

**CHAMPAIGN-URBANA JOINT CABLE AND  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
QUARTERLY MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**DATE:** July 16, 2003  
Wednesday, 4:30 p.m.

**PLACE:** Urbana Council Chambers

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	<b>CITY OF CHAMPAIGN</b>	<b>CITY OF URBANA</b>
	Richard Atterberry Brian Silverman Giraldo Rosales	Barb Gladney John Peterson Kevin Maxson
	<b>PARKLAND</b>	<b>UI</b>
	Tom McDonnell	Stan Yagi

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Karen Walker  
Danielle Chynoweth

**STAFF PRESENT:** Chris Foster  
Jeff Hamilton

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Christopher Lamb (VOLO), Melody Brucker (Insight), Dave Treat (Insight), Dave Thiel (UI7), and Scott Doman (Cable in the Classroom)

**OPEN:** The meeting was called to order and the minutes from the April 9<sup>th</sup>, April 16<sup>th</sup>, and June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting's were approved by Commissioner Silverman and seconded by Commissioner Gladney. Commissioner McDonnell wanted to make sure that the April 3<sup>rd</sup> minutes were clarified, so that all the information listed was attributed to the correct source.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** State Representative Naomi Jacobsen spoke at the meeting and asked if the Commission had any questions about the most recent session. Commissioner Atterberry asked about taxing authority, because Florida took the authority from the cities, and they now decide where the money goes. Mrs. Jacobsen said that she had not heard anything about it, but a lot of fees were added to the budget, and she voted no. Commissioner Silverman stated that the state could add a tax to cable service, but he felt that it couldn't take away the local money because of the way the government is structured. Chairman Peterson asked if there was a lot of debate about the SBC bill, Mrs. Jacobsen said there wasn't much debate, but she voted against the bill.

Commissioner Gladney received an inquiry about closed-captioning for Champaign-Urbana residents. Jeff Hamilton stated that the inquiry was meant for the Commission, not one particular station. He added that he spoke with the caller, which would like for all the PEG channels to have closed captioning or sign language available to the public. Jeff Hamilton stated that for live television it would require someone to type the conversation while identifying the speaker. Commissioner Silverman said closed-captioning was definitely feasible but expensive.

Christopher Lamb from Volo Broadband mentioned that IBM was developing a system for news channels, that transcribed interviews through voice recognition. Commissioner Gladney thought the commission should do some research on the topic, Jeff Hamilton said he would look into it.

**PRESENTATION BY VOLO BROADBAND:**

- Volo's service is sent through a system called fixed wireless, which is a radio frequency that is designed to be rapidly deployable with low overhead.
- Volo is trying to give people more than a raw connection; even the most inexpensive service provides a firewall.
- System is highly routed, so privacy is higher on their network.
- Focusing on making it affordable to get high-speed service, bandwidth use is based on the amount of data transferred.
- Cost for basic service is \$28.00 a month, user has a device on their roof that receives a radio wave that sends them their Internet service; the installation charge is \$300.
- The equipment on your roof is rented to you from Volo, to prevent people from hacking their system.
- The Volo network consists of a tower in downtown Champaign; Mcleod USA's fiber network is being used as the back end.
- Line of sight is recommended to use the service but the service should be able to make through some trees.
- The service uses unlicensed FCC radio frequencies to operate.
- The customer receives the fastest connection available at that time; the limitation for uploading and downloading is 250 MB per 24 hours.
- You can purchase an additional 250 MB for \$10, and the price drops off if you want even more MB.
- The range of the signal is about 7 miles from the center of Champaign; do have customers in Bondville and Thomasboro.
- Do have plans to roll out the network countywide.
- Currently have several hundred users, which is about 50% consumer, 50% commercial.

Commissioner Yagi asked if there were any concerns about the FCC wanting to use the unregulated bandwidth. Mr. Lamb said that the FCC feels that opening up the unlicensed spectrum is one the best things they have done.

Commissioner Maxson applauded Volo for offering a broadband service that doesn't restrict it's use to customers, and is a very valuable service for Champaign-Urbana.

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:** There were no reports from standing committees.

**REPORTS FROM STAFF:**

Jeff Hamilton said a spreadsheet with information on all of the broadband providers has been posted on Champaign's website. Mr. Hamilton also wanted to know if the Commission wanted to remain a member of NATOA, or join the Alliance for Community Media instead. Commissioner Gladney recommended that the Commission stick with NATOA, and if they wanted people could join the ACM on an individual basis. Commissioner Silverman suggested that the Commission pay for a membership for Barb Gladney since she was most involved with public access. Jeff Hamilton said he would look into it and see if the money was in the budget. Mr. Hamilton stated that it was time for the NATOA conference and that there was enough money to send one member. Commissioner Silverman said that one of the new Commissioners, Stan Yagi or Giraldo Rosales, should attend the conference. Commissioner Yagi said he would not be able to attend, Commissioner Rosales accepted and said it would be a great opportunity to get his feet wet.

