

**URBANA PUBLIC TELEVISION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

DATE: June 13, 2008
12:00 p.m.

PLACE: Urbana City Council Chambers
400 South Vine Street, Urbana, IL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Barbara Gladney Durl Kruse
Greg Boozell Dana Mancuso
Danielle Chynoweth Peter Resnick
Carol Inskeep

MEMBERS ABSENT: David Adcock

STAFF PRESENT: Kate Gorman
Todd Rent

OTHERS PRESENT: Paul Weichsel

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gladney called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 14, 2008 meeting were approved as presented.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda was modified to move item **VI. Staff Report** to the fifth item on the agenda and **VIII. Audience Participation** to the sixth item on the agenda.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no new correspondence for the Commission to review.

V. STAFF REPORT

Kate Gorman provided information outlining public access activity from December 2007 to May 2008. Total membership of UPTV was 79 active members and 96 total members. In organizational outreach, 153 Champaign and Urbana organizations were contacted, 49 responded and 19 UPTV memberships resulted from the contact.

Commissioner Resnick asked what defined an active member.

Ms. Gorman replied that an active member is someone who has been in contact with UPTV within the last year. In July, UPTV will hold a membership renewal drive to re-

contact members who have not been active recently. In May, all members were sent a letter notifying them of the revisions to the UPTV Policies and Procedures.

Five new cameras are being purchased for public access use, bringing the total number of cameras available for members to nine. A second editing station and a laptop for editing will be acquired in July. University High School's commencement ceremony was recorded and will be aired in June. Urbana Park District Board meetings will begin airing after the June 10th meeting is recorded, and five new locally produced series have begun airing on UPTV since the last meeting. Also, the UPTV intern position, who will work weekend hours, will be posted in June. Ms. Gorman stated she would be attending the Alliance for Community Media Conference on July 9th-12th and would give a report at the Commission's September meeting. UPTV will begin airing new informational promos about the station's location and how to become a member this week.

Commissioner Resnick asked what Comcast's policies are regarding rebroadcast of PSA's and promos, to see if UPTV's promos could be aired more widely. Chair Gladney stated that UPTV is allowed at least one a year under the current rules.

Chair Gladney asked Ms. Gorman for a summary of the graphs she provided on local public access programming vs. non-local public access programming. Ms. Gorman replied that local public access had been steadily increasing over the last six months with a spike in March 2007, while the non-local public access had maintained about the same number of hours with only a slight drop.

VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Paul Weichsel of Champaign asked Ms. Gorman if the UPTV staff routinely checks if the required copyright permissions are on file for submitted non-local programming before the programs air. Ms. Gorman replied yes.

Mr. Weichsel asked if there was any checking done by UPTV staff to ensure that producers submitting programs were not violating any of UPTV's requirements. Ms. Gorman stated that the station's policy was for producers to complete a cablecast request form where they must state that the submitted program does not contain any material that would violate the Policies.

Mr. Weichsel said that then it is not the staff's responsibility to find the violations in a program prior to being aired. Ms. Gorman said that was correct, it is the producer's responsibility.

Mr. Weichsel asked if there was a form to be filled out if a viewer saw a violation and wanted to report it. Ms. Gorman replied that there was not a form, but if the viewer would call or preferably, send an email or a letter to the office to report the violation, staff would verify the violation and then proceed accordingly.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Policies and Procedures Update

Ms. Gorman provided the update on the Policies' progress through the City Council meetings on 4-14-08, 4-28-08 and 5-5-08. The result was that the Policies were adopted by the Council in a vote of 6 ayes to 1 nay, and a motion was passed for Staff to acquire and develop counter-programming to run on UPTV. Both Ms. Gorman and Todd Rent of Human Relations have been working on obtaining programming.

Ms. Gorman also stated that some discrepancies between the 2004 Policies and the 2008 Policies had been discovered, and that she would be conducting an administrative audit on the Policies to correct any discrepancies.

Chair Gladney stated she would like the Commission to consider drafting a list of guidelines for staff when applying the Policies, to assist with a better understanding of the intent of the Policies.

Commissioner Boozell agreed that the Policies needed to be checked for any discrepancies, but he felt that writing intents for guidance would be less helpful than conveying the intents directly to Staff and to the members through outreach.

Chair Gladney clarified that she did not wish to include the intent with the written Policies, but wanted to make it possible for Staff to correct small discrepancies in the Policies without having to go to the Council.

