

Cable TV Advisory Board Minutes

Regular Meeting February 1, 2007

Members Present: Donna Behlen, Jeff Chambers, Herb Friedman, Rob Hackwith, Jim Johnson, Laurie Thomas Lee, Stuart Long, Jon Rehm, Scott Young

Members Absent: None (two vacancies currently exist on the Board.)

City Staff: Steve Huggenberger, Diane Gonzolas, Connie Guillaume

Representatives of Time Warner: Ann Shrewsbury, Jamie Wenz, Dick Bates

Chair Herb Friedman called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Behlen moved approval of the minutes from the June 27 meeting, Hackwith seconded, motion passed 9-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

Friedman brought up the question of the need and future of the Cable Advisory Board. He has enjoyed being here, however if he's on a board he wants to be sure that he's doing something of value rather than just sitting in meetings. Hackwith said that he had similar feelings, however he's not going to comment at length because his term on the board is expiring and he has chosen not to accept reappointment. He's enjoyed working with the members of the board. Chambers announced that his supervisor at Windstream thinks that he should step down, because Windstream is getting into business areas that may lead to an appearance of conflict of interest. He has enjoyed his time on the board as well.

Friedman said that he thinks we should wait to make permanent decisions until the new Mayor is selected and comes on board, to see what the Mayor thinks the role of the CAB should be. Johnson said he agrees with that, also thinks at any rate that the Board has a role between franchise agreements in terms of working with the access channel policies. Behlen agreed.

Lee asked if we did choose to eliminate the Board, how would that be done procedurally? Also asked where it's written that we meet quarterly. Steve Huggenberger said that the Board is a part of the Cable Ordinance, and the frequency of meetings is defined by our bylaws. Young said that he has a broadcasting background, he thought that there may be some value in reducing the frequency of normal meetings to just annually, with an opportunity to schedule special meetings if something comes up. Long said that that part of the reason we haven't done much recently is that we have chosen not to do much. A new Mayor might set a tone that would inspire us to do more. Rehm said that it's important to send a message to the new Mayor that we think the board is important. We provide an outlet for citizens to bring complaints. We give consumers and citizens a place to go if they can't get the cable franchise to respond.

Hackwith asked Huggenberger if the City Attorney's office thinks that the CAB encumbered the negotiations with TWC. Huggenberger thought that the board helped; Friedman's representation on the negotiating committee was particularly helpful.

Huggenberger said that one of the roles of the CAB as defined in the statute is to examine Education and Government Access rules; he also said that the FCC had issued an order in December 2006 which will make entrance into cable TV much easier, and he fully expects that there will probably be a new entrant into the community due to that ruling. If that happens, the CAB could be very important in helping work on that issue.

Huggenberger said that the access studio at UN-L is still in its infancy; the Board may be able to help that effort. Chambers asked if we have involvement in what's purchased for the studio; Huggenberger said that we could if we choose to. Behlen asked what the studio is to be used for. Huggenberger said that any educational organization would be able to use it. He noted that LPS doesn't have their own studio. Diane Gonzolas said that Bill Luxford has worked closely with the UN-L people to help them set up the facility. They will be doing outreach to educational groups to let them know it's there. Studio is in the Andersen Journalism Building. TWC has donated some equipment, the City has donated some equipment. Gonzolas said that they want to get more diverse programming on channel 21, including programs for local colleges.

Hackwith said that one of the mayoral candidates thinks that advisory boards slow city growth. Gonzolas said that she thinks that candidate was referring more to groups that work on development issues.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

We elected officers for the coming year. Jim Johnson moved that Jonathan Rehm be elected chair, Rob Hackwith seconded, motion passed 9-0. Scott Young moved that Stuart Long be elected vice-chair, Hackwith seconded, motion passed 9-0. Jeff Chambers moved that Jim Johnson be elected secretary, Behlen seconded, motion passed 9-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

Rob Hackwith reiterated that he does not plan to serve another term on the board.

REPORTS FROM TIME WARNER

Ann Shrewsbury from TWC reported that they're in an extremely competitive environment. Road Runner has stayed the same price since 1999; they were originally at 3 MB speed and have now upgraded to 7 MB for their standard service. Shrewsbury said that on the cable TV side, they continue to upgrade the software. They've added Caller ID On TV to their digital guide, and they continue to try and add new services to the guide. Laurie Lee asked how they handle complaints about Navigator. Shrewsbury said that the complaints are being handled individually. She said that since Lincoln is one of the first markets to have the guide, Lincoln's customers are having a big impact on how the service is improved. Dick Bates from TWC wanted to address a couple of things about the Navigator. Looking down the line, they had decided that they would have to create their own guide. Lincoln was a beta site for the product, so we're seeing it in its infancy. They'll be upgrading to version 2.4 in a couple of months. The guide will be tailored to the cable industry. Shrewsbury reported that they've credited customers when they call in. Jeff Chambers said that the cable industry is kind of like his experience in the telephone industry; 20 years ago the service was 80% hardware and 20% software, now the percentages are reversed. This has caused problems for companies trying to keep up.

REPORTS FROM THE CITY:

Diane and Connie distributed written copies of the City's reports.

Next meeting:

Stuart Long said that rather than meeting in April, we should probably wait until after the election so that we know who the Mayor is. Meeting was tentatively set for June 28th, with a request for the new Mayor to attend.

Long moved adjournment, Behlen seconded, motion passed 9-0. Meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Johnson, secretary