

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

April 8th, 2013

In Attendance: Tab Committee Chairman, Ed Ebenbach; Committee Members, Kurt Krause, Joe Salvati; Assistant Township Manager/Staff Liaison, Sandra Zadell; Board of Supervisor Liaison, Tom Scarborough, Board of Supervisor Member, Rick Colello.

Meeting Minutes: The Board approved the March 11, 2013 amended minutes unanimously.

Comcast update: No update

Verizon Update: Mrs. Zadell reviewed multiple channel changes and increased rates in the HD package realm. The Board discussed the fact that prices change a lot and wondered what they could do about rising costs, etc. as per the franchise agreement. Mr. Ebenbach stated he would talk this over with Jeff Garton at their next franchise agreement meeting.

Comcast Franchise Negotiations:

Mr. Ebenbach reported that the franchise renewal date passed on March 4, 2013 and that the Board received an e-mail from Brian Jeter with Comcast's response to our agreement requests on March 20. His synopsis was that they accepted our requests on some minor issues, but a number of their responses on the legal issues lacked clarity. The most discouraging but not surprising part of their response was in regard to our request for a second channel to be used for HD cablecast of DTV. Comcast's response was to continue providing the one channel that we currently use, as that is all that they are mandated to do. They stated that the Township must prove community need and interest in HD government content, and can't overlook increased costs on local subscribers. Mr. Ebenbach cited national statistics that show heavy penetration of HD channels in the market and expressed concern that our channel's picture quality will be inferior to other channels since many channels have migrated to dual SD/HD service. Mr. Ebenbach's analysis of the Doylestown Township Comcast system shows that 117 of the 222 standard definition channels have companion HD channels. This means over 50% of channels provide HD service in Doylestown right now, including CSPAN. In addition to denying the Township's request for a second/HD channel, Comcast also rescinded their offer to provide financial support to DTV, along with a no-charge residential class internet access service.

Mrs. Zadell suggested the possibility of negotiating a shorter term contract and giving up on the HD channel for now. She suggested we renegotiate in 5-7 years when the argument for HD will be even stronger.

The committee discussed another idea, that of renegotiating when the Verizon contract term ends. Mr. Krause stated Verizon will have less of an argument to defend against our request for an HD channel since they force new customers to sign up for HD. He

also stated that we may have a more compelling argument if we update our Channel to HD first and then present our HD Programming to them.

Mr. Scarborough pointed out that he was concerned that we ran over the contract expiration date, and that he wants to make sure we don't lose out on a franchise fee payment. Mr. Ebenbach stated he would check the legalities with Jeff Garton, and the actual financial performance with Ken Wallace.

Mr. Ebenbach outlined four options the committee has at this point in their negotiations:

1. Continue pushing/negotiating for a second/HD channel
2. Give up on the second/HD Channel for now, negotiate a 10 year contract renewal, and request more grant money and free residential class internet service
3. Give up on the second/HD Channel for now, negotiate a 5 year contract renewal, and request more grant money and free residential class internet service
4. Give up on the second/HD Channel for now and line up our Comcast contract with the Verizon contract and only sign for a three year contract renewal.

Mr. Scarborough mentioned that he will be meeting with an Executive Vice President at Comcast this week; he will see what he can do.

Mr. Salvati stated that Comcast seems to have identified that free internet and the grant funding are the items that are important to us in addition to the second/HD channel. He mentioned the possibility of the Township imposing a PEG fee of 25 cents per month, which could raise approximately \$6K per year. Mr. Salvati suggested possibly utilizing this issue in our negotiations.

Mr. Ebenbach concluded the discussion by indicating that he will set up discussions with Jeff Garton and others in the weeks ahead to consider the Pros and Cons of the various approaches that we could take and to evaluate the legal tactics we might employ to bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion. He stated that he will keep everyone informed as we move forward on this matter.

Social Media Report

Mrs. Zadell reported on her experience at PELRAS and the training she received on Social Media. She reviewed some of the issues to watch out for, and re-stated the need for a policy to govern the direction of our social media pages.

Mr. Salvati mentioned that we have to look at staffing and time requirements, does the Township have staff and time to handle social media.

Mrs. Zadell reported that the county Information Officer, Chris Edwards will attend May's meeting. She feels that his presentation will be very useful, and his advice will help given he is coming from another governmental organization.

Moments in Time

Mrs. Zadell reported that the MBIT students had trouble tying together the story line in the Moments in Time piece and were unable to continue the project.

Mr. Salvati stated that there definitely is a story in the existing video, but that they will need significant background information such as pictures and filing to bring it together.

Mrs. Zadell stated that Ms. Mason recommended the possibility of hiring someone to handle the project, maybe an intern. Ms. Mason also suggested focusing on one person's story at time and making it a miniseries. Ms. Mason wants to see the project move forward.

Mr. Salvati agreed that breaking the project into smaller parts may be a better option.

Mr. Scarborough felt the project would be more meaningful if the students do it than if we hired someone.

Mr. Ebenbach suggested that Mr. Salvati would be needed to give direction to anyone we hire and Mr. Salvati said that he would be happy to provide that person with the overall concept of the project, but that he isn't sure that he has the time in his schedule for the ongoing supervision of that person's work. The committee discussed a possible \$1,000 budget for hiring an intern to handle this project. They will discuss the issue further at their next meeting. Mrs. Zadell will speak with MBIT and try to get more details on why they had trouble with the project.

The committee tabled Emergency Management for the May meeting.

Mr. Ebenbach reported that the Planning Commission, Public Water and Sewer Committee, Traffic Advisory Committee and Dog Park both wanted to create/submit some original programming but have no update at this time.

Mrs. Zadell mentioned that the promo piece for Local Government Week is on air.

On a motion made by Mr. Krause, seconded by Mr. Ebenbach the committee adjourned at 9: 03 pm.