

FIVE TOWN CABLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Representing the Towns of Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, Sheffield and Stockbridge
Minutes
December 15, 2020
6:30pm
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM

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

Others Present: John Maher - Charter
George Doin - Charter
Rich Frederick – CTSB
Doug Good – Colebrook South
Terry Cowgill – Berkshire Edge
Denise Curtin – Recording Secretary

6:35pm Linda Miller called the meeting to order.

MINUTES: Rene Wood moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes of September 8, 2020.
Roll call was taken on the motion and minutes were accepted.

New Committee Member

Dennis Arseneau from Lenox is introduced.

SPECTRUM REPORT:

- John Maher presented the Spectrum report. George Doin was also on the zoom call.

Subscriber Complaints

- Choice package is available to customers in Lenox.
- Spectrum continues to do training to address the payment window and customer service inconsistencies.
- WSHM (Channel 3) will not be brought back.
- Birchwood Village in Lenox wiring issues have been completed.
- Coldbrooke South in Lenox has issues which Spectrum has just heard about this for the first time last week.
 - Customers need to contact customer service to report issues.
 - Doug Good is a resident at Coldbrooke South and attended the zoom meeting.
 - He does not understand how Spectrum can say that they are just now hearing about this. He has sent 2 letters over the summer and has made several calls.
 - George Doin the Field Ops Manager said that his team was out there last week after they were notified and have found some minor things that have been fixed. He asked that Doug and he speak outside of this meeting to discuss the issues in the complex.
- Unserved areas in Sheffield will be handled case by case and customers must call customer service to start the process.

- Rene Wood, the committee representative from Sheffield said that when people call the town hall it gets passed to her and she tries to resolve the issue with a Charter liaison. However, the last issue took 100 days for a resolution of an issue. The committee and Charter need to come up with a solution that doesn't get to this level.
- Recently the state of Maine passed a law regarding line extensions for 15 residents per aerial mile and that is now being litigated. We are unsure who is litigating this.
- John indicated in the report that he urges all members of the Cable Advisory Committee to communicate on a regular basis rather than waiting for quarterly meetings.

License Renewal

- Form 626 letters of notification of pending renewals were sent to the respective local franchising authorities (the Boards of Selectmen) on April 14, 2020.
- Linda Miller said that the Form 626 was not sent to the Cable Advisory Committee.
 - We must be included on everything that gets sent to the towns.
 - John Maher will send a copy of the form to Linda.
- In the very near future, we will be starting to set up with Charter to start work on the negotiations. Linda Miller will let John Maher know, in writing, when we are ready to start meeting.

CTSB REPORT:

- Rich Frederick presented the report.

CTSB Productions

- CTSB continues to be open 5 days per week. Interest has peaked for community members wishing to create new programming.
- New shows currently being developed are Barbara Allan's "Santa's Good Deed" which was recorded in our green screen studio. New monthly shows from the Literacy Network, "Stockbridge Merchants Tour", produced by Patrick White, and book readings from the Lee Library as well as "Giveback Berkshires".

Town Meetings

- The month of November we recorded 24 town meetings, 22 of which were held via Zoom and 2 were broadcast live via our cable channels and Facebook live.

Membership

- Currently stands at 131 in December with an additional 8 members due for renewal.

Staff Update

- Our staff continues to work very hard and we continue to spend a great deal of time in the studio. During our weekly staff meetings, we continue to lay out future plans and ideas, reflect on the current demands of broadcasting on 3 channels to 5 towns while maintaining a high level of service and content.
- CTSB received high praise from Dick Lindsey at The Berkshire Eagle thanking us for doing an exceptional job of covering all meetings remotely.
- We also received a letter from the Town of Stockbridge complimenting Steven Borns.
 - The letter was read by Rich Frederick to the committee.
- The Cable Advisory Committee would also like to thank you for hosting our meetings via Zoom in these difficult times when we can't meet in person.

OLD BUSINESS:

- CTSB still not on guide.

- Question was asked to John Maher/George Doin if we are on the same headend feed as Pittsfield?
 - Answer is that no we are not; we are fed out of the Lee hub.
 - However, the feed for the guide is fed from the same locations as other Berkshire towns and puts it across the entire Berkshire market, including Pittsfield and North Adams.
 - All peg access channels are on the same channels in all towns.
 - Maybe we could chat with Pittsfield and come up with a name for all locations.
- Public Service Announcements
 - It has been 9 months and we are still waiting for the information around the schedule of what ran and on what channels, what was the length of the spot, etc.
 - John Maher explained that it doesn't exist, and he was never provided this information. All he was able to get was that the spots ran between August 23 and November 30.
- Zip Code
 - Tom Hatch indicated that the zip code for Great Barrington continues to be incorrect. This has been an ongoing issue for several months also.
 - John Maher asked that a copy of the bill be sent to him. Tom Hatch will send.

GROUNDWORK FOR BEGINNING NEGOTIATIONS:

- Our new committee member, Dennis Arseneau was asked by Linda Miller to do some research for our upcoming negotiations.
- He spent a lot of time in comparing our license agreement with others in the state. There are 427 contracts on file.
- All agreements are very similar in content with different cable providers.
- There have been 13 renewed in 2020, however, no Charter contracts as of yet.
- Our 5 towns currently have 6,834 subscribers. The subscriber to population ratio is 29%
- Linda Miller asked if anyone would be interested in joining the negotiation committee.
 - Tom Hatch, Jim Brown and Rene Wood expressed interest in becoming a committee member.
 - Rene Wood indicated that these need to be treated as meetings to include minutes so the public can see.

NEW BUSINESS –

- None.

OTHER BUSINESS –

- The committee wanted to express the wonderful customer service that Carol in the Lee office provides.
 - She has a great relationship with customers, outstanding personality and is a delight to work with.
 - George Doin will relay this message to their leadership and John Maher will also pass along.
 - Always nice to hear some “good news”!

NEXT MEETING DATE – Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 6:30pm in Lenox, if we are able to meet in person.

Motion made by Rene Wood to adjourn. Motion seconded by Tom Hatch. Motion carried unanimously.
Meeting adjourned 7:45pm by Linda Miller.

Respectfully submitted,
Denise Curtin
Recording Secretary