

Barnstable Cable Committee Meeting

June 7, 2013 – 2:30PM

Selectmen's Meeting Room

Barnstable Town Hall

Attending: Nancy Richard, Chair; Suzanne Reid, Robert Dwyer, Thomas Terry, Jr, Committee Members; Ann Canedy, Town Council Liaison to the Committee; Tom Lynch, Barnstable Town Manager; Mary O'Keefee, Gov't Affairs Officer, Comcast; Sarah Colvin, Dan Wood, Mark Milne, Town of Barnstable/Government Access; Dustin Devlin, Educational Access; Terry Duenas, Linda Sandhu, Cape Media Center

Meeting called to order at 2:32PM by chair Nancy Richard

Richard welcomed the new members of the committee and ask Mr. Lynch to give the committee an overview of their responsibilities.

Tom Lynch: Committee responsibilities - charged to negotiate cable contract, address complaints about television service through Comcast, receive reports from the various channel operations, and give suggestions to the town to increase and/or refine government programming. The town has been aggressive with ways to communicate with citizens - Weekly e-news, Bulletins, CBB. TV programming: examples: 1 hour daily show, Barnstable This Morning (Sarah); Barnstable Today - 10 minute daily recap government meetings and other town topics. Town hall has a relationship with the Media Center as Sarah Colvin sits on that board. Other communication to citizens is done through Barnstable iForum.

Nancy Richard: Would you say the committee's responsibilities include gathering info about the way the funding is being spent?

Tom Lynch: The town has contracted with a firm to assist to review of administrative code. Will be taking a look at all of the boards and commissions to solidify their duties.

Government Access Report:

Mark Milne, the town's Finance Director gave a financial report of the town's G channel operations. The budget is available on town's website with a projection of 5 years on page 132. The document can be downloaded. Mr. Milne acknowledged that there are restrictions on what money can be used for.

Currently, they have four full-time staff for TV programming. The remainder of the budget is used for operations expenses and equipment replacement. From the approximately \$680,000 per year that the town received from cable funding in 2012-13, the schools receive funding for 1 1/2 people for Channel 22 programming as well. The town is projecting a fund balance of \$2M at end of this fiscal year after the fiber optic network is done. \$1M of this money will be set aside to build a reserve to insure the optic network, leaving \$1M for a reserve fund for the Government Access operations. The town expects to generate another \$700K per year after this depending

on cable subscribership. This income will cover staff, operational expenses and capital to fund existing G and E programs. The media center can apply for some of this funding as well, up to .25% depending on reporting benchmarks. This year, they can apply for up to \$47,850.

Comcast's Report

Mary O'Keeffe covers 32 communities as a liaison between the towns and Comcast. She also sends out the franchise checks. She outlined some of the new community service programs Comcast is involved in.

Two years ago, Comcast launched a program called Internet Essentials that works through the school lunch program. This is for low-income families, and includes home schooled and other types of students. The Arts Foundation of Cape Cod hosted a competition for a T-shirt design for the program, and designed the brochure, which she handed out to the committee. Included in the program are deeply discounted netbooks for the families digital literacy training.

Another new service is Business Broadband service, which has long been asked for here in town. This helps Comcast be competitive, and allows people to get the bandwidth they need and want when they work at home. Comcast also has a program in Barnstable called Exfinity Home,, which is a home security system.

Nancy Richard: What effect do these services have on the cable franchise, and the franchise fees the town gets, and the scope of this committee?

Mary O'Keeffe: None as the franchise includes only cable TV.

Nancy Richard: Have the subscriber rates dropped for TV in the past year?
What types of complaints have you gotten regarding TV service?
Where can we get the stats on response times for consumer complaints for Barnstable?

Mary O'Keeffe: Will get these answers and report them back to the committee. Some of the answers are on the Form 500, which should have arrived at the town hall in April this year. Nancy Richard will ask for a copy from town.

Ms. O'Keeffe also told the committee that the service Center on Enterprise Road is the busiest office on the Cape. Services are now all digital with no more analog. Soon, every TV will need a converter box to unencrypt channels. Comcast provides up to 3 adaptors are provided at no cost.

Dustin Devlin: Has Comcast looked into IP TV as a solution to providing cable TV service schools and other large government buildings since getting converter boxes for every TV is not feasible in these situations?

Mary O'Keefe: Comcast is still doing traditional TV. No answers about this yet.

Dustin Devlin: It is hard to bring service to a large number of TVs in a public building. It would be good for Comcast to help them come up with a solution to this.

Ann Canedy: Can every business in town now hook up to cable? Is this in the current contract? Are there any blackout areas?

Mary O'Keeffe: Service is provided on a case-by-case basis on the residential side. Comcast wants to know if a development is going in so they can install the wires. When someone lives on the edge of the cable plant, it can cost the subscriber money to install it if there's no one else living nearby. Regarding the situation on Plant Road, part of the delay was the "make ready" for the poles. It took a year with NStar setting the poles. It is now done. Comcast just follows along. Mary was personally involved on that, and helped get it done. Ann thanked her.

Dan Wood, the town's IT director talked about the banked franchise fees and building the town's iNet, which took about 7 years. After much back and forth with NStar to get the space, the town paid for space on the poles. In less than a year, they are 99% complete. All town and school buildings are on the fiber. Only site not hooked in is the Hyannis Fire Department, which had a few issues, but it's being worked on. Mr. Wood said the town would use the fiber network for video as soon as equipment is purchased.

Nancy Richard: Will this be transmitted into the G channel?

