

**CHAMPAIGN-URBANA CABLE TELEVISION AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
QUARTERLY MINUTES**

DATE: January 16, 2008
4:30 p.m.

PLACE: Urbana City Council Chambers
400 S. Vine St., Urbana, IL

MEMBERS PRESENT:	CHAMPAIGN	URBANA
	Rick Atterberry Karen Walker Ken Pirok Giraldo Rosales	Barbara Gladney Durl Kruse Danielle Chynoweth Peter Resnick

	PARKLAND	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
	Tom McDonnell	Stan Yagi

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Jeff Hamilton – City of Champaign
Kate Gorman – City of Urbana

OTHERS PRESENT: Art Svymbersky, Melody Brucker – Comcast Communications
Amy Plassic
Jeff Ruffner

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Atterberry called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Chair Atterberry asked Jeff Hamilton to note the attendance.

3. MODIFICATIONS TO AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda was approved as presented.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 10, 2007, October 17, 2007 and November 14, 2007 meetings were approved as presented.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence was accepted as presented in the Commission's packet.

The Commission welcomed Kate Gorman, the new station manager for UPTV.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A. Cable Franchise Renewal Update

Mr. Hamilton reported that Brian Grogan presented the Cable Needs Assessment report to the Urbana City Council on December 10, 2007 and to the Champaign City Council on December 11, 2007. By a straw poll vote, the Champaign Council adopted a modified version of the Needs Assessment report which doesn't include funding for a public access channel. Formal adoption of the modified report will be considered by Champaign's Council on February 5, 2008. The Refranchising Committee will meet again after both Councils formally adopt a needs assessment. Brian Grogan is currently drafting franchise agreements for the Cities to consider opening negotiations with.

Commissioner Chynoweth stated that on January 14, 2008, the Urbana City Council adopted the Urbana Community Needs Assessment report as presented. They also passed a motion to create the Public Access Steering Committee which was recommended in both Needs Assessment reports. This Committee will comprise decision-makers from both cities, the University of Illinois, Parkland College, local school districts, Cable Commissioners, and UPTV. She stated that the Committee should explore whether Champaign could help support the channel with in-kind services that won't lead to increased franchise fees.

Commissioner Pirok stated that a recent New-Gazette editorial reported that merely getting a 5th PEG Channel will increase subscriber fees. He said that he understands that just obtaining the channel would not increase subscriber costs.

Chair Atterberry agreed and stated the editorial had the facts wrong.

7. REPORTS

A. Committee Reports

Technical Committee/Broadband Access Committee

Commissioner Resnick reported that he and Commissioner Chynoweth are working to identify members for the new Broadband Access Committee.

Commissioner Chynoweth asked Commissioners to submit names of potential members to her or Commissioner Resnick for consideration.

Commissioner Gladney asked if Comcast is filtering the Internet. Chair Atterberry suggested that the Commission ask the cable operator to respond to that question during their part of the agenda.

Commissioner Resnick replied that network neutrality is still up in the air, but that the FCC seems to now be interested in the issue.

B. Staff Reports

UPTV

Ms. Gorman reported that UPTV is focusing on expanding their community outreach. They recently began producing coverage of University High School basketball games. They are also making changes to their website to strengthen UPTV's presence.

CGTV

Mr. Hamilton reported that the addition of a new part time intern has allowed CGTV to increase their production load. They are currently working on productions about the new library, an informational video about the fire department, and a new, monthly talk show.

Mr. Hamilton also reported that the Commission's memberships for NATOA, IL-NATOA, and Alliance for Community Media had been renewed for 2008.

C. System Operator Report

Art Svymbersky presented the Commission with Insight's 4th quarter report. He reported that subscriber statistics showed normal year-end fluctuations and good customer service levels for the quarter. He reported that the local cable system is now operated by Comcast -- the largest cable operator in the United States. He reported that customers will get information in the mail soon regarding upcoming changes to e-mail and other services.

Commissioner Resnick asked about the timeline for the full switchover from Insight to Comcast.

Mr. Svymbersky stated that February bills will be "Comcast" bills. Customers will have 6-9 months to pick their new Comcast e-mail addresses. Melody Brucker stated that the billing conversion is the first big step, and will happen around February 1st.