**REPORTS FROM CATV OPERATOR:** Melody Brucker said that Insight was gearing up for the students to return in August, and they were expecting an increase in numbers at that time. They have also been able to keep their phone stats up consistently at 92%, plus the average hold time has been less than 10 seconds. Mrs. Brucker added that Insight's drop/buries have been much more manageable, and they have not heard any complaints from the Commission.

HDTV was launched, with a total of 11 customers, the product is not being advertised, they are only using word of mouth. HBO and Showtime are the only channels available at the moment, but they are working on an HD tier that will include HD Discovery, HD ESPN, HD Net, and HD Movies. The tier will run \$10 a month. To receive HBO and Showtime in HD you have to run on a 5100 Box, which is \$2 per month. You are not charged anything more than the \$2 if you already have HBO and Showtime. A second box will not be required by October or November. Commissioner Silverman asked if the price would come down as more channels go to HD. Mrs. Brucker stated that she could only speak on what they are charging right now.

Commissioner Gladney expressed some disappointment in the basic cable price raise from \$10 to \$11.50. Mrs. Brucker stated that Insight has had minimal price increases since 2001. With the addition of HDTV, HSD, Digital Platform, and Video On-Demand the rate increases have been under 4%. Insight felt the basic cable product with 19 channels was undervalued, so they felt the rate adjustment was necessary. Mrs. Brucker added that Insight is well below the maximum rate they could charge for basic cable.

Commissioner Maxson asked if there were any plans to broadcast the networks in HD. Mrs. Brucker stated that they were working on that, and WAND was currently broadcasting primetime 7 – 10 PM in HD. Dave Treat from Insight stated that WAND was broadcasting a digital broadcast on a different channel, which Insight receives off of antennae. Commissioner Atterberry stated that he saw a demonstration on HDTV and it looked amazing. Commissioner Gladney added that she was the guest of Insight at the NCTA convention on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Gladney said that the showroom was terrific and the HDTV was the highlight of the room. She noted that the October study session was going to be on HDTV and Bill Check from NCTA would be willing to talk to us during the study session. Commissioner McDonnell said anyone who was interested in planning the study session could talk to him after the meeting.

#### **PEG REPORTS:**

David Thiel (UI7)

- Operates for the U of I 24 hours a day, been on the air for 5 years
- Offers international news, U of I student productions, and occasionally U of I events
- WILL is contracted out to handle the technical aspects of the station
- Station is routed through WILL master control
- Most of the programming comes directly from satellite
- SCOLA is an international news service that comes from Nebraska
- Student newscasts and magazine shows are produced by U of I TV/Radio classes
- Scheduling of U of I newscasts depend on the classes
- Occasionally have special broadcasts (I.E. Remembering 9/11, Title 9: How far have we come, and Women and Minorities)
- No repeated hours
- Bulletin Board runs 1 hour a day
- Sends out a monthly program listing to various television program listing services
- Web base schedule at [www.comm.uic.edu/ui7](http://www.comm.uic.edu/ui7)

Commissioner Gladney asked how the student broadcasts worked; Mr. Thiel said that the instructors contact him directly to set-up airtime for the programs.

Commissioner Atterberry asked about UI7's funding, Mr. Thiel had not heard of any changes at this time.

Commissioner Rosales asked if UI7 did any partnering with the community, Mr. Thiel said they were not set-up to do public access at this time.

Chris Foster (UPTV)

- 658 new hours of local programming
- 1368 hours of imported programming
- 2026 hours of new programming
- 3210 hours of bulletin programming

- Building programming base with Annenberg Channel
- Trying to increase public access and city originated programming
- 40 public access members, 9 currently active
- Added the Zoning Board of Appeals, Human Relations Commission, and Community Development Commission to the broadcast schedule
- Upgraded the video quality of the Urbana School Board broadcasts

Jeff Hamilton (Champaign Channel 5)

- Mostly a government channel
- 239 new hours of programming
- Was off the air for a short period of time, while they went through an A/V upgrade
- Have done some local programming, I.E. lectures held in the council chambers
- Put Crimestoppers top ten most wanted on the bulletin board, and within a two-month period 3 of the 10 were captured.
- Major equipment upgrade, looking forward to making further improvements in the future
- Looking into purchasing a satellite, to upgrade imported programming

Commissioner Atterberry asked if anyone knew about the future plans of the Illinois Channel. Chris Foster stated that they want to get to a point, where they have a small dish on everybody's roof that can receive the Channel. At this point they are just sending tapes, but the tapes do seem to be coming at least once a week.

