

Present: Decker, Jones, Mancini, McLain - Birmingham  
Borgon, Pfeifer, Verdi-Hus, Woodard – Beverly Hills  
Gallasch – Franklin

Absent: Ettenson – Bingham Farms

Also Present: Hanson - Executive Director  
Currier - Attorney for Cable Board  
Martinico - Director of Technology, Birmingham Schools  
Antuna - Bloomfield Community Television representative  
Beller - Comcast representative  
Valentine - Birmingham staff 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 MINUTES OF APRIL 19, 2006 CABLE BOARD MEETING**

The correction was made on page 2, point #2, to replace ‘Borgon and Hanson are’ with ‘The PEG Committee is’.

Motion by Woodard, second by Pfeifer, that the minutes of a Birmingham Area Cable Board meeting held on May 17, 2006 be approved as amended.

Motion passed.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **PEG Committee**

Mancini reported that the PEG Committee met on May 17 with Tom Hanson, Bob Borgon, Fred Gallasch and himself in attendance. Future PEG meetings will be scheduled following BACB meetings held on the third Wednesday of each month. There were two major topics of discussion at the PEG meeting: 1) Increase the airing of municipal meetings by BCTV, and; 2) Begin the process of identifying local programming service issues important to the public.

Discussions with Steve Rota from BCTV regarding the Board’s request to expand the airing of municipal meetings on Channel 15 resulted in schedule changes. Mancini believes that the new schedule rotation will maximize viewership. Steve Rota was thanked for his quick response and professional solution to the scheduling issue.

The task was accomplished in the short term by using VHS decks to increase the rotation. BCTV will be initiating a request for an additional two DVD units to replace the VHS decks. Mancini noted that the Board previously authorized the purchase of two DVD decks to be used for surveillance procedures. The upcoming request for DVD decks will be designated for broadcast purposes.

Mancini reported that Tom Hanson has initiated contacts with three research companies relative to conducting a survey and analyzing data to obtain an accurate assessment of

subscribers' preferences for PEG programming with the goal of better serving our subscribers. Hanson will review the results of the request for proposals during his executive director's report. Mancini anticipates review of proposals from public access providers to begin immediately after the August BACB meeting using the results of this research as a key element.

#### **Cable Action Committee**

Jones stated that Mel Ettenson will provide any new information available on a senior tier package at the next meeting. McLain will present the committee report next month in Jones' absence.

McLain proposed approaching local businesses in the communities with regard to storing the BACB production van during the winter months. There may be a business that would work with the Board to make space and deal with insurance issues. She volunteered to follow through with this.

#### **PROCLAMATIONS FOR SUSAN FRISHMAN AND PATRICIA TARINI**

Borgon read Proclamations of Appreciation recognizing Birmingham Area Cable Board members Susan Frishman and Patricia Tarini for their distinguished service as members of the Board representing the City of Birmingham. Susan Frishman served from April, 2004 to May, 2006; Patricia Tarini served from April 2005 to May 2006. Board members signed a copy of the Proclamations, which will be forwarded to Frishman and Tarini.

#### **GRANT REQUEST – CITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

Board members are in receipt of a letter dated May 30, 2006 from Thomas Markus, Birmingham City Manager, requesting a grant from the Birmingham Area Cable Board to fund the purchase of audio equipment in order to solve an ongoing audio issue. Joe Valentine, Birmingham staff liaison, stated that this request results from the installation of new cable broadcasting equipment that was funded through the Cable Board approximately a year ago. Members of the public have indicated that it is difficult for home audiences to hear presenters when they walk away from the microphone during their presentations.

The recommended solution is to use two wireless microphones that would attach to the speaker's lapel and allow the individual to walk anywhere in the room during a presentation and still be heard on the Channel 15. In order to use this type of wireless microphone, an additional mixer and receiver would need to be added to the existing broadcasting equipment. A quote has been obtained from Roscor, the vendor that installed the broadcasting equipment, in the amount of \$1,791.

