letter the Board sent to Brian Roberts requesting that he attend a Cable Board meeting when he is in town to address the Detroit Economic Club in May. In response to this correspondence, Dave Scott, President of Comcast's Midwest Division and Cleland met a couple of weeks ago with BACB Executive Director Kathy Hagaman, Bob Borgon and Mel Ettenson.

Cleland recapped some of the important issues that were discussed at that meeting as well as items that Comcast is focusing on. Comcast's main priority is to have a positive and professional relationship with this Board and with every community and customer it serves. Cleland affirmed that Comcast is committed to top quality customer service.

Comcast has done three important things. It has invested in infrastructure, in people, and it continues to offer new products and customer services. He elaborated on the investments made to serve Comcast customers. Cleland cited results of a recent subscriber survey to demonstrate that Comcast service continues to improve.

Cleland maintains that all of Comcast's product lines are highly competitive from its video products to its high speed data product. Comcast also offers digital telephone service in the area

where Comcast competes with many providers. If the company does not provide good customer service, it loses a customer.

Comcast wants to continue to provide the BACB with increased responsiveness on customer issues. Cleland announced that this Board's long-time representative Mike DiMaria has been reassigned to serve other communities and will be replaced by Fred Eaton as the Board's new government liaison from Comcast. Cleland commented that Mike DiMaria has done an excellent job. He provided background information on Fred Eaton.

DiMaria remarked that he has enjoyed his time as Comcast representative to the BACB, and he appreciates the work we have done on the new contract. He concurs that Eaton will be a great support mechanism for the Board going forward.

Delaney asked Comcast representatives how this Board compares to similar bodies with respect to its activity level.

Kate Ebli, Area Vice President of Comcast, responded that every community is unique and has a different focus. Some communities do not have local programming and are not active in that regard. She remarked that there are not many Boards that formalize customer complaints to the extent of this Board. Typically, Comcast representatives have a direct relationship with members of the boards and deal directly with the customers rather than going through a documented procedure. In communities that do not have cable boards, issues are addressed with members of the city governing body directly.

Ebli commented that the activity level in this consortium is higher than in many communities. She noted that this community is relatively newer to Comcast compared to other communities that the cable company has served particularly in the downriver area. Comcast representatives often deal with issues directly and immediately rather than through a formalized process.

Delaney commented that he views the Board's function as trying to obtain the best possible service for its subscribers. There have been difficult times in the past year or so. He would like to think this Board has helped to improve the level of cable television service to customers. Delaney assured Comcast representatives that it is his intention and likely the rest of the Board to maintain this level of activity. He added that he is looking forward to working with the new representative.

Delaney expressed continued concerns regarding picture quality and cost information, which were addressed by Comcast representatives. Cleland related that the recent survey conducted in this area indicated that subscribers rate picture quality at 2.98 on a scale of 1-4. Comcast intends to continue to communicate with customers as it moves forward with everything going on in the industry. Television standards will change from analog to digital in the year 2006. Several stations today are transmitting signals in high definition. Comcast is continuing to keep up with technology and will do its best to communicate those changes to the market place.

Currier referred to the question regarding the level of activity of this Board. The 47 communities his firm represents with respect to cable television have various levels of activities and interest.

The BACB has consistently met every month. The level of input from elected officials in the consortium communities is high. The elected officials in the Birmingham and Bloomfield consortiums expect these boards to be proactive and to maintain a high level of supervision with respect to the cable provider and the PEG provider. They expect high levels of customer service. That has been the charge to this body.

Currier contends that, when communities have passed Consumer Protection Ordinances and sophisticated Franchise Agreements, it does not make sense legally or from a policy point of view to subsequently ignore those documents or the legal obligations required of everyone in those franchise agreements. Unfortunately, many communities are not abreast of those documents, and problems continue without being fully addressed. It is Currier's opinion that this consortium does receive a higher level of service from Comcast because this Board demands that the cable company live up to its obligations.

Currier commented that for almost ten years he has had the pleasure of working with Mike DiMaria, an honorable and professional individual.

The Board welcomed Fred Eaton. Eaton expressed his objective, which is to see that there is first rate customer service for subscribers in this area.

Hollinshead suggested that it may be helpful for this Board to explore the overall direction of the television industry and the advance of technology over the next five or ten years, consider its impact on the communities, and try to anticipate and plan for some of the issues that may arise.

Board members thanked DiMaria for his help and his responsiveness to the Board and wished him the best in his new assignment. It was suggested that it is important that Eaton has even more support within the organization.