Commissioner Boozell agreed that there were some guiding principles that would be useful to note to Staff, and that minor changes should be kept out of Council, while all major changes would be sent for Council's consideration.

Commissioner Chynoweth stated the discussion of the intent of the Policies would help define what the next step for the Commission will be. She stated that the Commission should be working toward being a conduit for bringing the community together through increased outreach.

Commissioner Resnick stated that given the Commission only meets for an hour every three months, he would encourage collecting information and disseminating it to the other Commissioners before the actual meetings.

Commissioner Kruse stated that the Public Access Cable Advisory Committee is discussing how to form and govern a 5th channel for public access channel. He advised that the UPTV Commission may want to wait until the results of the Public Access committee's report to make some of the proposed decisions about the direction of UPTV.

B. Public Access Cable Advisory Committee Update

Commissioner Kruse stated the Public Access committee has met twice and has a total of 12 members, representing several government agencies as well as the community. The Committee is focusing on more practical questions of funding, governance and staffing.

Currently, the Committee is gathering information on the cost of studio space, sharing of resources between the existing channels and example budgets. Commissioner Kruse believes there is a great deal of interest in the 5th channel, but the practical details still must be worked out.

Commissioner Boozell asked how the Committee's report will impact the current franchise negotiations.

Commissioner Kruse stated that the Committee is operating independently of the franchise process and the report is for the cities' to understand the necessary steps for the creation of a public access 5th channel, should it be acquired in the franchise negotiations.

Commissioner Chynoweth stated that the franchise committee has been tasked with requesting a 5th channel by vote. The primary question is how will the 5th channel station be funded and operated jointly with in-kind or other contributions from the City of Champaign, the University of Illinois, Parkland College and the City of Urbana.

Commissioner Boozell asked if it was the franchise committee's responsibility to organize or request the mechanism for activation and distribution of a 5th channel, should it be awarded in the new franchise agreement.

Chair Gladney stated that in the negotiations such a mechanism is on the list of items being discussed.

C. Franchise Renewal Update

Chair Gladney stated there was no new news on the franchise renewal process. Comcast is now reviewing the proposal submitted by the franchise committee.

Commissioner Chynoweth stated that this is the informal stage of the negotiations.

Chair Gladney stated that the negotiations had to be settled by February 2009.

Commissioner Boozell asked if Comcast was waiting to respond until after several FCC rulings had been made regarding cable.

Chair Gladney stated she did not know, but would inform the Commission when concrete information was available.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Human Relations Commission Update

Commissioner Resnick stated that Todd Rent and the HRC had been working to acquire non-local programming as well as creating local programming to run on UPTV addressing hate speech and anti-discrimination issues. However, there are some problems with acquiring non-local programming because of copyright and being unable to rebroadcast the programs on UPTV. Some of the non-local programs found also have

segments of content that are not appropriate for the City of Urbana and Human Relations to sponsor, but that could be sponsored by independent members of UPTV.

Commissioner Resnick suggested that a joint effort by the Urbana Library and UPTV could make available to members of the public a selection of programming that addresses issues of concern that they could request to be run on UPTV.

Commissioner Inskeep asked if what he meant was that some of the programming from the library's collection would have a special label indicating it was available for rebroadcast on UPTV. Commissioner Resnick said yes.

Commissioner Resnick stated that, in the future, this could create a whole collection of programming on different topics that would be available for community members to request be rebroadcast on UPTV.

Commissioner Chynoweth advised that more effort be made to acquire programming that could be sponsored by the city, instead of hoping that a member of the community would select a program from the library and air it. The Commission could also sponsor a display case in the library highlighting the concerns about hate speech facing UPTV, directing library patrons to programming discussing the issues.

Commissioner Resnick stated he would take this idea back to the Human Relations Commission and discuss it with them.

Commissioner Boozell asked why the members of the UPTV Commission didn't just sponsor the programming themselves and get it on the air, instead of waiting for community members to discover it. He recommends that Staff time be spent creating locally produced programming to respond to the issues.

Commissioner Resnick stated that he agreed that locally produced programming was the Human Relations Commission's top priority. He asked Todd Rent to state why the City would not like to sponsor certain programs to air on UPTV.

Mr. Rent stated that he and Ms. Gorman did screen some of the episodes together, but Ms. Gorman watched them in their entirety.

Ms. Gorman stated that the programming *Spigots for Bigots or Channels for Change?* has language that is considered offensive. Also, some programs in the series were not as focused as others on the issues that the City hoped to address with the counter-programming it would sponsor.

