

FIVE TOWN CABLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*Representing the Towns of Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox,
Sheffield and Stockbridge Massachusetts*

Having read the Minutes of the Five Town Cable Advisory Committee meeting of March 10th, 2020, I hereby:

_____approve these minutes.

_____disapprove of these minutes.

_____approve these minutes with the following change(s), and or addition(s)

Signed: _____ dated:

Representing the Town of:

FIVE TOWN CABLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Representing the Towns of Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, Sheffield and Stockbridge

DRAFT Minutes

March 10, 2020

6:30pm

Stockbridge Town Hall

Stockbridge, MA 01262

Members Present: Linda Miller –Lenox
Tom Hatch – Great Barrington
Michael Kernan – Great Barrington
Jim Brown – Great Barrington
Ron Brouker - Stockbridge

Others Present: Richard Frederick – CTSB
John Maher, Spectrum
Evan Triantafilidis – Berkshire Record
Clarence Fanto – Berkshire Eagle
Catherine Miller – Sheffield Resident
Denise Curtin – Recording Secretary

6:37pm Linda Miller called the meeting to order.
Quorum was met. A quorum constitutes 3 towns represented.
The committee introduced themselves and what town they represent.
Great Barrington is the only town within the committee that has the maximum number of members.
Ron Brouker is a new member representing the town of Stockbridge.
Currently the Town of Lee only has 1 member and he is out of town quite frequently and unable to attend the quarterly meetings.
Linda Miller is reaching out to the Town of Lee to find a second representative.

MINUTES: Jim Brown moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes of December 10, 2019.
Motion seconded by Tom Hatch.
Jim Brown made a motion to accept the minutes as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

CTSB REPORT:

- Richard Frederick presented the CTSB report.
- Town Meetings – Recorded 27 town meetings, 12 of those were broadcast live with 103 hours of government programming.
 - CTSB has recorded all of the EPA and Housatonic River meetings and have shared them on social media.
- Membership – Remains close to an all time high of 136.
 - We are planning on many new shows and creating partnerships with The Berkshire County Workforce Board to bridge us to the schools, and The Boston International Kids Film Festival which will hold a 2 week summer camp in July at CTSB.

- Training – Classes have started for 2020 and we will be offering classes in Journalism, Field Camera Operations, and Studio Production and Editing.
- 2020 Changes – We are going to be launching a rebranding campaign which includes a new website which will stream all 3 CTSB channels live, a new logo, along with new signage and decals along with Saturday hours to better serve our community.
 - We will also be installing remote controlled robotic cameras in our 5 town halls and this will free up our videographers to cover more public events and give us more local community news on our channels.
- FCC/Spectrum – We have not received the 2019 check and we have been told we should receive it by March 15th.
 - Once received Richard Frederick will notify the committee.
- CTSB Channel 1301, 1302, 1303
 - Richard Frederick thanked the committee for all the support and hard work.
 - CTSB is listed and labeled now by numerical lookup.
 - People still look for it as CTSB.
 - Can we put “local public government” in front of the listing?
 - John Maher will look into it.
 - Jim Brown suggested to post any news on the town websites.
 - Richard Frederick indicated that they should “like” the CTSB Facebook page for any information.
 - If towns have something important to post they should share with the CTSB Facebook page.

SPECTRUM REPORT:

- John Maher present to give the report.
- Public Service Announcements
 - In the report it states “all of the information they have regarding PSA schedule for CTSB has been provided”.
 - Linda Miller indicated that if it was provided she did not receive a copy.
- Service disruption caused by ice storm on February 8th
 - John Maher stated in the report that this outage was only for a few hours. He indicated that this was an error in his report and the outage he was speaking about was for New Hampshire/Maine area.
 - Linda Miller contacted George Doin and he said that it was a Northeast outage caused by the storm.
 - Michael Kernan indicated that he was out for 5 – 6 hours and some people indicated that they were out for 2 days.
 - Michael Kernan requested a detailed report on the details of the outages in Berkshire County.
 - John Maher will get the details.
 - Question was asked if customers could still request a refund for the hours that they were out?
 - To get refunds customers should call Spectrum and request a refund.
 - Michael Kernan said that customers should not have to call for a refund, they should be given it automatically.
 - Sheffield resident, Catherine Miller said that last October she was without service for 5 days. She lives in a remote location and it was difficult for emergency communication.
- She deducted the amount for 5 days of service and the next month she received a “past due” bill.

