

**CHAMPAIGN-URBANA JOINT CABLE AND  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**DATE:** October 15, 2003  
Wednesday, 3:30 p.m.

**PLACE:** Urbana Council Chambers

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	<b>CITY OF CHAMPAIGN</b> Richard Atterberry Giraldo Rosales Karen Walker Brian Silverman	<b>CITY OF URBANA</b> Barb Gladney Jim Hayes Kevin Maxson
	<b>PARKLAND</b>	<b>UI</b>

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Tom McDonnell and Stan Yagi

**STAFF PRESENT:** Chris Foster  
Jeff Hamilton

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Paul Adams (Prairienet), Art Symberski (Insight), and Dave Treat (Insight)

**OPEN**

Chairman Atterberry welcomed Jim Hayes to the Commission. The July 9<sup>th</sup>, July 16<sup>th</sup>, and September 17<sup>th</sup> minutes were approved.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- Jeff Hamilton said that he received a note from former Commissioner Chynoweth thanking the Commission for letting her serve and the she would continue to send along information.
- Mr. Hamilton also noted that Insight sent the City of Champaign a letter that detailed their new rate and service changes.

**OLD BUSINESS**

A former Study Session focused on area broadband providers. Paul Adams from Prairienet wasn't able to make previous meetings.

*Paul Adams (Prairienet)*

- Don't offer broadband
- Started ten years ago as a free net
- Providing access to areas that didn't have it before
- Service is 56K dial-up
- Used a grant to ratchet up services that they provide
- Established training programs and a computer recycling program
- Combined training, recycling, and internet service into a program called Community Networking Initiative
- Program allows those who meet the income requirements to receive a minimum of 12 hours of computer training, a recycled computer to take home with them, and a 56K hook-up.
- Have been working on a wireless computer network in East St. Louis.

Chairman Atterberry asked Mr. Adams, where Prairienet would be going in the future?

- Prairienet tries to serve the population that isn't being served.
- People want person-to-person contact, when they need Tech. Support.
- Will continue to provide services to those with low incomes.
- Prairienet may have a role in developing a wireless network in the C-U community.
- Still recycling computers, looking for Pentium Class machines.
- Pentiums can handle freeware.
- PC's not Mac's.
- Both the City of Urbana and Champaign have been contributors.
- Demand for computers has dropped.

#### *Closed Captioning of PEG Channels*

Jeff Hamilton was asked to give a report on Closed-Captioning options for the PEG Channels

#### Sign Language

- Sign Language Interpreter, inside in-set box interpreting speech.
- PACE says that this is the preferred format.
- Interpreters charge \$30-\$40 an hour with a two hour minimum.

#### Captioning

- Text across the bottom of the screen describing what is being said.
- Closed and Open Captioning.
- Open, means the text is always on the screen.
- Closed, means the text is turned on and off by the viewers.
- Most TV sets have this Closed Captioning option.
- To produce captioning, someone must type in as fast as the people in the meeting are talking.

#### Captioning Options

- Live captioning, in-house, PEG Channels purchase equipment, for \$5,000-\$10,000.
- Must have a stenographer to type along with the meeting, \$100 an hour with a 2-hour minimum.
- 116 televised meeting's estimates at \$23,000 a year, plus the cost of equipment, and the recurring cost of the stenographer every year.
- Another way is to send the audio through a phone line to a captioning service, which types it up and sends back through another phone line that runs through the encoder device.
- Cost is \$4,000 to \$8,000 for equipment and \$125 an hour for the service.
- If you don't want to do live programming, you can transcribe taped meetings, send the tapes to a service that Captions the meeting for you. No equipment is necessary.
- \$3 to \$6 a minute to transcribe a meeting, you then send the tape to a service that would caption the meeting for \$6 to \$15 a minute.
- Problem with this method is the week's turnaround time, by the time you received the finish product the meeting could be dated.

Commissioner Silverman stated that with the limited audience we were talking about, the service needed to be cost effective?

- Mr. Hamilton said that he has asked PACE about the audience size, but he has yet to hear a response.
- He added that he was not making any recommendations; he was just passing along the information.
- Chairman Atterberry suggested that the Closed-Captioning issue may be a good topic for a study session.

#### Voice Generated Captioning

- Voice recognition software takes hours to recognize one's voice.
- It would be impractical to ask every Commissioner or Council Member to take the time to train on the system.
- Best way would be to train 1 or 2 people, and then have them repeat what is said into the system.
- Equipment for the system runs between \$7,000 and \$11,000.
- Would have to pay staff or outside person to read back the meeting into the system.

Commissioner Gladney agreed with Chairman Atterberry and thought that we should discuss the subject during one of the Commission's Study Sessions.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The Technical Committee had nothing to report.

### *PEG Report (Barb Gladney)*

- PEG Committee is working on setting up a PEG Advisory Board.
- All of the annual PEG Channel reports were binded into one folder by Jeff Hamilton.
- Chairman Atterberry motioned to approve the annual PEG reports, it was accepted.
- The cable bill mailers went out again, the Commission is now doing this twice a year.