Chair Atterberry asked how long customers will have before their old Insight e-mail addresses stop working.

Mr. Svymbersky responded that customers will have about 9 months to convert to a new e-mail address and that messages will automatically forward from the Insight address to the Comcast address for a while.

Commissioner Resnick asked if Comcast will change their channel lineups.

Ms. Brucker replied there will not be a lot of changes in the near future. She said that Comcast will increase high definition and video-on-demand content.

Commissioner Walker asked about Comcast's policy regarding Internet blocking.

Mr. Svymbersky stated that he will have to research Comcast's policies, but that everything is currently "business as usual."

Commissioner Chynoweth reported that today she filed a complaint with the FCC regarding Comcast blocking peer-to-peer traffic. She agreed to provide a copy of her complaint to Ms. Brucker.

Commissioner Yagi asked if Comcast will follow the new state law requiring a 28-day billing turnaround requirement.

Ms. Brucker replied that her staff is still gathering information on this issue but that Comcast feels they are in compliance with the new state law.

Commissioner Gladney stated that the Commission had received several complaints about poor customer service and asked how they will address that problem.

Mr. Svymbersky stated that good customer service is very important, is taken seriously, and is addressed through ongoing training. Ms. Brucker pointed out that they take thousands of calls a month. She admitted that poor customer service can happen but that they are striving to eliminate it. They are doing their best to help the customer and work through the problem. She said that complaints are inevitable but that they work quickly to solve any issues with their customers.

Chair Atterberry asked if broadband customer calls are handled locally.

Mr. Svymbersky replied that general questions are handled locally, but technical issues are sent to a Tier 2 call center. He said that they work with staff both locally and at other offices to address complaints and issues as needed.

Commissioner Pirok said that his calls to Insight usually result in a response that the problem is at the customer's house and that a service call is necessary. He said that he has received this response from the cable operator numerous times, even when he feels the problem isn't on his end. He agrees to the service call but feels that the technicians are just wasting their time. He shared that he joined the Cable Commission so that he could have this ongoing problem addressed.

Mr. Svymbersky reported that Comcast's customer service and troubleshooting tools will be enhanced and better able to help with this type of issue.

Commissioner Walker said that one of the complaint forms indicates a caller can call the local office and dial "2" to connect to a CSR. She asked if that was a recent change.

Mr. Svymbersky replied that a change will be made with the Comcast phone system and customers won't have to validate their identity using a social security number any longer.

Chair Atterberry asked if there was any progress regarding the Big Ten Network.

Ms. Brucker replied that those negotiations are at the corporate level, and she is not aware of any progress.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Future of the Public Access Study Committee

Chair Atterberry stated that the Committee had fulfilled its charge when it presented its report in late 2005.

Commissioner Gladney said the Committee didn't want to disband until it talked with the consultants, which took place last summer. She moved that the Public Access Study Committee be disbanded.

Commissioner Kruse seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

B. New State Customer Service Standards

Mr. Hamilton stated that he wanted to provide some information to the Commission about new customer service protections for cable and video customers in Illinois. He explained that this would also be a good public education opportunity.

- New state customer service standards applied to incumbent cable operators on January 1, 2008
- Includes all providers of cable and paid television services.
- This includes Comcast, AT&T, and possibly satellite providers.

New Cable/Video Customer Service Protections

- 60-day trail period during which customers can disconnect service without penalty
- Maximum 1-year contract terms, with limited termination charges
- Requires disclosure of all charges – including actual price at end of promotional term
- Rates for each level of service must be available to the public and on the Web
- Minimum 28 day turnaround for bill payment
- \$25 customer credit for missed appointments
- Customers don't have to sign up for other services in order to get television service
- Written standards given to all new customers and annually thereafter
- Photo-ID badges required of service employees
- 30-day notice prior to raising rates or eliminating channels
- \$150 customer credit for disclosure of private customer information
- Charges to cease within 1 business day after customer terminates service
- Customer calls answered within 30 seconds no less than 90% of the time
- Annual reports on compliance and number of customer complaints sent to state and local government bodies
- Enforcement by the Attorney General's Office and local government bodies

Commissioner Chynoweth asked how local government would enforce this new law.

Mr. Hamilton stated that they will likely follow existing procedures, utilizing cable complaints and annual compliance checks. He anticipates the cities can continue to work on issues informally with the cable operator; escalating to formal remedies as needed.