- WWLP – Springfield channel
 - A commentary appeared in the Berkshire Eagle on March 6th “Return of WWLP is a Great First Step”.
 - The return of this station was arranged by Senator Markey and Congressman Neal.
 - They worked hard to return this station to the Spectrum lineup.
 - Under the terms of the agreement between Nexstar Media Group, owner of WWLP, it states that subscribers will either see live WWLP news programming as it airs, and when the news is not aired live, the station will loop previous news broadcasts. The station will serve as a 24-hour WWLP news station covering Massachusetts.
 - The re-instatement of this channel should happen within the next 60 days.
 - Jim Brown asked if this would implement a rate increase in broadcast fees. John Maher indicated that it would not.
- WCVB
 - They continue to work to get WCVB back, however, John Maher indicated that per their December 2019 report there are no plans to reinstate that channel.
- Albany market coverage
 - There is a bill in the Senate that is waiting to be signed to get the Berkshires out of the Albany market.
 - It has already been approved and signed in the House.
- Customer Service
 - When Charter took over from Time Warner they told us that all customer service was going to be brought back to the United States.
 - This has not happened – a promise has been broken.
 - It is not that your customer service people are not competent, but there is a very big language barrier.
- News Channel 1
 - It was suggested that they update their loop. The same morning loop should not be running the same at 7:00pm.
 - The weather needs to be right.
 - Also, channel 1 is not available on the Roku Spectrum app.
 - John Maher will ask the news people about that.
- Zip Code change
 - Michael Kernan, one of the committee members from Great Barrington has asked over the last 9 months, or more, that the zip code for Great Barrington be corrected. The correct zip code is 01230.
 - John Maher said that he has requested this change numerous times, however, he did not have the correct zip code. He will request this change again.

- Billing due dates
 - Continue to be an issue amongst subscribers.
 - When customers receive their bill they sometimes only have 2 days to pay, and some people receive their statements after the required due date.
 - John Maher indicated that you have 30 days to pay the bill, and 60 days before any negative action takes place.
 - Many people prefer to pay their bills on/before the due date, not after.
 - Michael Kernan brought his statement in and the statement date is February 28th. He received the statement on March 6th in his mail. The due date is March 8th.
 - John Maher said that he has passed this information along after each meeting.
 - We asked if there was anyone higher up that we could take this situation to?
 - John Maher said he has brought it to upper management.
 - Committee said that they would be going to the Attorney General to report this issue and see what can be done about it.

OLD BUSINESS –

- Is there anything new on the FCC ruling?
 - John Maher said that there is no information yet, and no updates.

NEW BUSINESS –

- The contract between the five towns and Charter Communications is up for renewal in 2023.
- We are 3 years out this month.
- As in the past we will form a sub-committee to start doing our homework, which includes reading and reviewing other state contracts, following all state guidelines.
- Linda Miller will send out an email to our committee members to gather interest in serving on the sub-committee.
- Once the sub-committee has completed its research we will then open up negotiations with Charter Communications.
- Currently each of the five towns negotiates their own contract. Linda Miller will inquire about doing an umbrella contract.

NEXT MEETING –

- June 9, 2020 to be held in Great Barrington, MA.

- Motion to adjourn was made by Tom Hatch. Michael Kernan seconded and motion carried unanimously.
- Meeting adjourned 7:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Denise Curtin
Recording Secretary