

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

Absent: Correa, Frishman - Birmingham
Delaney – Beverly Hills

Also Present: Hanson - Executive Director
Salhaney - Attorney for Cable Board
Martinico - Director of Technology, Birmingham Schools
Helwig - Bloomfield Community Television representative
Valentine – Birmingham Staff Liaison
Beller and Wack - Comcast representatives

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

A correction was made to indicate that the May 18, 2005 meeting was adjourned at 9:29 a.m.

Motion by Woodard, second by Ettenson, that the minutes of a Birmingham Area Cable Board meeting held on Wednesday, May 18, 2005 be approved as amended.

Motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PEG Committee

Committee chair Fredrick reported that the PEG Programming Committee will be reviewing program content and scheduling practices of Channels 15 and 18 in the coming months with the aim of making them as viewer friendly as possible to increase viewing levels. A challenge will be to develop a clear identity for each channel. The Committee is working with Bloomfield Community Television to avoid confusing BACB municipality programming on Channel 15 with Bloomfield's Channel 15. Comcast will be asked to re-title the TV Guide listing for our Channel 15 from Public Access Programming to a more descriptive title such as Municipality Programming.

The PEG Committee thinks that there is an opportunity to add more interest to Channel 15 by programming “city service” shows featuring officials like the Fire Chief, city planner, etc. from each of the four municipalities. Another idea to gain more public interest in our channels is to run a contest in the communities with the winner getting their own show. The PEG Programming Committee invites the ideas of all Board members to enhance our channels.

Cable Action Committee

Hirsch stated that his committee met on Wednesday, May 15 to follow up on subjects covered at the May Cable Board meeting.

Comcast was asked to provide further information on specific action taken in responding to complaints last month from Joseph Faggan and Kate Ester. The Board is concerned with whether the subscribers are satisfied.

Beller remarked that she appreciated the Cable Action Committee providing her with a list of items that will be covered in their report prior to the meeting, which gave her the opportunity to research the topics. Comcast has talked to Mr. Faggan numerous times, and he is satisfied with the resolution to his complaint. Beller explained that credits were given for some of his services and adjustments were made because of a bill error. By the time the adjustments took place due to the billing cycle, the May statement was printed and his bill balance was only \$32.74.

Regarding the complaint from Ms. Ester, once the system schedules a service appointment, it overrides further action being necessary. This is the reason why the customer did not receive a return phone call. Beller reported that the subscriber has been contacted by a technical supervisor and she is pleased with the resolution.

Hirsch reviewed that, at the last meeting, the Board heard from new Comcast Call Center Director Ken Snead, who mentioned plans to increase the training for customer service representatives (CSRs). Beller was asked if she could elaborate on these plans.

Beller stated that Snead has implemented a weekly program of one-on-one coaching sessions with CSRs. He has also created two positions, a human performance coordinator and a call trend specialist. Their responsibility is to coordinate the timing of actual communications to all three call centers. These positions also listen to calls, identify call trends, create feedback loops, and basically prepare talking points for job aids.

Hirsch asked how the training will emphasize that CSRs should not convey misleading information to callers. Beller responded that this is part of listening to the calls and identifying where inaccurate information may have been communicated. This would result in one-on-one coaching sessions so that the CSR understands what the accurate response should have been.

Hirsch asked if Comcast has a specific policy in terms of what adjustments a CSR can make in terms of credit on a subscriber's bill as compensation for customer service problems. He questioned whether the caller has to request the adjustment.

Beller stated that Comcast does not have a specific policy on levels of credits that can be authorized. They rely on CSRs and their communication with supervisors, who review the account history and verify patterns with the account before issuing a credit. The account as a whole is discussed before a CSR uses their discretion as to what type of credit is given based on the specific situation.

Comcast has recently informed analog customers who are receiving a premium channel that it is now providing premium service via digital transmission. Those customers who do not have a digital converter box in their home and are receiving a premium channel will need to either swap their analog box or purchase a digital box in order to receive transmission. The cost of the box is \$4.20/month. Analog customers who chose to upgrade their box will receive the

interactive programming guide and multiplexing. Digital cable subscribers will need a digital converter for every television to view premium channels. There is no impact on analog customers with no premium channels. Beller clarified that Comcast is not requiring an analog preferred basic customer to become a digital customer in order to receive HBO or premium channels.

Hirsch stated that the letter from Comcast explaining this change has caused some confusion. Beller responded that Comcast is working with the media on clarification of this issue. Comcast recently went through an extensive training and rebriefing session with call center people on the topic. Discussions are taking place in terms of additional communication to the customers.

