

FIVE TOWN CABLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Representing the Towns of Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, Sheffield and Stockbridge
Minutes
December 13, 2022
Lee Town Hall, Lee, MA

MEETING WAS HELD IN PERSON FOLLOWING COVID PROTOCOLS

Members Present: Linda Miller – Lenox
Tom Hatch – Great Barrington
Rene Wood – Sheffield
Anita Schwerner – Stockbridge
Dennis Arseneau – Lenox
Dan Miller – Great Barrington

Others Present: John Maher – Charter

6:31pm Linda Miller called the meeting to order.
Quorum met with representatives from 4 towns, Lenox, Great Barrington, Sheffield and Stockbridge.

MINUTES: Motion made by Rene Wood to dispense with the reading of the minutes of September 13, 2022.
Seconded by Tom Hatch.
Motion carried unanimously.

SPECTRUM REPORT

- John Maher from Spectrum presented the report.
- Dennis Arseneau asked who would be in the upcoming negotiation meetings. John Maher indicated that their outside counsel, Dan Reing, would be there and others from Charter, but he was unsure of who at this time.
- Request was discussed about having a Zoom meeting with the people out east and John Maher indicated that would be preferable to Charter.
- Linda Miller said that an official notice will be sent with date and time.
- John Maher reported that he continues to ask the committee to forward complaints on a regular basis instead of waiting until our quarterly meetings so that it can be handled in a timely manner.
- Linda Miller stated that there is a subscriber that has submitted multiple complaints, however, he wanted the committee to pass along that the customer service people and service techs at Spectrum are wonderful.
 - John Maher said thank you and it is always nice to receive compliments instead of complaints.
- Linda Miller said that there are still issues with the synchronicity between audio and video. This is a continuing complaint amongst subscribers and no solutions.
 - Rene Wood said that she does not have this issue in Sheffield, and she has not received complaints about it.
 - Dennis Arseneau suggested that customers take a video of the issue, and we can send to Spectrum.
- Dan Miller brought up that the Education Public Access channels are not on the Spectrum app.
 - Dennis Arseneau said that this is part of our contract negotiations.

CTSB REPORT:

- Rich Frederick was unable to be present the report in person and asked that Linda Miller read the CTSB report as he submitted. Linda Miller read the report.
- Fall Festival of Shakespeare
 - Huge success this year. We streamed 11 schools' performances over 4 days.
 - Staff reported that people were watching from Key West, Colorado, California and even Europe.
- Spectrum Visit
 - Spectrum News 1 Engineering Manager Scott Mason, along with John Maher and Linda Miller visited the CTSB studio on November 3rd.
 - The site visit was to determine the current conditions of CTSB broadcast hardware, software, lighting, cameras and tri pods.
 - Scott was able to witness our brand-new Cablecast servers and the many upgrades we have completed in the past two years, along with items in need of replacement.
 - Scott is very interested in what he saw at our facility.
- What's New at CTSB
 - Solo Creatives is a new show produced by our board member Sherry Steiner which gives local artist and musicians a half hour in our studio to share their talents.
 - We currently have 6 interns from Berkshire CIP. We are very proud to teach them all about broadcasting and video production.
 - We received a check for \$500 from The Berkshire Taconic Foundation along with a wall display of memorabilia in recognition for our live coverage of the unveiling of the Elizabeth Freeman statue in Sheffield.

Memberships and CTSB Programs

- The current membership is 152 members.
- We encourage anyone interested in becoming a member or would like a tour of our studio to please stop by or call us at 413-243-8211.

LICENSE RENEWAL

- Dennis Arseneau presented a power point slide show laying out where we are at in the renewal process.
- We are currently in Phase 2 of the process.
- Rene Wood said that it is very important for everyone on our committee review the Ascertainment Report.
- Rene also is making another request that the 5 towns put the report on their websites.
- Rene Wood brought up a call she received from an older resident concerned about what she is paying for her cable subscription.
 - She currently pays \$155.00, and she continually sees advertisements for \$45.00 for new customers. She feels this is customer discrimination.
 - She also is charged for sports channels, and she does not watch sports, but it's part of the bundle she has.
 - This brings us back to our "a la carte" services in which 95% of the subscribers that responded to our survey would like to see happen.
- Rene Wood said there is a very interesting grant that was recently announced, the MBI Digital Equity Grant and Sheffield has already submitted for it.
- MBI (Massachusetts Broadband Institute) says there is tons of money coming into the state from infrastructure and MBI has been focused on underserved, and non-served communities and is now looking at the digital equities and they have a municipal digital equity planning grant application.

- Committee members should take it to your town administrator to apply for this free grant.
- They are looking at 3 things:
 - Access includes appropriate speeds for what your needs are.
 - Device access - have the devices so that you can possibly get your bill down and having someone help you with that.
 - Training on how to use the digital tools and access that you have.
- This grant allows a consultant to come in and BRPC is one of the consultants available.
- A plan will be developed, which will also involve Charter in terms of providing awareness of the program out there.
- MBI has both their own maps, as well as federal government maps, which show connectivity down to the residential level which will help us when we negotiate the build outs. Hopefully maps will be available from Mark Malloy from BRPC.

CITIZEN SPEAK

- None.

NEW BUSINESS

- Dennis Arseneau said that we need to come to a solution for posting public notices, agendas, our Ascertainment reports, etc. on their websites.
- Each town should have a link for the Five Town Cable Advisory Committee that people can click on and find our minutes, pertinent documents, notices, agendas, CTSB reports, etc.
- Also discussed were the public documents with record retention – where do the documents from this meeting go? These have to be kept in a town. They need to be in the possession of one of the towns.
 - Rene Wood volunteered to keep the agenda, minutes, and other documentation on the negotiation sessions in Sheffield. All agenda and minutes will continue to be sent to each of the 5 Town Clerks.
- Linda Miller will ask Chris Ketchen if we could keep these in Lenox.
- Every document should be kept in each town. If someone walks into the town hall people should be able to access any of our documents.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Additional Committee members needed.
 - 1 in Great Barrington; 3 in Lee; 1 in Lenox and 2 in Sheffield needed.
- Contact Linda Miller if interested at lzmiller-5towncac@roadrunner.com, or contact your town administrator.
- Volunteers are always needed at CTSB.

NEXT MEETING DATE – Tuesday, March 14, 2023, in Great Barrington.

Motion made to adjourn by Rene Wood, seconded by Tom Hatch.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Curtin

Recording Secretary