Mr. Rent stated that there was still an ongoing discussion of whether or not to sponsor *Spigots*, since several of the programs had a very particular point of view. Some of the episodes featured discussions of racism that included racial epithets. He hoped that the Commission would be able to share in the discussion and that as City staff they were struggling with the appropriate way to present these programs.

Commissioner Boozell suggested using excerpts from the programming as part of a larger program featuring a panel discussing the issues raised.

Commissioner Chynoweth stated that she met the producer of the *Spigots* series, Martha Wallner who is considering visiting Urbana this fall, and would speak to her about the possibility of hosting a panel discussion to air on UPTV about the programs.

Commissioner Kruse stated he was troubled by the city government sponsoring programming that responds directly to public access programming. He felt it was the job of the community to respond to public access programming that they found offensive.

Commissioner Resnick stated that the Human Relations Commission felt that directly responding to particular public access programs was not appropriate, however, discussing issues of discrimination and hate more broadly was their concern.

Commissioner Boozell stated he agreed with Commissioner Kruse's concern, but the concern of the government about the programming run on UPTV was inevitable because of the City's involvement with the operations of the station. Encouraging more speech and dialogue on the channel should be the priority.

B. UPTV Programming Committee

Chair Gladney recommended forming a programming committee to create a short series of informational programs describing what public access is.

Commissioner Kruse agreed that the Commission needed to inform the public about the valuable resource public access is in the community to correct any misinformation.

Commissioner Chynoweth suggested asking members of the previous public access cable committee to be part of the programming committee.

Chair Gladney asked for participants and she, Commissioner Kruse and Commissioner Inskeep agreed to meet and discuss the next step.

C. Media Reform Conference Report

Commissioner Chynoweth attended the Media Reform Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota with the goal of learning from leaders of other public access channels and their content producers what has been done regarding hate speech on these channels. She also attended a panel discussion called "Standing Up Against Hate Speech" which was specifically focused on the broadcasting of false propaganda on commercially owned networks. During the panel, she explained the situation in Urbana and asked the attendees to suggest resources to provide counter-programming to anti-Semitic hate speech.

Commissioner Chynoweth learned the distinction between false propaganda, which makes deliberate, false claims about a category of people, but does not make a call to action and hate speech, which makes a call to action against a category of people. The response of many public access stations to this speech is to foster more dialogue within

the community. While non-local counter-programming is difficult to find, most stations decided to create their own programming to address these issues. Outreach to non-profits and community organizations is an important component to creating the dialogue between community members.

Commissioner Chynoweth suggested some courses of action to address discrimination on public access could be: curate a series on UPTV about bigotry, do a local wrap around the programming, or ask high schoolers to do local history interviews with holocaust survivors. She highly recommended UPTV Commissioners attending future Media Reform Conferences.

Chair Gladney requested that Commissioner Chynoweth's report be placed on the web with the minutes from today's meeting for the public to use as a resource.

Paul Weichsel made an additional comment stating that he had a hard time reconciling the Commissioners' general attitude of support for free speech and today's discussion on carefully selecting "appropriate" speech in programming that would be sponsored by the City of Urbana.

IX. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Boozell gave a report on local telecom policy stating that at the Media Reform Conference, FCC commissioners were met with and discussed the impact of state franchising on PEG access facilities. The FCC commissioners were informed that when they make policies that primarily benefit the large telecom providers, in many cases, local access channels are restricted in their operations or have to close. 217 PEG stations were surveyed for the report. In Illinois, which has one of the best set of franchising laws, many officials are reluctant to enforce these laws, for example, not requiring PEG channels be carried at the same quality level as other commercial stations. AT&T has attempted to put PEG stations in a low-quality tier (less resolution, no close captioning, no listing on electric programming guides) that would not be accessible by the basic cable subscribers.

Commissioner Boozell encouraged contacting the Attorney General's office and request them to take action against the treatment of PEG channels by AT&T and other cable providers. He stated that he had a letter outlining these problems that the Commissioners could sign and send to the Attorney General, district and state representatives.

Commissioner Chynoweth agreed and asked Commissioner Boozell to distribute the letter through Staff before the next meeting due to the timely nature of the issues.

Commissioner Boozell stated that those interested could get more information at www.keepusconnected.org.

X. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting was set for September 12th at 12:00 p.m. in the Urbana City Council Chambers. The meeting was adjourned at 1:23 p.m.