Dan Wood: Yes, possibility by end of year or beginning of next year. They will be purchasing a mobile studio to help with this process, along with other equipment.

Bob Dwyer: What is purpose of mobile studio?

Sarah Colvin: We can set up multi camera shoots and send programming out over channel 18 live.

Ann Canedy: Do you foresee this being used to cover village events?

Sarah Colvin: Possibly, although coverage of these events is not so much a byproduct of fiber, but of that mobile studio. Programs can be recorded and sent out later on. Having additional staff will help as well.

Educational Access Report:

Dustin Devlin did not prepare a written report or bring budget figures for the committee, but he wanted to make known to the committee the uniqueness of the school program. Unlike many Educational Access stations in other towns, Barnstable's school channel is not managed by the public access station or the government station, but is managed completely by the school. Primary objective is to get more children involved. They are trying to expand the program beyond the 8-12 grade kids down to 6 & 7th grade, actually having the children produce content for the channel. 6-7th will be doing a daily show

next year. The department is moving the old standard definition equipment over to the Intermediate School over the summer.

Nancy Richard: Is the charter school involved in the program?

Dustin Devlin: No.

Nancy Richard: Do you have summer programs for kids, like a camp?

Dustin Devlin: Tried it out but teachers have too much on their plates. They do have an intern-based program with alumnae who will further their education by working with current HS students on productions. Studio is open all summer for jam sessions.

Nancy Richard: What percentage of funding for the program that comes from cable funding and how much come from the school budget? Also, what is the budget for the school program coming up next year, and what was it last year?

Dustin Devlin: Need to get that info from Mark Gareth (?), the finance director.

Nancy Richard: How much staff currently in the program?

Dustin Devlin: Now they have two full-time people, Dustin, the TV Manager, and a Coordinator/Assistant who does the programming and preproduction, Noreen Jones.

Tom Lynch: Does your training integrate with the other curriculum at the HS?

Dustin Devlin: Curriculum is trying to do this, but there is no core frame for it. They were reluctant to hire a teacher to carry through the Ch 22 curriculum. They have since developed a pathway called creative technology. Digital Media Arts (8-9th grade) leads to a pathway in that field.

Ann Canedy: We would urge the school to develop benchmarks to figure out how the programs are going, and what your reportable goals are at the end of each year. Asked Dustin to look at last year's figures and compares this year's end of year (July 1).

Ann Canedy: Who do you report to?

Dustin Devlin: I am a district employee, not a department employee. Adam Farrell should be able to get the information for you.

Bob Dwyer: Sturgis Charter School is NOT private, so the question is should we think about involving them in some way? Please keep it in back of your mind.

Dustin Devlin: Yes. Channel 22 is hosting some of the college's programming as well.

Public Access Programming

Terry Duenas, Executive Director of the Media Center presented a report of activities. They are web streaming Barnstable Today on the public access channel. They moved to a new location on Shad Hole Road in Dennisport (2 miles from old location). CCRT goes there.

Nancy Richard asked several housekeeping questions related to the agreement between the Media center and the town that were addressed.

Nancy Richard: What is the percentage of programs produced by Barnstable residents? And what percentage of your funding comes from Barnstable vs. other towns?

Terry Duenas: 35% of our funding comes from Barnstable.

Nancy Richard asked for figures from last year at this time vs. today to use as benchmarks.

Linda Sandhu reported the channel number changed last year from 17 to 99 without any calls or major problems. She credits everyone at the table for making this happen in a positive way.

Nancy Richard: In Section 3 of the contract the access center agrees to provide a regular news program. How is this being addressed?

Linda Sandhu: Re the news, reports back to them indicate that the cape is inundated with news. People have had enough. The media center has reached out the news vendors and trained them in video. This is the avenue they have pursued. This has been a lot of fun, and they appreciate this.

Terry Duenas: We are encouraging groups and orgs to have press conferences at C3TV studio.

Ann Canedy said she finds it disturbing that the Media Center thinks we have too much news on the Cape. She doesn't agree with this. Her criticism of Barnstable News on the G channel is that it is one-sided, a projection of the administration to the public about Barnstable. There are other sides to the story. Some people feel the show is "all about Hyannis."

Terry Duenas: We started a news show with volunteer News reporters, but didn't have an adequate staff to cover 5 towns completely. Linda does a program, which does an analysis of events or activities.

Thomas Terry: Do you have anything on how to use Skype for people who are looking for jobs?

Terry Duenas: There are very few organizations that we have not reached out to. We also have computer labs, and you are welcome to come in and learn how to use Skype there.

Dustin Devlin: Is it the philosophy to give access to the general public to equipment that is supposed to be for producing video?

Terry Duenas: We used to hide that from Mary, but Comcast does know that our mission is building community through media. We might not always be able to help them, but we try.

New Business:

Ann Canedy asked Tom Lynch if he would be including the committees in the discussion of the reorganization of committees in the new town code. Mr. Lynch said the town has not had that discussion yet, but will be talking about this very soon. The cable committee doesn't need to meet every month, at least not until we get closer to the renewal of the cable contract. Nancy Richard would like to have set quarterly meetings. However, since the committee has just gotten the report and request from the Media Center for their .25% funding grant from the town, they will be meeting again next month. Ms Richard asked Terry Duenas to provide his report as soon as possible, in digital format, so she can send it out to the committee well in advance of the next meeting. This will give them time to read it and be ready to make a recommendation to the town. She also requested that he find the document that allows for the .25% provision as she was unable to locate it in the agreement between the town and the Media Center, and does not remember it being in the cable contract.

The next meeting will be held on July 12 at 2:30PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50PM