Motion by Mancini, second by Woodard, to approve the expenditure of \$1,791.00 for two wireless microphones and related equipment for use by the City of Birmingham.

Motion passed unanimously.

### **BACB ATTENDEES/ 2006 NATOA CONFERENCE**

The annual meeting of NATOA (National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors) will be held from August 22-25 in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. The 2006-07 Cable Board budget provides funding for two Board members in addition to the Executive Director to attend the annual conference. There is very important information disseminated at the NATOA meetings and knowledge to be gained from networking with other cable organizations.

Borgon indicated that he would like to be considered to represent the Board this year at the conference. The chair of the PEG Committee is generally encouraged to be part of this event; however, Bob Mancini is not able to attend the August conference. Borgon will contact Mel Ettenson about attending prior to the next meeting. McLain expressed interest and will check her schedule. Interested Board members were asked to contact Borgon.

Motion by Pfeifer, second by Mancini, to approve the expenditure to send the Executive Director of the Birmingham Area Cable Board and two Board members to be determined at the next meeting to the annual meeting of NATOA from August 22-25, 2006 in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

Motion passed unanimously.

### **COMCAST RELATED TOPICS**

#### **Subscriber Complaints**

Hanson reported that, out of 24 new and outstanding complaints, 19 have been closed out leaving only five pending complaints. An issue with intermittent loss of Channel 15 as well as other reception issues in the Townsend vicinity have been resolved. Comcast crews have been out there regularly. Questions and comments from Board members about specific complaints were addressed by Hanson and Louise Beller representing Comcast.

#### **Comcast Updates**

Beller outlined items included in her report to the Cable Board dated June 21, 2006. Topics include:

- Channel additions and realignment changes effective June 27<sup>th</sup>
- New payment method offered effective July 15<sup>th</sup>
- First quarter Call Center Statistics provided to the Board
- Comcast launches Triple Play offer for \$99 in all southeast Michigan markets
- Comcast is working with Birmingham Schools to install/relocate cable as part of their building expansion
- New content ON DEMAND available to digital customers
- Comcast free Film Series in partnership with Campus Martius on Saturdays this summer
- Comcast is a Foundation Partner with Automation Alley supporting expanded technology, jobs and community support through Oakland County and the state

### **Other Issues**

Questions from Board members were addressed by Beller. Woodard inquired about the Comcast Call Center report in terms of what constitutes an answered call. Subscriber complaints have indicated that a machine will pick up the phone when Comcast is called and a message says that the caller could wait on the line or leave an e-mail. McLain interjected that there are times when Comcast Internet service may be down and the subscriber cannot email the company.

Woodard questioned whether a call is considered answered in 30 seconds if a machine picks up the phone and tells the caller that they could leave a message due to high volume. Beller responded that this call is considered answered. It is considered unanswered if a person dials Comcast and receives a busy signal. She noted that it is described that way in the Franchise Agreement.

Woodard remarked that the Call Center report gives the impression that it is an efficient system; however, the Board hears from subscribers that report that their calls are not always answered promptly.

Beller agreed that this is a valid point and that Comcast is investing in efforts to refine this process because it will be in the company's competitive advantage to provide improved customer service. The bill payment change is designed to alleviate some of the pressure from the call center. With regard to the e-mail option, Beller stated that the response to customers is quick, and the site is monitored continually.

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

Hanson stated that four companies were contacted and three firms submitted proposals to conduct a survey of the Birmingham area consortium communities with the research objective being to obtain an accurate assessment of subscriber uses and preferences for PEG (Public, Educational, Government) programming on channels 15 and 18. Hanson outlined the overall research objectives:

- Map current subscriber behaviors (time of day, frequency of access, most likely time to watch);
- Measure awareness and accessing of current programming of channels 15 and 18;
- Identify preferred types of programming prioritized by importance to the subscriber;
- Identify future desires relative to programming for channels 18 and 15;
- Profile subscribers for targeted outreach (age, number of viewers in household, type of household, education level).

