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Bill Hakkinen, Secretary

CABLE TELEVISION ADVISORY COUNCIL OF SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT MEETING MINUTES

January 13, 2005, Regular Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
Groton Public Library, 52 Newtown Road, Route 117, Groton, CT 06340

IN ATTENDANCE: Jim Kelley, Jim Griffith, Anne Ingraham, Jerry Tobias, Art Barton, Patricia Ostrout, Allan Palmer, Shawn Greeley, Tim Chokas, Bill Hakkinen

COMCAST REPRESENTATIVES: John Bairos, Kristen Roberts,, Frank Faccini

THAMES VALLEY COMMUNICATION: Russell Dipallina, Carl Andersen

I. Recognition of members of the public - none present

II. Reports

Chairman Kelley introduced new member Tim Chokas representing the Stonington Board of Education.

A. Minutes – from November 4th meeting accepted with a correction noted by Carl Andersen of TVC – his status report is amended to “...90% of the City or Groton is now complete, and 100% will be completed by the end of the year.”

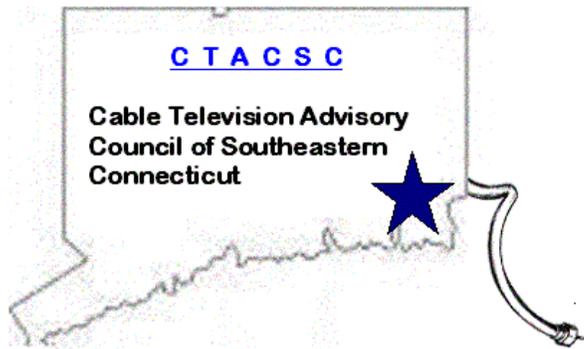
B. Treasurer’s Report – As of December 23rd, 2004 the Advisory Council’s checking account balance is \$16,001.59.

Expenses \$13.32 – Jim Kelley, Postage
77.24 – Jim Griffith, Refreshments
75.00 – Moreene Nahornick, Steno Services
Income \$ 2.55 – Interest for November & December

C. Comcast Report – Kristen Roberts reported that Comcast will begin using a new monthly bill format which will be consistent across Connecticut. The HBO preview being offered free to the franchise area will cease as of the end of February; Comcast will then use this channel (63) to offer rotating previews of other premium channels, 60 days at a time. Kristen confirmed that the Hartford CBS affiliate would have the right to request protection for duplicate programming should a cable franchise carry a second CBS affiliate channel. Kristen reviewed other coming channel lineup changes. Chairman Kelley had forwarded a subscriber request for TCM to Comcast. Comcast has received two letters of intent re: the third-party public access studio, one from Soundview Community Media of Bridgeport, and one from Frank Faccini, Comcast’s local public access coordinator – these will be reviewed with TVC. Kristen handed out “Criteria for Selection of a Community Access Provider”, summarizing the Connecticut general Statutes. Chairman Kelley indicated the Advisory Council will possibly hold a separate special meeting at the appropriate time to review the proposals, receive input from Comcast and TVC, and make a recommendation to the DPUC. It is unclear when DPUC will open a docket on the issue. Kristen provided a docket number (97-09-09) for a previous Soundview public access petition.

Tobias reiterated his comments from the previous meeting, that he expects a lot of complaints from customers re: the planned loss of free HBO.

D. Thames Valley Communication Report – Carl Andersen reported that as of the period end of 2004, TVC has met all their milestones - 80.8 miles of cable, passing 9,798 homes – the City of Groton is complete. TVC will conduct an annual customer satisfaction survey to monitor service quality and customer concerns. Carl handed out a summary of pending channel lineup changes, and indicated that the Expanded Basic monthly rate remains at \$36.95. Also, TVC will begin replacing the older-style Personal Video Recorder (PVR) set-top boxes with a newer model with enhanced features; subscribers will continue to pay the same monthly rate (\$10.00), or, if they choose to keep the older –style PVR, their rate will drop to \$8.00 per month.



III. Old Business

A. Status of the third party public access provider – already covered in previous discussions. The CTACSC will have a role in the public hearings to be conducted. Kristen Roberts indicated it would likely be a 6-9 month process, to be completed in 2006.

