

Present: Decker, Fredrick, Frishman, Hirsch, Jones - Birmingham
Borgon, Delaney, Verdi-Hus and Woodard – Beverly Hills
Ettenson – Bingham Farms
Gallasch - Franklin

Absent: Correa and Hollinshead - Birmingham

Also Present: Hagaman - Executive Director
Salhaney - Attorney for Cable Board
Gillis – Bloomfield Community Television representative
Valentine – Birmingham Staff Liaison
Beller - Comcast representative
Pfeifer – Beverly Hills Council liaison

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 MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Woodard, second by Ettenson, that the minutes of a Birmingham Area Cable Board meeting held on Wednesday, January 19, 2005 be approved as submitted.

Motion passed.

GRANT REQUEST – CITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Joe Valentine referred to his February 10, 2005 memo outlining the status of a project to upgrade the cable equipment for the City of Birmingham to improve the quality of public meeting broadcasts. The plan includes upgrading the camera equipment, broadcasting equipment, and lighting improvements for the Commission chamber to allow for better picture quality. Included in the project as a separate element is audio/visual equipment for the Department of Public Services conference room where public meetings are held.

Three bids were received and opened on February 7, 2005. After a review of the proposals by Valentine and Jim Gillis, it was determined that two of the bids met the fundamental requirements of the specifications – Blue Water Technologies and Roscor. All three proposals included various alternate equipment options. The bid from Roscor allows for a higher end camera that would provide better picture quality for meetings. Considering that video quality has been the impetus for this upgrade, it will be recommended that this alternate bid for cameras be accepted as part of the overall solution.

Valentine referred to the bid summary spreadsheet and answered questions from Board members. Gillis addressed the differences in technology between the video cameras specified in the bids. The alternate bid camera will afford the city a professional grade camera. Gillis explained that the bid includes retrofitting that is required not only for the lighting solution but to reconfigure the structure of the room in terms of how it is laid out. This may include additional costs that would be covered in a contingency amount.

Pfeifer commented on the process that Beverly Hills went through to upgrade its Council Chamber with broadcasting equipment through a grant from the Cable Board. She noted that the original bid price from Roscor was reduced following elimination of some of the equipment included in the initial proposal. The Cable Board removed the power point presentation capability from the Beverly Hills proposal, which has subsequently been added through an additional grant. Gillis remarked that almost \$27,000 was saved on the Beverly Hills project by using equipment in the mobile van, since the production van was being retrofitted.

Pfeifer recalled that additional work done in the Beverly Hills Council Chamber such as providing a new Council table for permanent installation of microphones, building a control room, and additional electrical work was funded by the Village. The agreement with the Cable Board at the time was that it would provide a grant to cover cameras and equipment with everything else being the responsibility of the Village. Beverly Hills spent an additional \$25,000-\$30,000 to complete the project. Pfeifer believes that the offer of a grant to Birmingham was presented under the same guidelines of camera and equipment. She added that Beverly Hills was informed that the equipment purchased from the Cable Board grant was the responsibility of the Village to maintain.

Gillis explained that the retrofit that will take place in Birmingham will not involve drywall being taken down or the room being changed. There will be replacement of conduit in the room. The goal is to improve all of Birmingham's broadcasting systems in the Commission room and the DPS facility for the same price paid for the video gear for the Beverly Hills Council chamber. The City of Birmingham will be responsible for maintaining the equipment.

Questions from Board members were addressed by Gillis and Valentine. Valentine reviewed the project timeline. If the grant award is approved today, it will be brought before the Birmingham City Commission tentatively on February 21. The City Commission will consider the award of an agreement with a selected bidder and move forward with the project with the understanding that funding for the project is coming from the Cable Board. The equipment would be ordered at the end of February and installed some time in May.

Motion by Hirsch, second by Ettenson, to award a grant in an amount not to exceed \$130,000 to the City of Birmingham for the purchase and installation of new broadcasting equipment and related solutions for the City Commission room and Department of Public Services conference room.

