

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

DATE: January 21, 2009
4:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT:	CHAMPAIGN	URBANA
	Rick Atterberry	Barbara Gladney
	Karen Walker	Durl Kruse
	Giraldo Rosales	Peter Resnick
		David Gehrig
	PARKLAND	
	Chris Foster	

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ken Pirok

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Art Svymbersky – Comcast
Kristin Pollak – Comcast
Jim Lee – Comcast

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Chair Atterberry asked Kate Gorman to note the attendance.

3. MODIFICATIONS TO AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jeff Hamilton asked that the Cable Compliance Report be removed from the agenda. The change was approved and the modified agenda accepted.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the October 15, 2008 meeting were approved as presented.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Hamilton presented various notices from Comcast regarding channel lineup changes. Keep Us Connected notified the Commission that the Illinois Attorney General is investigating AT&T and their handling of PEG stations. The News-Gazette had a large

article on PEG stations in Urbana-Champaign. Champaign's received a total of 17 cable complaints for the quarter; 10 were about programming.

Ms. Gorman reported that Urbana had 8 cable complaints for the quarter, but there had been 245 calls to the station. 202 of the calls had been due to confusion over what number on the customer's bill to call for assistance from Comcast.

Mr. Hamilton stated that Champaign also receives a number of calls from people looking for Comcast's phone number. He reported that the City asked that language on the bill be changed to clarify that the City phone number was for people wishing to file formal complaints. He said that Comcast responded that they were unable to fulfill that request.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A. Cable Franchise Renewal Update

Chair Atterberry stated that advances are being made in the franchise negotiations, and the City of Champaign is waiting for an updated draft copy from Comcast reflecting recent conversations. Champaign will decide soon if they will seek an extension to the franchise agreement, which expires February 28, 2009. Champaign's next negotiating session with Comcast is January 28th.

B. NATOA Annual Conference Report

Commissioner Peter Resnick stated that his complete report on the NATOA Conference would be sent to Mr. Hamilton for distribution to the Commission tomorrow.

C. Digital Television Transition Update

Chair Atterberry stated that there are no new developments on the issues raised at the January 14th study session regarding the DTV transition. The current deadline (February 17, 2009) will hold unless Congress acts to postpone it. The new FCC Chair would like to appropriate additional funds to send out unused coupons to new owners by first class mail.

7. REPORTS

A. Committee Reports

Commissioner Resnick stated that the Broadband Access Committee has developed a mission statement and a vision statement, which was included in the Commissioner's packets. The Broadband Committee is continuing research into government programs to support the plan, and would like to ask the Commission to approve the mission and vision statements.

Commissioner Rosales asked who the members of the Broadband Committee are.

Commissioner Resnick answered that the members are: Danielle Chynoweth, Mike Smeltzer, Bill DeJarnette, Fred Halenar, Jeff Hamilton, Andrew O’ Baoill, Peter Folk, Mel Farrell, Josh King, Peter Folk, and Daniel Meredith.

Commissioner Kruse asked for a timeline for the first reports to the Commission. Commissioner Resnick replied that the Committee would be meeting monthly and reports would follow soon.

The Commission approved the Broadband Access Committee’s new mission and vision statements.

B. Staff Reports

Ms. Gorman stated that UPTV was selected as one of six stations to participate in the Open Media Project, which will be implemented at the end of the month. The station recently had 24 single programs from the public submitted. She also reported that UPTV and Urbana High School are collaborating on a new series.

Mr. Hamilton stated that CGTV had produced the C-U International Humanitarian Awards Ceremony and had produced a live broadcast from the Champaign Public Library of a joint meeting of the Champaign Park District, Champaign School Board and City Council. He thanks Comcast for their assistance with the live broadcast. CGTV is also continuing to produce Champaign Connection and has produced 8 monthly shows thus far. Mr. Hamilton reported that the City also received Comcast’s FCC reports which are on file and available for anyone to review. The Commission’s memberships with NATOA (\$830), Illinois NATOA (\$60), and Alliance for Community Media (\$100) were also renewed. The Commission’s budget balance stands at \$2300.

Commissioner Resnick stated that money was reimbursed to the City of Champaign related to his NATOA trip, and wondered if those funds had been returned to the Commission’s budget. Mr. Hamilton said he would check and see.