Hirsch commented that subscribers have been asking why channel 69 WE continues to be listed on the analog TV guide when it is available only to digital subscribers. Beller answered that this was an error that has been corrected.

Hirsch asked Beller to comment on what's ahead in terms of Comcast's long term strategy for moving subscribers to its digital tier and whether there is a schedule or goal in place.

Beller commented on the ongoing digital television transition. She remarked that some of the changes that were put in place as a result of the 1996 Cable Act were to drive competition in multiple areas and initiate a transition to digital so that the federal government would have the ability to buy back some of the analog spectrum to be used for emergency services and for additional wireless deployment or the advancement of new technologies. In 2002, Congress asked for voluntary proactive transition in terms of migrating customers to digital with the idea of an end goal of converting to digital in 2006 or when 85% of households would have digital television sets. Beller noted that, as 2006 approaches, Comcast is not close to the 85% television penetration.

There has been legislation introduced that proposes creating a firm deadline for the digital transition by 2008. Beller stated that the cable industry has been putting practices in place and using its technology to protect the analog customer, which is why Comcast is looking at transitions in terms of digital simulcasts that would allow it to convert the digital signal into an analog feed. If a customer does not have a digital box or digital television set, they would still have the capability of seeing those channels. Beller noted that some of the current legislation does not protect analog customers. Comcast is beefing up its digital channels and deploying new products and services partly in response to competition and partly to position itself for this transition that is going on. The company will follow the lead of the FCC and Congress in terms of this change.

Beller was asked how Comcast makes decisions regarding programming changes. She responded that a variety of factors are taken into consideration including competition, customer feedback, programmer obligations and contractual commitments.

Ettenson suggested that it be communicated to subscribers that they have to request a credit for customer service issues. Comcast has indicated that they decide whether to issue credit on a case by case basis.

Decker questioned whether competition from other providers is an area of interest of the Cable Action Committee. Residents want to know if they are receiving a fair price for their service.

Hirsch stated that the Cable Board and the Cable Action Committee have made many contacts, and other cable providers have expressed no interest in coming into this area and competing with Comcast. The cost of building the necessary infrastructure is prohibitive. Hirsch does not foresee any direct cable provider competition; however, there is movement by electric companies to provide cable service and Internet service.

Borgon noted that there are neighboring communities that have both Comcast and Wide Open West (WOW) cable service. The price difference between the alternate service and what this consortium is paying for Comcast is not more than \$2 apart.

COMCAST RELATED TOPICS

Subscriber Complaints

Borgon remarked that complaint #05-63 concerns a subscribers who cannot record meetings on Channel 15 because they are not listed in the Comcast program guide.

Beller stated that Comcast does not control the scheduling of Channel 15. Programming varies and the times are not identified. The schedule is sent to TV Guide under the general category of Government Channel.

Borgon stated that BCTV prepares a program listing on a timely basis. He asked if the listing could be sent to TV Guide to use in the program guide. Beller will research this and determine the options.

Hanson reported that there were 14 complaints received this month. The overriding complaint from subscribers concerned the rate increase in combination with a reduction in services. Hanson would be interested in visiting the Franchise Agreement with the Board's attorney to review items with respect to reduction in services. He would like to understand where some of the complaints fall in terms of the requirements of the Franchise Agreement.

Hanson remarked that consumers feel helpless and want to know why cable rates are increasing. He suggested that it be the task of the Board to explain why rates are going up and to provide some comparisons of cable services throughout the nation.

Ettenson stated that the answer from Comcast has always been that the customer should look at what the company is doing for the subscribers in terms of improvements and adding services. The question from subscribers is whether they still have to pay for that service if they are not using it. The answer is partially yes. Ettenson thinks that the constant increase in service led by the digital tier is the answer to that even though it may not satisfy the subscriber.

Borgon mentioned that two-thirds of this consortium's subscribers are analog customers. It appears that all that Comcast is doing for the analog tier is taking away stations.

Woodard asked for a follow up on Complaint #52, a violation on a service call. Beller reported that a credit was issued to that customer.

Monthly Subscriber Statistics

Questions and comments on the Comcast system statistics for April and May were addressed by Beller.

Other Issues

Complaint Log - Members related that the customer complaint log prepared and submitted by Beller does not include the information requested by the Board and required by the Franchise Agreement. There followed a lengthy discussion on what information this report should contain. The Board is asking for subscriber complaints received by Comcast in addition to the complaints that come through the Cable Board office. A complaint log dated March of 2002 from Tim Currier's files will be copied for Beller to assist her in preparation of the next report.

