

FIVE TOWN CABLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Representing the Towns of Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, Sheffield and Stockbridge  
Minutes  
March 11, 2019  
6:30pm  
Great Barrington Town Hall  
334 Main Street  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

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

Others Present: John Maher - Charter  
George Doin - Charter  
Leo Mahoney – CTSB  
Denise Curtin – Recording Secretary  
Jeff Diamond – Richmond resident

6:30pm Linda Miller called the meeting to order.

Quorum was met. A quorum constitutes 3 towns represented.

**MINUTES:** Rene Wood moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes of December 11, 2018.  
Motion was seconded by Tom Hatch.  
Rene Wood made a motion to accept the minutes as submitted. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**MEMBERS:** Linda announced that we have lost 2 members from the committee. Doug Slier from Lenox is unable to continue due to illness. William Lehman from Stockbridge is unable to continue as he has accepted a job out of the area.  
The 2 towns have been notified. The committee now has 1 representative from Lenox, Linda Miller and the town of Stockbridge has no representation.

**CTSB REPORT:**

Leo Mahoney was present to give the report.

- FCC decision
  - We continue to await the decision from the FCC regarding the PEG fees.
  - Linda stated that there was a law that was passed by Congress in 1984 and the FCC can't take something that specific and interpret it differently.
  - There are a number of documents related to this and if you wish to receive a copy please sign in on the sheet at the committee table and Linda will send to you.
- 5% Franchise Fee Checks
  - Franchise fee checks are due from the cable company on or before March 15<sup>th</sup>. Melinda informed CTSB that the checks are due to arrive on March 15<sup>th</sup> and Leo will let the committee know if they are better or worse than last year.

- Scholarship Awards
  - Two \$1,000 scholarship checks have been mailed to 2 winners, Michelle Desiata from Monument Mountain and Daniel Santos from Lee High School.
- Projects & Programs
  - There are a number of projects currently happening:
  - Mahaiwe Theater and Ark Media have rented studio space at a cost of \$1500. The rental cost is for equipment and space.
  - Olli has reached out and they are interested in working with CTSB.
  - Wendy Germain and Dianne Karnett are working on a program called “The Last Train to Pittsfield”.
  - Patrick Toole has been hired by Shakespeare & Co. to produce a documentary about the Fall Festival of Shakespeare. CTSB will be assisting with this project.
  - We are airing live weekday morning shows from Mt. Everett.
  - Quinn Burnell will record a new installment of “The Buzz” with a live interview from Lee to Monument. Show features Monument students who have organized a tristate student film festival.
  - CTSB will record the CATA Gala for the 6<sup>th</sup> year in a row.
  - Stats for Dec/Jan/Feb:
    - Studio time 55 hours / Training time 27 hours / Editing time 293 hours / Class time 50 hours.
    - Covered 57 meetings and 34 were live.
  - Jim Brown asked if programming on CTSB is available as a streaming service and Leo indicated that at this time it was not.
- Channel Guide
  - In Melinda Kinney’s report she stated that the channel ID was corrected on the guide.
  - However, it was noted that it is still going to Pittsfield and North Adams. No impact on CTSB.
  - George Doin will look into this.
- Public Service Spots
  - John Maher will let Melinda know that she did not specify when the public service spots aired and on what channels.
  - As reported in the Spectrum report these spots were aired August 23 through November 30.
  - The committee would like more particulars.
  - None of the committee saw any of these.
  - Leo asked if CTSB could run them on their channels?
- Leo Mahoney upcoming Retirement
  - Leo’s job will be posted on April 1, 2019 and they would like it to be filled by October 1, 2019.

## **SPECTRUM REPORT:**

- John Maher – Introduced himself. He will be our new representative reporting to Melinda Kinney.
- Follow-up items from December meeting
  - PEG Channels offered on Spectrum App – no plans at this time
  - Broadcast fees – this information is confidential and we cannot disclose the terms of our contracts.
  - Is this confidential because Spectrum chooses to make it confidential?
  - Which channels does this cover?
  - John will try to get the list for us and send to Linda to be distributed.
  - We would like to know what channels we are charged for vs. must carry stations.
  - Last broadcast fee increase was in November 2018 from \$8.85 to \$9.95.

- Rate increase –
  - Effective February 2019 the Broadcast TV surcharge was adjusted from \$9.95 to \$11.99 in Great Barrington and Sheffield. The change did not impact the rate regulated communities of Lee, Lenox and Stockbridge.
  - Why can't it be done once per year instead of nickel & diming everyone?
  - When is it going to end?
- Earnings Report
  - Charter/Spectrum earnings report can be found at <https://ir.charter.com>
- Peg pass through –
  - As of February 2019, \$118,807 still remains to be recouped by Charter of the initial \$212k grant.
  - Linda stated that this continues as an issue related to “grant” and is not to be recouped.
- Customer complaints/issues –
  - Problems continue with freezing, tiling and audio drop out.
  - Wi-Fi in the Lenox downtown Church St. area is an issue. Subscriber has called service and it still is not fixed and she has just given up.
  - George Doin will talk to these subscribers. He is not aware of any system wide problems at this time.
  - Linda will provide the names to George.
  - Inconsistent communication – different answers every time you call.
  - Linda called to get information related to switching from Time Warner Legacy to Spectrum and called two different times and was given two different answers.
  - If you dial in to pay your bill they state “same as last month” and it never is the same.
  - Charter promised that they were bringing call centers back to United States. We continually get overseas call centers when calling.
  - We cannot count on anything Charter tells us.
  - If you are experiencing technical issues please call Spectrum.
  - Can Spectrum create an email address to submit the complaints? John is not sure if they are capable of doing this.
  - The committee urges customers to contact your town committee member. You can call your town hall to get your representative name and email.
- Status of WCVB and WWLP
  - There are no plans to bring these channels back.
  - It was stated to the committee that WWLP and Charter were in negotiations.
  - The final answer from Charter was in the paper the day after our meeting and stated that it did not make economic sense for Charter to carry this station. Seems the decision was already made and we were just being strung along.
- Subscriber Questionnaire Scheduled for 2019:
  - Is it worth it?
  - Rene feels that there is not enough interest in completing it based on past results.
  - It will be in the June customer bills. Committee will ask Leo to advertise that it is coming.

### **OLD BUSINESS –**

- New York State and Charter. John is not familiar with this.
  - Rumor is that a settlement has been made offering subscribers 3 months of HBO and that New York has dropped the case.
- New broadband company, Fiber Connect, will soon be offered in Great Barrington and 2 other towns bringing very high speed internet service via fiber.
  - The monthly fee is higher than Spectrum, however, subscribers are so fed up with Spectrum that they may be willing to pay the higher price.

### **NEW BUSINESS –**

- The 2 year term for Chairman is up for election this year.
  - Normally election is done in March but we will postpone the election until June meeting due to lack of 5 towns in attendance tonight.

### **OTHER BUSINESS –**

None

### **NEXT MEETING:**

Tuesday, June 11, 2019 in Sheffield at 6:30pm

Motion made by Rene Wood to adjourn. Motion seconded by Tom Hatch. Motion carried unanimously.  
Meeting adjourned 7:48pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Denise Curtin  
Recording Secretary