Roll Call Vote:

Decker	- yes
Fredrick	- yes
Frishman	- yes
Hirsch	- yes
Jones	- yes
Borgon	- yes

Delaney - yes
Verdi-Hus - yes
Woodard - yes
Gallasch - no
Ettenson - yes

Motion passed (10 – 1).

EQUIPMENT UPGRADE – MLTV

Jim Gillis has completed an evaluation of the playback equipment for MLTV in view of the changes occurring at the Birmingham Commission room. Currently, MLTV has nine sources of content consisting of four VHS decks, two DVCPRO decks, two live feeds and a community bulletin board. When a municipal meeting runs longer than what one VHS tape will hold, it is dubbed off onto an extended play mode resulting in a loss of quality. Facilities are transitioning to DVD players, an inexpensive and accepted media that is higher quality than VHS.

Gillis outlined the basic components that the Board may want to consider to improve playback capabilities and upgrade meetings covered by MLTV by using a DVD format. He noted that the four VHS machines are starting to age and will be in need of replacement in the coming months. Gillis' goal is to upgrade the look of the channel, improve quality, and achieve a more user-friendly format.

The Board authorized Gillis to go out for bids on the equipment outlined in his written report. Gillis expects to have bids ready for review at the next Board meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PEG Committee

The PEG Committee did not meet in the last month.

Cable Action Committee

Hirsch reviewed questions raised at last month's meeting. At the request of the Board, Comcast provided members with copies of the quarterly subscriber complaint log for 2004. The Franchise Agreement requires that the Board receive complaint logs every quarter. Hirsch asked if Comcast can be expected to deliver future logs to the Board on a regular basis.

Hagaman remarked that she cross-referenced the report from Comcast and found that 99% of the complaints listed on the log came directly through the Cable Board. She questioned whether there are other complaints received by Comcast that are not being recorded in this report. Her concern is that Comcast records a complaint as a request for service.

Beller responded that she is not clear on the content of what had been delivered to the Board by the previous Comcast representative. Hagaman suggested that she and Beller work together on the content and timing of the report. There is a need to clarify a request for service versus a complaint about the service. Ettenson suggested categorizing

complaints into major categories, which would be helpful in terms of analyzing where problems occur.

Hirsch stated that Comcast has informed the Board that it will comply with the new Identity Theft Law, which prohibits requiring personal identifying information to confirm a customer's identity. Comcast was asked to inform the Board as to the action it will be taking to conform to this law as well as what instructions will be given to Comcast employees on this subject.

Beller responded that it is the responsibility of Comcast as a corporation doing business in the State of Michigan to adhere to new laws and to properly train its employees. As with any important law or policy change, Comcast holds training sessions. Requesting a Social Security number will no longer be a requirement for a change of service. Beller was asked to advise the Board on what information will be requested for a change of service.

Hirsch stated that Comcast has followed up on a request to provide Board members with an organization chart. Beller reviewed the Comcast Michigan Region Organization Chart with the Board.

Hirsch asked Beller if Comcast has given any thought to running a complete programming guide on one of the BACB access channels. This was suggested as an alternative to the limited display featured on the TV Guide Channel. Hirsch questioned whether there are any regulatory issues that would prohibit this. Attorney Salhaney will look into the legal aspects and report back to the Board.

Hirsch commented that Board members are in receipt of an article about an audit of Comcast Corporation's national rate filing. The audit indicated that Comcast overcharged in a number of regulated categories in 2004. Comcast has denied those allegations and indicated that it would respond to appropriate local authorities by mid February. Hirsch asked that the Board be provided with a copy of that response in time for review at next month's meeting.

Hirsch added that it would also be useful to have information on this area's comparative costs for those seven categories: remotes, basic set top, addressable/digital box, HDTV box, unwired installation, pre-wired installation, and hourly service charge.