## **STAFF REPORT**

Jeff Hamilton presented a Cable Compliance Report.

- 2-year compliance check of Insight Communications.
- All requirements were met except for a copy of Insight's recent audit report.
- That is expected Spring 2004.

Commissioner Silverman asked if Franchise Fees were being collected on cable modems.

- Mr. Hamilton said a recent court ruling was made on the issue.

Chairman Atterberry asked about live programming origination capability.

- Live origination of programming can be accomplished at many places around town.
- The hardware to produce this programming is available.

Mr. Hamilton noted that there was a complaint about the turnaround time on when customers receive their cable bills and the due date for payment.

- Insight meeting the requirements that they need to meet.
- They do have a grace period past the due date

Mr. Hamilton presented a memo about the court ruling on cable modems

- Ruled that cable modem service is an information service and a telecommunications service.
- Changes FCC definition
- Effects how cities can regulate rates, open access, customer service and other matters involved with cable modems.
- Don't have to pay franchise fees on cable modems.
- Courts are expecting for the ruling to be appealed.
- One impact is that Insight could be required to provide open access to other providers via their pipeline.
- Champaign may no longer receive franchise fees on cable modems. Urbana is currently not receiving the franchise fee on cable modems.
- Mr. Hamilton stated that cities are not permitted to take complaints on cable modems, those are supposed to go to the FCC.

Chris Foster stated that UPTV was continuing to work on outreach and increasing public access.

## **REPORT BY THE CATV SYSTEM OPERATOR**

Art Symborski from Insight noted that they do take complaints on billing cycles very seriously and that this particular problem was caused because of an update to the billing system.

- Would like to provide 10-14 days to pay the bills.

### Subscriber Statistics

- Good gains in July, August, and September with basic customers.
- Digital customers also grew in all three months.
- Continuing to add value to the digital product.
- HSD customers also saw sizeable gains.
- Customer service numbers were not where they would like.
- Number of calls increased due to the students returning.
- 75 Drops on the ground.

### New Offerings

- Starz on Demand, Library of 100 movies a month, which you can watch as if it were on VHS or DVD.
- HD Tier Package: HDNET, HD Movies, HDESPN, HD Discovery for \$7.95.
- SPEED and MTV2 were moved to the Classic service.

## **NATOA CONFERENCE REVIEW**

Commissioner Rosales reported on the 2003 NATOA Conference in Denver, Colorado.

- Conference really stimulated his interest in telecommunications.
- Conference divided into four stages: Programming, Regulatory, Technical and Multi-Media, and Technological Showcase.
- Programming: Went on a tour of a public access television studio. Commissioner Rosales hoped that the creation of a public access studio could be a future goal of the Commission.
- Can be done by coaxial cable, satellite, or fiber link.
- Conference opened up his eyes to many areas: Hardware involved in cable operations, legal aspects, the issue of cable modems, and to the responsibility that we have to the public, city, and school systems.
- Commissioner Rosales feels that we under utilize are PEG Channels.
- Money is out there for programming, equipment, studios, etc.

## **MEETING DATES FOR 2004**

The meeting dates for 2004 were set.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday's of January, April, July, and October at 4:30PM
- Need to amend the by-laws to allow the change in times for each meeting.
- Commission decided to continue using the Study Sessions as workshops.

Set topics for 2004 Study Sessions.

- January 14<sup>th</sup> – PACE, and Closed-Captioning.
- April 14<sup>th</sup> – Telephone (Provisional)
- July 14<sup>th</sup> – Legislative Updates
- October 13<sup>th</sup> – PEG Advisory

## **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Rosales has been with working with the University of Illinois to bring Spanish cable TV to the residence halls.

- Asked Insight if the rate could be lowered for a large group of subscribers.
- Can they add more Spanish TV options?
- Commissioner Silverman noted that the franchise agreement with U of I was different than Champaign and Urbana's.
- The U of I agreement is outside the Commission's purview.
- Insight has a program where they provide the University with Digital converters, which Spanish students can use to receive 8-10 Latino channels.
- Commissioner Rosales stated that there were only 175 boxes and they wanted to add more but the expense to the University was enormous.
- Insight would have to add the Latino channels to the classic service, because a digital box is currently needed to pick up the Latino package.

Commissioner Gladney wanted to note that that some people at the HDTV Forum spoke about using Direct TV or DISH Network instead of cable, which she felt was bad because they don't provide access to the PEG Channels.

Commissioner Silverman added that he was taken aback by comments made by Paul Donahue from WICD at the HDTV Forum. He felt it was very wrong for Mr. Donahue to accuse the cable company of lining their pockets.

## **END OF MEETING**

Next meeting dates are January 14<sup>th</sup> for the Study Session and January 21st for the regular meeting.