B. Report by Art Barton on paper inserts and discussion as to how we should publicize the Council – Art said the cost of a one-page insert into The Day one-time would be \$2,100, if we supply the insert, and that they do not recommend putting it into the Thursday through Sunday paper.

C. Review of Committee Goals – Chairman Kelley suggested that the Council skip detailed discussion of each goal at this meeting.

IV. New Business

A. How we do business. How can we become more results oriented?

Chairman Kelley stated that he proposes the Council consider the use of Project Teams. A Project Team be comprised of a small number of Council members; would address a specific issue, would make a recommendation to the full Council; and then the Project Team would dissolve at the completion of its assignment. The proposal was generally accepted with little discussion.

B. Should we start a web site / Bill Hakkinen suggests a plan.

Bill explained that following the previous meeting, at which the Council spent a fair amount of time discussing how to increase Council awareness among the general public, it occurred to him that the Council might consider having a web site. This would be a low-cost, continuous method to maintain a presence to the public. Bill stated that in his early research he had found that web site hosting for a non-profit customer (such as the CTACSC) would cost in the ballpark of \$400 per year, exclusive of design and providing content. Carl Andersen offered to provide host services on the TVC computer, and IT support to get the web site started. There was much discussion, and general agreement among the Council members to pursue this approach. Jim Griffiths offered to help Bill with the next steps, and Jim offered to bring a laptop to the next meeting and present some web site design suggestions. Chairman Kelley suggested that the Council not abandon the Public Service Announcement (PSA) approach – Bill stated that he and Shawn already have a date set aside for the PSA taping. Jim Griffiths and Bill will further investigate the web site suggestion for the next meeting.

C. Meeting frequency – should we change it?

There was general agreement to keep the current meeting schedule.

D. Shawn Greeley reported that his October Comcast bill continued to incorrectly reflect the address for the Council.

Kristen stated that this had been corrected.

E. Should we initiate a new grant program? Do we need a buffer for possible legal fees?

Art Barton suggested that we not consider grants until the Council's funds have increased. We do not have enough funds at this time to conduct a credible grant program. The Council agreed.

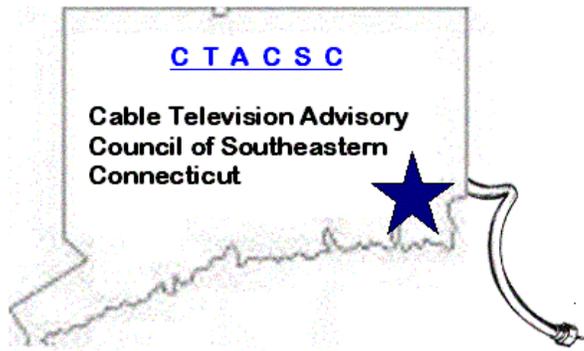
F. Councilor Tobias requests a statement from Comcast on the funding source for publicity and costs associated with their "good neighbor" events (cable subscribers or Comcast funds).

Kristen reported that these events are underwritten with corporate funds, and not local subscriber fees.

G. Survey of Councilors for comments, observations, reservations, concerns about anything related to the Council or this meeting.

Shawn Greeley volunteered to serve on a Project Team for the third party public access task.

Art Barton suggested we need more tables and chairs for the size of the group – Shawn will investigate.



Jim Griffiths mentioned that he and Pat Ostrout have met with their school superintendent and first selectman to explain the cable opportunities for their town and school with the TVC system coming soon. Jim plans to write a letter to the town officials detailing the possibilities resulting from this access. Anne Ingraham asked for a copy of that letter.

V. Communications

Jerry Tobias related an issue he has had with Comcast re: his complaint from last summer about his subscriber rate. Over the course of several phone calls to Comcast, Comcast reps promised Jerry they would give him discounted pricing for a period of time, and then failed to do so. Kristen Roberts took Jerry's letter (attached) and promised to resolve the issue.

Jim stated that he had previously reported on the request for the TCM channel, which he has forwarded to Comcast, and that reporters from The Day may be doing a feature article on the CTACSC.

VI. Adjournment – Tobias moved to adjourn the meeting, Hakkinen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Hakkinen