Three companies responded – RDA Group, Intellitrends, and Public Sector Consultants. Cost estimates range from a low bid of \$14,600 for a mail survey to \$33,000. Hanson indicated that each company is highly qualified to accomplish this project. Although informed that the Board anticipates conducting a mail survey, each company recommended doing a telephone survey as the best way to go in terms of accuracy and time frame for completion. The companies contacted also suggested utilizing a link to their website to supplement either approach.

A telephone survey would be accurate and take less than four weeks to complete but carry a higher cost. Mail surveys may take four to six weeks, and the results may be less predictable though statistically sound. Hanson suggested that the Board discuss the methodology for the survey. There followed a lengthy discussion on the pros and cons of mailing versus phone surveys. Factors considered were efficiency and time savings, cost, response rates, accuracy, types and number of questions.

Members expressed concern with the number of people on “do not call” lists and general resistance to telephone surveys or to being interrupted. It was suggested that people may want to talk about competition issues and recent telecommunications legislation rather than PEG access channels, which could skew the sample. The sense of the Board was that they would receive more responses and opinions from a mail survey. It was mentioned that the draft survey should be abbreviated. The point was made that the mailing would be informational as much as a survey for the reason that a number of Comcast subscribers may not know about the PEG access channels.

It was suggested that information on the upcoming survey be posted on the BACB website. Hanson mentioned that there will be a link placed on the Board’s web site that connects to the research company’s web site. There is a cost savings to the Board when respondents pursue that route.

Pfeifer shared Beverly Hills’ experiences with a library phone survey, library mail survey and a more recent mail survey conducted by its Strategic Planning Committee. She will provide the PEG Committee with the name of the individual and company that did the mailing and compiled statistics for most recent village-wide survey, which had a 28% response rate.

Borgon stated that the Cable Board is looking for a recommendation from the PEG Committee on the methodology and the supplier before taking action to authorize expenditure of funds to conduct a survey. He proposed that the Board defer action on this item until the next meeting following further discussion and recommendation from the PEG Committee.

Board members discussed a mail versus phone survey and how the draft survey could be condensed. In lieu of giving specific direction to the PEG Committee on how to proceed, Borgon suggested allowing Hanson and the Committee to have further discussions with the research companies on survey options and costs and return next month with a recommendation and a revised questionnaire. Mancini proposed forwarding a modified survey to members in the next couple of weeks for their input.

#### Legislative Update

Hanson provided the Board with an update on what is occurring on the State and Federal levels in terms of pending telecommunications legislation with respect to creating competition in the cable provider market.

He read a communication from NATOA: On June 8<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. House of Representatives, by a vote of 321-101 passed H.R. 5252, the Communications Opportunity, Promotion and Enhancement Act of 2006 (COPE). In passing this legislation, the House has chosen to support a bill that will destroy local control of telecommunications in our communities, strip local government budgets that support communications services used by police, fire, schools, community media centers and other local government services. The legislation if finally adopted will have a devastating impact on local communities and public interest issues in telecommunications policy.

Similar legislation is under consideration in the Senate in the form of S. 2686. Neither of these pieces of legislation will serve the public interest of real video choice or of rapid deployment of broadband services at reasonable rates to everyone.

In response to an inquiry, Hanson commented on the a la Carte bill introduced by U.S. Senator John McCain, or “Consumers Having Options in Cable Entertainment (CHOICE) Act of 2006”.

Hanson summarized the bottom line of all the bills that people may be hearing about: Despite the phone company rhetoric that the change in law will provide consumers with real choice, better services, and lower prices – there is no evidence for any of these claims. Years of consumer protection and rules regulating the communications industry will be either set back or summarily dismissed.

Hanson emphasized that, since its inception, the BACB has pushed for fair consumer pricing and has consistently petitioned Congress to act against rising cable rates. This Cable Board has repeatedly extended its invitation to other companies like Wide Open West to enter the area and establish a competitive presence. The Cable Board supports competition and supports the bi-partisan efforts in Lansing and in Washington to bring competition into the area.

