

CITY OF LINCOLN
Cable TV Advisory Board Minutes
January 28, 2010

Members Present: Barb Bartle, Donna Behlen, Mary Herres, Laurie Lee, Jerrod Jaeger, Jim Johnson, Stuart Long, Jon Rehm, Art Zygielbaum

Members Absent: Herb Friedman (excused), Herb Schimek (unexcused).

City Staff: Steve Huggenberger, Diane Gonzolas

Representatives of Time Warner: Steve Randell, Ann Shrewsbury, Jamie Wenz, Brandy Johnson

Others: Larry Caldwell

Meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by chair Art Zygielbaum. Minutes from the July 2009 meeting were read. Long moved approval, Jaeger seconded, motion passed.

CHANNEL 10 STATUS

Gonzolas reported on the status of Channel 10. The channel is in transition right now; it's running more video programming. Jaeger said that if the City wanted the Access Committee to schedule a meeting to discuss, we could set up a meeting of that committee. Gonzolas said that we might try to schedule some kind of meeting with the Access Committee, Time Warner Cable, the City, and others; possibly early spring.

RATE INCREASE

Zygielbaum asked Shrewsbury to discuss the recent TWC rate increase. Shrewsbury said that rates are adjusted every year; TWC complies with all the legal regulations, and they do direct mail to their customers to inform them of changes. She says they didn't have a lot of complaints this year; she thinks that may be because a lot of people had locked in prices last year. Shrewsbury passed around a list of talking points on rate adjustments.

Shrewsbury also reported that this year they launched a "Roll Over or Get Tough" campaign to try to get their entertainment channels to hold down costs. She said that channels are looking for new ways to increase revenue, and TWC feels that many are charging too much to air their programming. She said that if TWC had to pay such steep increases with every channel, it would be cost-prohibitive for their customers; TWC wants to do business in Lincoln but needs to hold rates down.

Behlen asked if DVR rates had increased; Shrewsbury said yes.

STATUS OF CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS

Zygielbaum asked for an update on citizen concerns & complaints.

Gonzolas said that customer David Cygan had complained that TWC doesn't work with LES and AllTel to bury cable at the same time as those entities. Complaint said that because TWC won't work with LES and AllTel, there is extra overhead to do digging a second time. Specifically his complaint referred to cable for his office on the 8100 block of South 15th Street. Herres followed up with a question about whether TWC has a policy of doing their own work as opposed to trying to work with other companies. Huggenberger said that TWC had opted out of a trenching agreement. Herres asked TWC representatives why they opted out. Randell said that TWC is working with them when possible, but sometimes they have to do it on their own schedule. Gonzolas said that the letter reported that Mr. Cygan has been told that TWC has

often been asked to cooperate, but has not done so. Jaeger asked if our CAB responsibility includes business subscribers; Huggenberger said yes. Long commented that cable probably doesn't cost too much to lay in a conduit; Randell disagreed and said that it can be costly. Herres reminded us of the business owner that had complained at a previous CAB meeting about service to their business in a newly developing part of town. Randell said that sometimes TWC is able to work with LES and Alltel, but sometimes they can't.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Behlen moved that we keep the same slate of officers for 2010 as for 2009:

Chair: Art Zygielbaum
Vice-Chair: Herb Friedman
Secretary: Jim Johnson

Lee seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-1.

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Zygielbaum asked for a discussion of what we want to assign to our committees.

Rehm said that we should look into the fact that free over the air television service is kind of on "life support" right now. He suggested that one of the committees should look at what would happen if on-air TV goes away. Lee disagreed with the premise that it's on life support; she said that a lot of content has switched over to the Internet. Rehm said that makes it less available to the public. Zygielbaum asked if that subject would be in the purview of the Board; Huggenberger said no. Zygielbaum said that the Board might want to look into what the City's obligation might be in case on-air TV goes away, and to make sure people understand the issue. Randell said that going forward, people may have to purchase either a cable box or a satellite dish. Zygielbaum said that people don't have the right to a phone, but he thinks there is an argument to be made that they have the right to television service, to cover cases of emergency. Jaeger said that if we set up a committee, we need to make sure they look at the Charter. Zygielbaum appointed a committee, consisting of Art Zygielbaum, John Rehm and Laurie Lee, to look at this. Discussed names "Digital Alternatives Committee" or "TV LifeLine." No final decision made on committee name at this time.

REPORTS FROM THE CITY

Gonzolas passed around her report. She had found a number of old clippings that hadn't previously been distributed; they have been added to this month's packet.

She discussed results of a "City Satisfaction Survey" that the Mayor's office had commissioned. Distributed a report on this survey.

REPORTS FROM TWC

Wenz distributed copies of his report. Two parts; August through October and December through January. (He had prepared the first part for our October meeting, but that was cancelled.) He said that the Nebraska Library Commission has done some programming on Channel 80.

Shrewsbury reported that she had some tense moments at the end of the year due to discussions with Fox, but that negotiations were successful. She said that many customers responded to the "Roll Over or Get Tough" ads and she thinks that affected the outcome.

She reported that all HD channels will be moving into the thousands channel tiers on March 3. TWC will publicize the change.

Shrewsbury said that 72 channels now have the Start Over feature; you can restart programs if you come in while they're airing. This feature was developed by TWC. Jaeger said that he is disappointed because it doesn't allow Fast Forward; TWC representatives agreed that it doesn't. Gonzolas said that you also can't record from the beginning; TWC agreed. Jaeger said because of those issues, he finds it pretty much useless; he wants to be able to Fast Forward programs.

Shrewsbury reported that TWC is planning philanthropic initiatives to get children interested in math and science. They are working on a Robotics competition; also planning a program called "Connect a Million Minds" that would work with UNL to get young people working on scientific projects. If CAB members know of any organizations that would like to work with children on these issues, we can go to the TWC website for more information.

Randell reported that he's glad to be here in Lincoln as the new leader of the Nebraska TWC team. He is wanting to expand customer care, with more of a local presence. He said that Lincoln is a good place to find quality talent. Zygielbaum remarked that he thinks we're seeing fewer complaints these days. He did note that he and many others lost all service on Christmas night. Randell agreed; said that there was a significant outage in Lincoln that night.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Larry Caldwell addressed the Board. He said that he has been talking to both TWC and the City; would like to see an engineering drawing of TWC listing the number of customers on each node; he says that his system often pixelates during a Husker game and he wants to know what kind of capacity is in the system. He also would like to see a copy of CFR Title 47. On the second note, Jaeger said that he thinks Detroit Law School has the whole federal code online. On the first note, Randell said that TWC considers the information about number of subscribers to be confidential, and will not be sharing that information publicly. Shrewsbury took down Mr. Caldwell's contact information, and will follow up.

ADJOURNMENT

Herres moved adjournment, Behlen seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for April 29 at the City-County Building, room TBA

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Johnson, secretary

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