

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

DATE: January 12, 2005
Wednesday, 4:00 p.m.

PLACE: Champaign Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT:	CITY OF CHAMPAIGN	CITY OF URBANA
	Richard Atterberry Karen Walker	Barb Gladney Kevin Maxson Peter Resnick
	PARKLAND	UI

MEMBERS ABSCENT: Tom McDonnell, Stan Yagi, Jim Hayes, Giraldo Rosales, and Brian Silverman

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Foster
Jeff Hamilton

OTHERS PRESENT: Randall Cotton and John Marchibrano

Call to Order

Vice Chair Kevin Maxson called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM.

Additions to the Agenda

Discussion of the Study Session was added under Reports of the Agenda for the January 19th regular meeting.

A discussion on the political content policies for both Channel 5 and 6 was added to the agenda under Old Business.

Study Session

Mr. Hamilton wanted to announce that NATOA was going to have a web based conference on Voice Over IP on Feb 7 – 9. The City of Champaign was going to register for the conference and Mr. Hamilton wanted to get an idea of how many Commissioners wanted to participate.

Discussion on the possibility of adding and additional PEG Channel strictly for public access

Commissioner Gladney stated she presented a resolution at an October meeting of the PEG Advisory Committee. The resolution was given to Chairman Atterberry and he was to ask Insight if a channel could become available solely for public access. She added that the purpose of the resolution was to examine the need for a channel just for public access.

Chairman Atterberry said that he had a couple informal discussions with Insight and there did not seem to be a lot of enthusiasm about the possibilities of an additional channel. Insight felt it should be dealt with during the franchise is renegotiated.

Jeff Hamilton, City of Champaign – Spoke on his time at Ames, Iowa Public Access

Full time public access channel operated by the city, the city also operates a full time government channel.

- Orientations held monthly for about 8 – 12 people
- 2 -3 people would actually come back and be producers
- Studio, Control Room, Editing Bay, Green Room
- 5 SVHS Camcorder, Mics, Tripods, available
- 24 hour a day programming, waiting list for evening time slots
- Wide variety of programming
- Open 8 AM to Midnight
- Interest in use in public access has diminished
- Funding - \$180,000 provided by cable operator to set-up facility, and paid rent for facility
- City paid for staffing, operational costs, and equipment costs
- Ames, Iowa has a population of 50,000
- Budget for facility was comparable to the budget for the City of Champaign

Chris Foster, City of Urbana – Structure of other public access channels

- Most of the channels that I found get there funding through a franchise agreement with the cable company.
- Most have studio facilities
- Other available equipment varies from station to station
- Most are governed by a volunteer board
- Staff sizes vary

Commissioner Resnick asked if they had more public access programming on these channels than UPTV has.

Mr. Foster said that they did have more public access programming, but is hard to compare since we have both government and public access programming on UPTV.

Chair Atterberry asked about the relationship between the board of the channels and the city government.

Mr. Foster stated that he made some good contacts that he could call and ask about how the boards and city government interact.

Commissioner Walker – Structure of other public access channels

- 3 to 4 of the channels she looked at shared public access and governmental programming
- Channels that only had public access programming seem to have more creative and eclectic programming
- Lots of call in shows (Meet the Criminals, Meet the Pets, Homework Helper)
- Lots of how to and language shows
- Benefits of having a separate channel is that people seem to be more creative
- One Community got \$500,000 for a studio as well as production trucks from its franchise agreement
- Many communities seemed to be shooting for the sky and some of them got it

Commissioner Gladney – Websites

- www.alliancecm.org
- www.buskegroup.com
- <http://world.std.com/~rghm/alpha.htm>

UPTV Coordinator Chris Foster wanted to make it clear that many of these public access channels hire producers to produce programs and even buy programming for there channels. There channels are full but not all of the programming is locally produced.

Audience Participation

Randall Cotton – Resident of Champaign In support of reforming public access television and making it more accessible and responsive to the public, the current arrangement is atypical since the city administration runs the public access television. This led to the censorship of two programs on UPTV, the request for Democracy Now and a program on community police relations. In order to have a vibrant public access station it must be separate from the city government and our community should be moving towards this model.

Commissioner Maxson stated that Mr. Cotton had grossly mischaracterized the situation involving government interference. The documentary was not aired at the behest of the city legal department. They did not bow to public pressure, they waited for the court decision to be made and when the charges were dismissed the program was aired. As far as Democracy Now, while 9 months seems like a long time, our commissions tend to move slowly. Mr. Maxson said he never felt any pressure from the Mayor there just some new rules, policies, etc. that needed to be examined and created.

Commissioner Gladney added the UPTV Commission was dealing with some administration problems at the same time which also delayed the request for Democracy Now

Commissioner Maxson stated that he was very supportive of adding an additional channel for public access and he had hoped that Insight would immediately tell us that they were interested.

Chair Atterberry added that he had not been able to have any in-depth conversations with Insight about the possibility. Most of his information had come from city resources who think they would be opposed to reopening the franchise.

Commissioner Gladney said that we were given bandwidth for 8 channels and we are currently using only 4.

Commissioner Maxson felt the most important issue is public support and he had hoped that there were more members of the community at the meeting in support for the new channel.

Randall Cotton asked the commission if UPTV was controlled by a non-profit entity if they thought the Copwatch program would have been censored.

Commissioner Maxson said if they had good legal advice they wouldn't have.

Commissioner Resnick said that a non-profit run channel would be more willing to play a program and challenge any legal action.

John Marchibrano – Resident of Champaign

- Public Involvement requires public awareness
- \$500,000 is not very much money for the cable company to provide
- Involved with university film clubs that would love to have their content shown
- Dozens of filmmakers and documentaries are around the U of I that could use the resource if they knew about it.

Commissioner Gladney said as a result of this meeting she would like to set-up a study committee to examine the creation of a public access channel for the community.

Chair Atterberry agreed and the issue was put on the agenda for the regular meeting. He added the community needs to show support, the franchisee needs to buy into it, and the city governments need to be provided with enough information of how this works in other communities so they can make a decision. It is clear that the city councils may think that they will be held accountable for what is on the channel since they negotiate the franchise.

Commissioner Resnick wanted to make clear that the city negotiates the franchise and they are the ones signing the bottom line that states they want an independently run public access channel.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 PM.