McLain remarked that she became a member of the Board to encourage competition but that you have to know what the trade-offs are. If the subscribers do not have a partnership or a way to resolve disputes with a competitive company, they are no further ahead.

Attorney Tim Currier commented on a recent discussion he had with an executive from AT&T at which time Currier indicated that AT&T could come into the Birmingham area and compete at any time if they agreed to serve all of the communities and match the franchise held by Comcast. He informed this individual that a memorandum of understanding is not acceptable because the Michigan Constitution requires a franchise agreement.

Currier related that some of the communities his firm represents have experienced a request for permits to install a device called a vrad box, which is a digital relay system for digital communications for Internet, telephone, Internet protocol television, and cable television. AT&T is quietly installing these vrad boxes in select, dense communities in southeast Oakland County such as Pleasant Ridge, Huntington Woods and Royal Oak. There have been no requests in the BACB area to his knowledge.

Currier reviewed that, when Americast came into the area a number of years ago, its proposal was to service Birmingham and possibly Beverly Hills, excluding Franklin and Bingham Farms. The unanimous response from the BACB was that there must be universal service for all or none of the consortium communities. Currier believes that this should remain the policy of the Board with respect to AT&T coming into the area.

Currier described the Wireless Oakland Program. The concept is to wire the entire County with basic, wireless Internet capability.

Borgon stated that the Board has completed its fourth and final Franklin Money Market wire transfer to MBS Securities making it approximately \$400,000 now that is being invested on behalf of the PEG account. Treasurer John Decker mentioned that representatives of MBS Securities will meet with members of the Board who are interested in visiting their facility and learning more about the company.

### **MLTV15/ PA18 REPORT**

Lisa Antuna from BCTV reported that there were five regular municipal meetings taped for channel 15 in the last month, three *Eye on Oakland* programs, and the Beverly Hills Memorial Day parade. She thanked Bob Borgon and Andy Aubrey for hosting the event. A special Beverly Hills Council meeting will be taped on Thursday, June 29.

Antuna stated that Birmingham, Beverly Hills and Franklin will routinely receive a DVD of each meeting taped. BCTV staff would like to extend best wishes to Stan Pasieka upon his retirement as Assistant to the Manager in Beverly Hills.

PA Channel 18 has taped 34 shows in the last month, thirteen from BACB producers. The concert season has begun, and BCTV will be taping the events. Steve Rota will be working with the Birmingham Fire Department on a CERT (Citizen Emergency Response Team) program. It is a citizen volunteer program that trains people to help emergency response personnel in the times of emergencies.

Antuna related that repairs to the production van are 90% complete. Staff has noticed a leak that allows water to seep in between the aluminum side of the truck and the interior, which results in a moldy smell inside the truck. BCTV is working with the Bloomfield Township Department of Public Services to address this issue. The Board will be notified of necessary repairs related to the mold issue.

BCTV has received a quote for \$537 for three additional DVD units and the DVD controllers for a total of seven DVD decks for municipal meeting playback. The three DVD units will replace VHS decks. Two more quotes will be requested before BCTV submits a proposal and seeks Board authorization to purchase this equipment at next month's meeting.

BCTV has been meeting with Comcast staff on a regular basis to discuss channel M15 problems that are being experienced on an analog and digital end. A written report will be prepared to outline issues that are occurring. The next volunteer workshops are scheduled for Tuesday, July 11 at 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Hanson informed Antuna of a new public service announcement produced by NATOA and available on DVD. It reflects the latest telecommunications issues and interviews. He will provide the DVD to BCTV for airing.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Borgon commented that it was indicated at the last meeting that notice of open seats on municipal boards and committees would be placed on the municipal bulletin board.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None

**BOARD COMMENTS**

Borgon mentioned that election of officers will be an agenda item for next month's meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.