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Cable Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 10-14-03

SELECTMEN'S CABLE TELEVISION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of meeting of Oct.14, 2003

Meeting began @7:10 p.m. in Town Hall Hearing Room

Members Present – Phil McCarthy & Bob Chebator , a quorum

Town Counsel, John Maher attending Selectmen's Budget Meeting in next room joined our meeting for 15 minutes. Also in attendance Chuck Sherwood, Paul Berg, Steve Galeotalanza, Barbara Costa, & Glen Koenig

Mr. McCarthy summarized where we were in the Comcast renewal process and stated his belief that the focus of negotiations should be on building a strong case for obtaining financing and services over and above a provision requiring a payment of 5% of gross revenue. He also stated his belief that Comcast will readily cede operation of PEG Access

if the Town decides to turn over PEG access to a private, non-profit access corporation.

He pointed out that under the current arrangement, public access broadcasting with only a couple of exceptions is denied to RCN subscribers, which is unacceptable and makes a strong argument for a turning PEG Access over to a PEG Access Corporation.

Mr. Sherwood spoke at length about conducting a formal Needs Assessment as a means of strengthening the Towns negotiating position.

Mr. Berg provided insight into Newton's recent renewal license process and also supports a Needs Assessment.

Mr. Koenig also supports a Needs Assessment and further stated that a minimum of 3 PEG channels and high speed internet access must be available to a public access corp.

Mr. Maher stated he too, is coming around on a Needs Assessment and believes that based on a recent federal district court case it could well give the Town a leg up.

He also raised the issue of a school dept request for allocation of cable fee funds for purchase of computers. Mr. Sherwood and Mr. McCarthy pointed out that the referenced funds are earmarked in the license for cable related purposes in accord with spirit and letter of Telecommunications Act. It was agreed that this request would be further scrutinized but consensus was that these funds ought not to be accessed for school depts. purchase of computers.

Mr. Chebator raised the idea of expanding committee from current 3 members. It was agreed that this would be further discussed at next meeting

Mr. Sherwood said he would provide sample RFP's for conducting a formal Needs Assessment for committee's review and consideration.

Next meeting set for 10/28/03 to discuss advisability of formal Needs Assessment
Meeting adjourned @ 8:20pm