Attorney Salhaney referred to the sections of the Cable Ordinance and Franchise Agreement that specify the basic information to be included in the complaint log. The Consumer Protection Ordinance language provides the definition of a complaint. There was discussion among Board members as to exactly what constitutes a complaint.

The Board asked that Comcast submit the second quarter report in compliance with the Franchise Agreement for review at the July meeting.

Technical Operations - Area Director of Technical Operations Jeff Wack was present to talk about what is going on with the technical operations side of Comcast and answer questions from Board members. He talked about Comcast's emphasis on quality as it relates to technical operations, service calls, and installations once an order is placed at the call center. Wack reviewed a graph to explain items considered by technicians in measuring the volume of service calls and repeat service calls. Their goal is first call resolution with a high emphasis on quality. Another key metric that the technical operation crew measures itself against is the repair time to make sure that service problems are being resolved in a timely fashion.

Questions from Board members were addressed by Wack. He noted that the technical crew strives to keep the average repair time under 24 hours. Gallasch suggested that the 8% goal for repeat service calls is not high enough.

Comcast Scholarship – Comcast Leaders & Achievers Scholarship winners for the area include: Emily Mayer of Beverly Hills and Alyssa Rosenzweig of Birmingham. A recognition dinner will be held in their honor on August 2, 2005.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Hanson related that his activities during the last month have included touring the BCTV facility, the Birmingham Public Schools Media Center and Conference Center, the BPS Administrative Building and Groves and Seaholm High Schools. He was impressed at every location.

Included in the packet is a report dated June 8, 2005 from Kathy Hagan addressing an inquiry from the Board regarding a \$33,000 projected year end figure for Special Projects under the Board Expenses heading.

Hanson stated that a check was issued to Roscor Corporation for completion of payment on playback equipment received and installed by BCTV. He reported that installation of Birmingham's new production equipment is near completion.

Joe Valentine from Birmingham reported that Birmingham is about 90% complete with the cable equipment installation for the Birmingham Commission chamber upgrade. There was a significant improvement in the quality of the picture of the Monday night Commission meeting broadcast. Work is being done on some live audio issues. Web streaming will be addressed with the hope of having it operational for the June 27 City Commission meeting.

MLTV15/PA18 REPORT

There were six regular municipal meetings during the last month. Eight non-meeting MLTV-15 shows were taped, edited and aired during this time.

Training on the Birmingham system is taking place. The entire BCTV production staff will participate in the training and two or three staff members are assigned to each of the first three meetings.

The Beverly Hills meeting on June 7 and the Birmingham and Franklin meetings on June 13 will be recorded on DVD and played back on the new DVD system.

Twenty-six programs were taped and/or edited for PA 18 this period. Of special interest to the BACB area are: *Talk of the Town*, *21st Leaders* at The Community House, and *The Senior Women's Club* at The Community House. These shows are produced by BACB area producers.

Lisa Antuna will start on June 22 at which time BCTV will be back to being fully staffed.

OLD BUSINESS

Borgon commented on the annual NATOA conference this September in Washington and the importance of this particular conference in terms of the Board's lobbying efforts. PEG Chairperson Fredrick will attend this year along with Executive Director Hanson. Borgon proposed that the Cable Board Chairperson should attend. The new chairperson will be elected at the July Board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Pfeifer asked the Board to consider a funding request for Beverly Hills. Currently, Beverly Hills is connected to the Internet with OakNet through Oakland County. There have been problems with that system and consideration has been given to contracting with Comcast to provide high speed Internet service to one computer in the Village Clerk's office. The cost of the service for a municipality is almost double the cost of service for an individual homeowner. Pfeifer asked if the Board would consider providing Beverly Hills with Internet service for the Village Clerk considering that Beverly Hills manages the Cable Board's finances.

The Board discussed the request briefly and agreed to consider the request next month.

BOARD COMMENTS

Pfeifer thanked Jim Delaney for his dedicated service on the Birmingham Area Cable Board over the years. The Beverly Hills Council has made two announcements of a vacancy on the Cable Board to fill Delaney's seat. There have been no applications as of this time. Pfeifer will be sitting at the table as alternate representative to the Board until such time as the position is filled.

Borgon echoed Pfeifer's comments about Jim Delaney's fine service on the Cable Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 a.m.