C. System Operator Reports

Art Svymbersky went over the most recent channel changes to Comcast’s lineup. Comcast has launched these new HD channels: Versus-947, Golf-921, Golf Info HD, Fox News-950, FX-948, Speed-946, and MLB Network-516 and in March the Hallmark Movie Channel. 36 channels were added this year, including 27 HD channels.

Kristin Pollok announced a new local program called “Newsmakers” that will be aired five minutes before the hour on Headline News. She also reported that the Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club won a \$15,000 grant from Comcast and invited the Commission to attend the check award ceremony on February 10th.

Commissioner Karen Walker asked Mr. Svymbersky what Comcast management’s responses have been to the complaints brought up recently by the Commission. Mr. Svymbersky stated that they make sure to send programming complaints to the head office and any system problems are dealt with at the local office (while informing the

head office as well). Commissioner Walker asked if there are any explanations why Champaign-Urbana has the highest cable rates in the Midwest. Mr. Svymbersky stated that they try to be sensitive to concerns about rates and they share them with the regional and national offices. Rates are not set locally.

Commissioner Resnick asked about the HD channel lineup and the odd numbering system. Jim Lee explained that there had been some changes made to accommodate the migration of the newly launched HD channels and those decisions were made by a regional group. Commissioner Resnick asked about the grouping of the local PEG channels around number 111, and asked if there was any way to arrange the suffixes to correspond with the stations' actual channel number (e.g. CGTV 5 on 111.5). Mr. Lee said he would look into it.

Commissioner Gladney asked how many channels Basic subscriber have lost recently, while still paying the same amount of money. Mr. Svymbersky stated there would be 5 total channels lost, but unfortunately programming costs do not go down.

Chair Atterberry was concerned about the usability of Comcast's website and the accuracy of the information on it, particularly the GIS service which should show the lineup available in the area. He said he is also concerned with the low quality of customer service mentioned in the formal complaints. Mr. Svymbersky responded that they try to address any customer service issues by retraining personnel to give out accurate and courteous responses to customer questions.

Commissioner Chris Foster asked if it would be possible to get the language on the bill changed to make the correct phone number clearer to customers. Mr. Svymbersky stated he would look into it.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Commission Travel Guidelines

Mr. Hamilton presented a draft of guidelines for Commissioners when they travel, which are based on the guidelines of the City of Champaign. He stated the guidelines will make it possible for Commissioners to assess the costs and benefits available to them when they travel. Two changes refer to submitting receipts within 1 week after the Commissioner returns from the trip and cancellation policies. Discussion ensued. The Commission approved the guidelines as submitted.

B. Broadband Access Committee Appointments

Commissioner Resnick asked the Commission to appoint a new member to the Broadband Access Committee. The name of the nominee had been sent to the Commission in an e-mail from Commissioner Resnick. [Professor Abdul Alkalimat]. The Commission approved the appointment.

C. PEG Insert

Mr. Hamilton reported that the Commission had budgeted \$1200 for the PEG inserts. He reminded the Commission that Comcast is now going to charge the Commission to place the inserts into cable bills, raising the cost of the project to \$1400. Discussion ensued on whether to continue using the PEG inserts to communicate about the PEG channels to subscribers. Commissioner Gladney and Commissioner Walker agreed to look into alternative ways of marketing the PEG channels and would report back at April's meeting.

D. FCC Communication

Commissioner Gladney suggested the Commission write a letter to the new members of the FCC, welcome the new chair and inform him of the Commission's position on cable and telecom issues. Commissioner Gladney will write a draft letter and asked the Commissioners to let her know what issues to include.

E. Commission Vacancy

Chair Atterberry stated that Stan Yagi has retired from the Commission and the Chancellor of the University of Illinois will make a recommendation for a replacement. Chair Atterberry recognized Mr. Yagi's service and appreciated his input over the years.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was no audience participation.

10. COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

There were no Commissioner comments.

11. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND ADJOURNMENT

The next Study Session was set for April 8th at 4:00 p.m. in Champaign and the next regular meeting was set for April 15th at 4:00 p.m. in Urbana. Mr. Hamilton stated that AT&T may be ready to give a U-Verse presentation at the April meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Submitted by,

Kate Gorman
Urbana Public Television
City of Urbana