

FIVE TOWN CABLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Representing the Towns of Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, Sheffield and Stockbridge
Minutes
December 11, 2018
6:30pm
Lee Town Hall
32 Main Street
Lee, MA 01238

Members Present: Linda Miller –Lenox
Steven Moritz – Lee
Jim Brown – Great Barrington
Tom Hatch – Great Barrington
Michael Kernan – Great Barrington
Rene Wood - Sheffield

Others Present: Melinda Kinney - Charter
John Fogarty – Charter
George Doin - Charter
Leo Mahoney – CTSB
Denise Curtin – Recording Secretary
Dick Lindsay - Press
Jeff Diamond – Richmond resident
Ed Fechner – Richmond resident
Chris Ketchen – Chief Administrative Officer, Lee and Lenox

6:32pm Linda Miller called the meeting to order.

MINUTES: Rene Wood moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes of September 11, 2018.
Motion was seconded by Steve Moritz and Tom Hatch.
Rene Wood made a motion to accept the minutes as submitted. Motion was seconded and passed with one member abstaining from vote.

NEW MEMBER: Michael Kernan is a new member from Great Barrington.

CTSB REPORT:

Leo Mahoney was present to give the report.

- FCC decision
 - FCC is considering ending the 5% requirement that cable companies pay for Community Television.
 - If this decision passes it will be devastating to all communities, not just ours.
 - CTSB has decided to postpone their January 1st budget for 2 months pending the outcome of the FCC decision.
 - There will be no ramifications to push the budget out as they have enough carryover. There are no plans for any layoffs, or reduction in production.

- Linda Miller asked that as a committee we create a resolution and send to the Massachusetts Attorney General's office. If this decision passes it would be nullifying our contract with Charter.
- Rene Wood said that the Sheffield Board of Selectmen and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission have already sent letters. The Sheffield board requested that smaller communities be exempt from this decision.
- Rene Wood made a motion, and seconded by Steve Moritz, that on behalf of the committee we send a letter, instead of a resolution alerting the AG the impact that this decision will have on the Berkshires. All members agreed.
- The committee encourages you as subscribers to send your concerns to:
 - FCC
455 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20544
Attn: Chairman PAI
- This address is also posted on the CTSB website.
- Fall Festival of Shakespeare
 - CTSB has been involved with this production for 28 years.
 - There were no technical issues.
 - DVD and streaming sales were on track to meet the sales goal of \$4,000.
- Projects
 - Some of the projects underway include programs at the Mahawie Theater, Antique Roadshow type show with Simons Rock, local library shows and a new morning show at Mt. Everett High School.
- Leo Mahoney
 - Rene Wood spoke about the depth of influence that Leo brings to the committee and commended him for all of his hard work and accomplishments for CTSB. She asked to have some of the accomplishments included in the letter that we will be sending to the AG office.
 - It was also brought to our attention that Leo will be retiring in November 2019. He will be missed and the committee thanked him for all of his dedication and hard work.

SPECTRUM REPORT:

- Melinda Kinney and John Fogarty present to give report. George Doin was also present.

CTSB on guide-

- Melinda said that Spectrum has aired public service announcements as to where CTSB can be found.
 - No committee member has seen any of these announcements.
 - The committee requested to be notified what networks they aired on.
 - CTSB was put on the guide, however, it went to other communities, not just where CTSB is aired.
 - Engineering is working on getting this just for our 5 towns.
 - She also indicated that Spectrum has no obligation to carry this on the guide. She asked engineering to go above and beyond to get this on the guide.
 - The committee feels that Charter does have an obligation to let subscribers know where they can find their public access channels.
- Peg Fee pass through:
 - There is \$124k remaining to be recouped.

Rate increase –

- Notices were sent to the committee and the town officials.
- Traditionally these are done in February – is it changing to now or is there another one coming in February?
- Melinda indicated that this rate increase deals with equipment, and the last one in February was for tier packages.
- Melinda will find out if there is another one coming in February and she will also let us know when the last time the equipment had a rate increase.
- Michael Kernan asked what the Broadcast fees specifically cover and how much per channel.
- Melinda said that these fees cover broadcast channels (i.e. CBS, NBC, etc.). She does not think we will get any information as these contracts are confidential.
- Michael also asked how it is determined which channels Spectrum carries?
- It is incumbent upon how broadcast channels want it carried.
- Linda Miller requested explanation of why the unregulated towns got all of the increases and the regulated towns only got the Latino View increase.
- Melinda will ask the DTC for information.

Customer complaints/issues –

- Problems continue with freezing, tiling and audio drop out.
- The committee urges customers to contact your town committee member. You can call your town hall to get your representative name and email. We have an excellent resource in Melinda Kinney and can contact her to look into any issues you may have.
- Subscriber in Housatonic has a p.o. box and the customer didn't get any bills as they were sent to her home address.
- Tom Hatch will send Melinda the information and she will look into it.

Earnings Report:

- Melinda provided links to all reports in her written report that was sent to the committee.

WSHM:

- Spectrum does carry this channel in HD when in market.
- This has been launched on the Spectrum app.
- This cannot be shown in landscape mode. Melinda will bring to the software departments attention.

WWLP:

- Charter is willing to carry under the same terms as before.
- They have also offered to carry newscast on their Spectrum news channel.
- Coverage is still in negotiations.

Subscriber Questionnaire Scheduled for 2019:

- Linda has provided a draft.
- John Fogarty and Melinda are reviewing and will get back to Linda with changes and/or suggestions.
- Needs to be completed by end of January.

OLD BUSINESS –

- New York state and Charter – has it been resolved? Melinda indicated that it is still an on-going discussion.

NEW BUSINESS –

- Committee discussed expanding the CAC to include all of south county towns.
- If we expanded we can only expand to towns with same hub site.
- It's the way the channels are fed and there are technical limitations and contractual limitations due to franchise agreement with CTSB.
- This is the first time we have discussed this and we will need to have some exploratory discussions.
- Richmond resident, Ed Fechner asked what limitations were to join the group? The committee has no answer at this time.
- Richmond contract expires in 2021 and ours expires in 2023.
- What is the downside to expanding to 6 or 9 towns? Suggestion was made to have a symposium with other towns to find some direction. She asked Chris Ketchen if he would host in Lenox? He will look into it.
- Steve Moritz said he does not think that adding more towns would benefit us.

OTHER BUSINESS –

- John Fogarty will be retiring and this is his last meeting that he will be attending. The committee presented a gift to John and thanked him for always being there for us and he will be missed.

NEXT MEETING:

March 12, 2018 at 6:30pm in Great Barrington.

Motion made by Steve Moritz to adjourn. Motion seconded by Tom Hatch. Motion carried unanimously.
Meeting adjourned 8:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Denise Curtin
Recording Secretary