### **Subscriber Complaints**

Complaint #111 (from last month) – Steve Meiselak of Beverly Hills had a line down for a couple of months. The Board is concerned with the lack of response to customer complaints and breakdown in communication. Calls from the customer were not logged in by Comcast customer service representatives.

Eaton spoke with the customer and learned that he was satisfied with the resolution to his problem. Hagaman asked if there is a process in place to make sure that calls are tracked and remain in the customer base. Eaton replied that Comcast is rolling out a new program called "Comtrack" across the call center, which enables the customer account executive (CAE) to more easily identify the activity that has taken place in the customer's account over the recent past. Initial bugs in the elaborate program have been resolved, and CAEs are being trained in its use. The program will be fully operative in May.

Complaint #112 (from last month) – A complaint from Katherine Hayes of Birmingham involved a rude service representative, a technician who would not provide the caller with a name or tech number, inability to schedule an appointment for five days, and cancellation of an appointment if a customer does not answer the phone to confirm the appointment. The customer

was calling because she did not understand a feature and was treated rudely. The customer was given a one month credit from Comcast. DiMaria was requested to provide a letter of apology to the customer for the rude response of the Comcast representative.

Eaton related that the customer received a full month's credit, and the Comcast employee was reprimanded.

Cleland discussed the feature involved in this complaint, which allows the customer to see a description of what is on at the bottom of the television screen. It is a tool that allows customers to channel surf without having to change channels. This is a customer enhancement that comes with digital service. He added that the rudeness of a service representative is unacceptable.

Complaint #116 (from last month) – Eaton stated that he called David Hines of Bingham Farms yesterday and left a message to call back if he was still unhappy. He did not call back. Eaton informed the Board that Comcast has dealt with the employee who was involved in this matter as well as Complaint #112.

Complaint #122 – A complaint from Angela Moscowitz from Birmingham involves a visit from a collector and a resulting payment pick-up fee.

Eaton explained that Comcast endeavors to recover money when a customer does not pay their bill. A subscriber who is seriously in arrears on their payment receives several phone calls first. It is a practice of many businesses to collect on days when people are home. Comcast has a published list of prices that is mailed to customers each year. A \$15 collection fee is listed under "other charges".

Delaney asked Comcast to make sure its policy is followed on this particular issue.

Complaint #123 – Beverly Newman of Franklin indicated that she experienced problems with a credit from Comcast, which resulted in her service being disconnected.

Eaton explained that the customer increased her level of service and miscalculated how long the credit would continue. She asked the company to establish a separate account for Internet service, which Comcast was unable to do.

Hagaman stated that the customer called her back and thanked the Board for addressing the issue. Everything is resolved to her liking.

Complaint #124 – Richard Holloway of Bingham Farms complained about two price increases since September. Eaton responded that there was a Basic service price increase, which was announced, followed by a \$2 increase in premium channels. All subscribers were notified of these changes.

Complaint #125 – Jake Smith of Birmingham reported intermittent cable problems and a rescheduled service appointment. Eaton responded that the matter was resolved and the customer was given a credit for a missed appointment.

Eaton explained that there are situations whereby a technician comes upon a problem installation that delays him and affects subsequent appointments. The rest of the route is then divided up among other technicians who are out on the road. Comcast tries to take care of everyone who has a scheduled appointment that day. At times there are circumstances beyond the technician's control. Eaton went on to discuss how jobs are scheduled and measures taken by Comcast to improve its management of quota.

This customer received an on-time guarantee credit. Eaton will follow up on additional credit given by Comcast for the next meeting.

Currier stated that the Consumer Protection Ordinance requires that there be a four-hour appointment window, and there is no provision for quotas. Quota maintenance is a Comcast problem.

Complaint #126 – Craig Castle of Birmingham submitted a problem with poor reception and missed service appointments.

Eaton stated that this person lives in a multiple dwelling unit. There was damaged cable in the wall two floors below him. The technicians did respond to the problem but did not notify the customer because the damage was not inside his apartment. The subscriber should have been notified that Comcast was on the job and corrected the problem. Comcast will verify that the service was satisfactory and discuss a credit when the customer is back in town. This complaint will be held over until the next meeting.

Complaint #127 – Haganan noted that a complaint from Richard Holloway of Bingham Farms will be investigated further before it is addressed.

Woodard anticipates future customer complaints if people have a similar experience to the one she had regarding the two-month free digital upgrade offer. She took advantage of the Comcast offer and returned the black box at the scheduled time. Her bill was incorrect and she was given inaccurate information from the service representative when she called Comcast for an explanation of the charges. The representative was not aware of the special offer to Birmingham area customers.