Commissioner Chynoweth asked if the complaint procedure will remain the same.

Mr. Hamilton said no changes were anticipated in the local complaint process and that customers should consult their cable bills for information on filing complaints with their local franchising authority (phoning Champaign staff or e-mailing Urbana staff).

Commissioner Gladney asked if the same complaint procedure will be used with AT&T.

Mr. Hamilton responded that when AT&T begins offering television services locally, that staff will gather local contact information and work on developing a similar complaint process with them.

Commissioner Resnick asked if the state's 30 second/90% rule is any more detailed than the one in our franchise.

Mr. Hamilton reported it is about the same.

Commissioner McDonnell asked who a state franchisee will report their compliance too on issues like phone statistics.

Mr. Hamilton responded that the operator is to provide an annual report to both the state and the local franchising authority.

Commissioner Kruse said that he receives customer complaints about the cable operator's broadband services, which he realizes the Commission doesn't oversee. He asked where Commissioners should refer those customers too.

Mr. Hamilton responded that Champaign handles broadband and cable TV complaints the same way. He stated that the local cable operator has responded to broadband complaints submitted via the City. He acknowledged that this could change in the future. He added that Comcast's telephone service is regulated by the state and that the Internet is regulated by the federal government.

Commissioner Kruse asked Ms. Brucker if Comcast was agreeable to this process.

Ms. Brucker said that for now they want to handle all customer issues locally.

Commissioner Resnick stated that handling Internet/broadband problems locally is a good idea. He feels that any attempts to regulate the Internet would result in a large court battle.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Amy Plassic, 2902 N. Highcrest Road, Urbana.

Ms. Plassic stated that cable and broadband are not currently available at her home. She was told by the local cable office to attend this meeting and request it.

Chair Atterberry asked if she lives within the Urbana city limits.

Ms. Plassic replied no.

Chair Atterberry stated that the County has a franchise and perhaps she is covered by the County's franchise. He explained that this Commission only has oversight over the Champaign-Urbana city limits.

Ms. Plassic asked if she should address this issue with the County.

Chair Atterberry advised that would be her best course of action.

Ms. Brucker stated that Comcast is aware of that growing subdivision but that it is still pretty far from their current cable plant. She reported that they are looking researching whether it is feasible to build out and provide service out in that area.

Chair Atterberry asked if the County has any density build out requirements like the cities.

Melody Brucker replied that it depends. She stated that Comcast wants new customers and will build out to new rural subdivisions when it makes economic sense.

Commissioner Walker asked if a neighborhood petition would help.

Ms. Brucker stated that a neighborhood petition could help to justify the costs of building service to new areas.

Jeff Ruffner, 811 Irvine Road, Champaign

Mr. Ruffner stated that the Commission has correspondence from him in their packets. He stated that new laws haven't kept up with new technologies. He stated that the Commission's website should make it clear that they don't make the laws, but merely enforce them. He said that when companies police themselves, we have to be careful when considering the information they give us. He recommends a body be set up for customers to complain to. He said that the Insight isn't a member of the Better Business Bureau and that most customers don't realize the Cable Commission even exists. He said that consumers don't know where to complain to and suggested requiring Comcast to put language on their bills to tell customers how to complain.

Chair Atterberry explained that the complaint process is included on cable bills in Champaign-Urbana.

10. COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS

Commissioner Resnick said that customers might think the number on the bill is to a complaint department at the cable office. He suggested that the Commission do a billing insert to advise customers that the Cable Commission exists and can help handle cable complaints.

Commissioner Yagi pointed out that different services are regulated by different governmental bodies. He suggested that the Commission's website be clarified to explain that the Commission oversees cable television service only. He suggested also providing the contact information for other agencies so that broadband and telephone customers know where they can complain to.

Chair Atterberry asked Jeff Hamilton to look into making these changes on the Commission's website.

11. SET FUTURE MEETING DATE AND ADJOURNMENT

The next study session was scheduled for April 9, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. in Champaign.

The next regular meeting was scheduled for April 16, 2008 at 4:30 p.m. in Urbana.

The topic for the study session meeting will be the analog to digital broadcast conversion.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:38 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Hamilton
Telecommunications AV Technician
City of Champaign