Commissioner Atterberry noted that he noticed some audio problems with the Illinois Channel programs

Commissioner Silverman noted that the audio on the Illinois Channel programs seem to be louder than other programs

Barb Gladney (Parkland Channel 9)

- Airs telecourses and produces some programs in their studio
- Import programs which are sponsored by educational purposes that support the college
- Updating web page
- PEG inserts are set to be mailed out again

#### **CABLE IN THE CLASSROOM PRESENTATION (SCOTT DOMAN)**

- Non-profit consortium directed at K-12.
- Provides free cable service to the schools
- Insight normally provides a single service drop, no other equipment is provided
- Mr. Doman helps provide a design to extend the cable throughout the whole school
- Enables the school to originate broadcasting from within the school
- Can pipe assemblies, lunch menus, etc. into the classrooms
- Smaller schools can use it for Internet service
- Provide a design for a network backbone and service taps in each classroom
- Suggested an increase in the franchise fee rate, to pay for the program

Commissioner Silverman stated that Urbana could not increase their rate, and while Champaign could, why should people who get cable pay for something that goes into the schools. The schools should increase their taxes, if they wanted the money for this project.

Mr. Doman stated that their experience with the program is that the cable commissions take it on as a way to give back to the community.

Commissioner Gladney was unsure about what Cable in the Classroom offered.

Mr. Doman stated they provided a design of a cable network that could be wired throughout the whole school. So that every classroom has television in the room.

Commissioner Silverman suggested that Mr. Doman should be talking to the School Board not the Cable Commission. He stated the program really had nothing to do with cable.

Chairman Peterson said it is part of the public commitment thing the cable company started 5 years ago.

Commissioner Silverman said Mr. Doman should ask Insight to pay for it.

Mr. Doman said that it would have to be negotiated into the franchise agreement.

Commissioner McDonnell clarified that Insight provides a cable connection and the potential for the school to send a signal back to the cable company.

Mrs. Brucker said they provide the basic connection and the schools take it from there.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

- Chairman Peterson stepped down as Chairman and nominated Rick Atterberry for Chairman
- The nomination of Rick Atterberry passed by the vote of 7 to 0.
- Commissioner Gladney recognized Chairman Peterson for his long and dedicated service to the community as member and chair of the Joint Cable Commission. He has overseen franchise and re-franchise agreements, he has put in long hours, he is ever vigilant of the public interest, and always respectful of his fellow Commissioners.
- Commissioner Silverman seconded what Mrs. Gladney said and amplified that John was paving the way for the original Cablevision back in 1973. He is the only Chairman that I have ever known; he has helped every new member get up to speed on the Commission's current business. Commissioner Silverman added that we were losing a lot of institutional memory, and it's our loss. The cities should do something more for Chairman Peterson than just say goodbye.
- Chairman Peterson thanked Commissioner Silverman and Gladney for their comments. He said that he was beginning his fourth career and really felt it was a time to add some new blood.
- Newly elected Chairman Atterberry said we needed to nominate a Vice-Chair
- Commissioner Silverman recommended Commissioner Gladney
- Commissioner Gladney stated that she liked being Secretary
- Chairman Peterson suggested nominating Kevin Maxson for Vice-Chair
- Commissioner Silverman nominated Kevin Maxson for Vice-Chair, Commissioner McDonnell seconded the nomination
- The nomination of Kevin Maxson for Vice-Chair passed by the vote of 8 to 0
- Commissioner Silverman nominated Barb Gladney for Secretary, Chairman Peterson seconded the nomination
- The nomination of Barb Gladney for Secretary was approved by the vote of 8 to 0

### **COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS**

Commissioner Silverman complimented Insight on its broadcast of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade

Commissioner McDonnell reiterated that he and Commissioner Walker would be planning the October study session on HDTV.

Newly elected Chairman Atterberry recognized Tom Bruno and George Badger who left the commission, and he welcomed their replacements Stan Yagi from the U of I and Giraldo Rosales from the Champaign City Council. Mr. Atterberry added that Chairman Peterson's knowledge and experience would be missed.

Next meeting dates are - Study Session October 8<sup>th</sup> in Champaign, Regular Meeting October 15<sup>th</sup> in Urbana.

Meeting was adjourned.