DiMaria remarked that less than ten people took advantage of this offer from Comcast. Eaton explained that call center employees have access to an intranet site that lists special promotions and price changes. Evidently, the customer account executive was not thinking fast enough to look it up.

Haganan noted that Board members were provided with a copy of an e-mail received by Dorothy Pfeifer from a subscriber who related thoughts about the channel line up, marketing of digital service, the recent special offer, and the lack of competition for cable television service.

Eaton read a letter dated October 8, 2002 from a subscriber that was sent to the manager in Birmingham complimenting a Comcast repair service person who corrected problems on two of their television sets.

### **Birmingham Link**

Eaton stated that Comcast engineers will provide a timeline for the completion of the underground fiber link to City Hall in January.

Currier commented that City of Birmingham engineers have not received all the detail required to finish the link.

### **Monthly Subscriber Statistics**

Woodard noted that the month-to-month comparison is missing from the November system statistics report. Eaton will provide this in next month's report.

Currier mentioned that the Cable Board sent documentation to Comcast for reimbursement of Board expenses related to the 394 Application and has yet to receive the check.. Eaton will follow up on this and advise the Board.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Hagaman stated that copies of the franchise fee audit were prepared and sent to Board members. Due to an incorrect assumption with respect to the definition of gross revenue, a revised audit report will be furnished and distributed to members. Beth Bailey from Plante & Moran will be present at the January meeting to present the findings to the Board.

The Cable Board office will be closed from December 24<sup>th</sup> to January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Borgon related that Stuart Laidlaw has submitted his resignation to the Board effective immediately and that his resignation was accepted by the Birmingham City Commission at its December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. Birmingham has two candidates for this position and is expected to make an appointment to fill the vacancy at its January 6<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting.

In response to an inquiry, Ebli stated that Comcast had been calculating franchise fees for the year with some of those payments based on the Home Shopping Network and advertising sales. The new franchise agreement had removed those two revenue sources from the definition of gross revenue. An adjustment was made in the third quarter. The fourth quarter franchise fees will be based on revenues received from subscribers for that quarter.

### **MLTV15/PA18**

Helwig reported on MLTV15 and Channel 18 meetings and programs produced during the last month. The December 9, 2002 Birmingham Commission meeting was not broadcast live due to a problem with the connection to the live feed. The meeting was replayed on schedule.

As discussed at the last meeting, BCTV is producing a Holiday Happenings program featuring events primarily in Birmingham and Franklin. It will be on the air by the end of the week.

Helwig reported that she and Jim Gillis met recently with Joe Valentine from the City of Birmingham. Valentine is looking at the possibility of web streaming Birmingham Commission meetings. BCTV will work with Valentine on equipment upgrades with web streaming as an end result. Helwig remarked that web streaming is not always successful because the technology is not there to be satisfactory for most communities. Valentine also proposed doing a video presentation of Birmingham's 2003/04 budget. He will script it and organize connections with staff. BCTV will produce the budget presentation in March.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Delaney noted that Comcast has furnished Board members with a sheet listing monthly services and prices. Prices listed are effective December 1, 2001 with a note that some prices and packages will change effective with the customer's January 2002 statement.

Ebli clarified that Comcast provided Board members with an example of the annual notification sent to customers. A current list of rates is issued to customers every year and will be inserted in customer bills in January 2003. She will provide the Board members with current copies for the next meeting.

Hagaman commented that the problem is that there are a number of changes later in the year after people receive the rate card in January. Subscribers are confused as to the current prices once promotions expire.

Ebli responded that Comcast does adjustments throughout the year at different times. At the time of installation, new customers receive a list of the current prices and a channel line up. Existing customers are notified of any price changes but do not receive a revised list in the mail. In answer to an inquiry, Ebli stated that she will check on whether current pricing is posted on a website that could be accessed by customers. It was noted that a customer can call Comcast and request that a price list be mailed to them.

### **BOARD COMMENTS**

Ettenson asked if Brian Roberts, President of Comcast Communications, will be sent an invitation to attend a monthly meeting of the Birmingham Area Cable Board in May when he will be in the area to speak at the Detroit Economic Club. The letter sent by the Board will be updated to reflect the change in his appearance in Detroit from March to May.

Board members expressed their appreciation to Mike DiMaria for his assistance and responsiveness to this Board. The Board looks forward to working with Fred Eaton.

Motion by Woodard, seconded by Delaney, to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 a.m.

Motion passed unanimously.