COMCAST RELATED TOPICS

Subscriber Complaints

A complaint was held over from last month regarding intermittent problems with cable reception. This is a case where Comcast was not able to find the problem and tried to contact the subscriber, who did not return Comcast's calls. Hagaman appealed to subscribers to return calls to Comcast in order to resolve problems. It was noted that the subscriber in Complaint #05-02 was given the on-call cellular phone number for assistance so that Comcast could get someone out there to observe the problem while it was occurring.

Monthly Subscriber Statistics

There were no comments on the Comcast system statistics for January.

Other Issues

Beller stated that Comcast nationally announced its digital voice products. The Board will hear more over the coming months as to how that product will be rolled out locally.

Beller highlighted Comcast activities in the community: 1) Being a major sponsor for the Birmingham Bloomfield Coalition Summit on February 4, 2005; 2) American Heart Association support for the month of February; 3) Black History Month movie premiers and events throughout southeast Michigan during February, and 4) Comcast volunteers will be supporting the February 27th Birmingham Bloomfield Symphony event.

The Comcast Call Center Monthly Statistics were reviewed by the Board. Comcast did not meet the 90% requirement for answering calls within 30 seconds in six of the 12 months on 2004. Hagaman asked for another column in the report entitled “Quarterly Average”. Questions on the report were addressed by Beller.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Hagaman and Treasurer Delaney are working on a 2005/06 Cable Board budget for presentation to the Board at its March meeting. One of the line items in that budget will be the NATOA (National Association of Telecommunications Officials and Advisors) conference. Last year, the Board decided to send two members in addition to the Executive Director to the Annual NATOA Conference. Hagaman asked members to notify the chair or the Director if they are interested in attending this informative conference from September 22-25 in Washington, D.C. Reservations should be made in early July.

Hagaman updated the Board on the Granicus proposal for web streaming municipal meetings. The discussion centered around a grant being in place for all of the communities that are interested in web streaming. There was a meeting held with municipal clerks and representatives from the consortium communities directly following last month’s web streaming presentation to the Board. It was anticipated that a proposal would be generated from Granicus to Beverly Hills. An issue has since surfaced that will require a determination as to whether web streaming is feasible given the Internet service that Beverly Hills has through the County.

MLTV/PA 18 REPORT

Gillis stated that Bloomfield Community Television covered several annual functions during February including the annual dog show at Berkshire School. A Birmingham Historical Society program was filmed on the topic of preserving historic homes, with the final project ready for a March playback.

Public access program numbers remain consistent. There is more work being done by public access users in the Birmingham area communities. BCTV held two volunteer workshops for camera training on January 25th and received 29 responses with nine people already returning to assist on productions.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

BOARD COMMENTS

Delaney related that the amount approved by the Board for Birmingham cable broadcasting equipment is a budgeted amount.

Delaney requested information on whether Comcast continues to charge non-cable television subscribers more for high-speed Internet service. Beller responded that cable subscribers receive a discount on high-speed Internet service. The cost is \$42.95/month for a Comcast cable subscriber and \$54.99/month for non-cable subscribers.

Delaney was interested in knowing the number of customers who are paying the higher rate. He has a problem with people who are paying more for the same service. Borgon asked if people receive additional discounts if they use Comcast telephone service.

Beller remarked that high speed Internet is not a service that is overseen by the Cable Board.

Ettenson commented that there was an announcement yesterday that CMS Energy is experimenting with offering high-speed Internet over electrical power lines in trial areas of Mid-Michigan beginning in June. There may be alternatives for high speed Internet on the horizon.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Thomas Johnson on Gates Road in Beverly Hills expressed his concern about the lack of competition for cable television and Internet service in the area. He knows of retired people who are customers of Wide Open West and are paying half as much as he pays for cable television and Internet services from Comcast.

Mr. Johnson was informed that the Cable Board has asked Wide Open West to extend its service into the Birmingham area, but the company does not want to invest in expanding its infrastructure into the consortium communities at this time.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.