

IOWA CITY TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

DRAFT

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2009--5:30 P.M.

CITY CABLE TV OFFICE, 10 S. LINN ST.-TOWER PLACE PARKING FACILITY

MEMBERS PRESENT: Laura Bergus, Hans Hoerschelman, Robert Kemp, Saul Mekies

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bob Kemp

STAFF PRESENT: Mike Brau, Bob Hardy

OTHERS PRESENT: Josh Goding, Beth Fisher, Kevin Hoyland, Phil Meany

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL

None at this time.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Hardy distributed a letter Grassley sent him asking for City support in Mediacom's appeal to the FCC regarding their dispute with Sinclair regarding retransmission consent negotiations. Mekies moved to request that the City write a letter to the FCC expressing a concern for consumers if there is an interruption in service of the CBS channel. The motion passed unanimously. PATV will be closed for Thanksgiving Nov. 26-29 and Dec. 24-Jan. 2. With regards to how improvements might be made to the school channel Hardy suggested that he, Hoerschelman and Goding meet to discuss how parents and school organizations might become involved. Mekies said the parent teacher organizations should be contacted and cautioned against the other access channels taking over the school channel activities. Bergus said there is value in producing programs for the school channel regardless of who does it and the Commission should strive to facilitate more programming. Hardy suggested that a bottom-up approach be adopted in which the members of the Community Television Group work with community groups and individuals to build capacity. Perhaps a merging of access channels' activities would be productive. Mekies suggested taking funds from the allocation that goes to the Community Television Group each year and offer it to the schools for a teacher stipend. Hardy said the allocation to the Community Television Group has not been used for a while and that will be looked at. Hoerschelman and Hagen said the funding of a stipend could be tried for a year. Bergus said she went to the City website looking for the video voter information and found no information or link to the City Channel website and said most people wouldn't know to go the City Channel 4 website. Steps should be taken to make those links. Bergus said a link to the City Channel 4 content on City Council meetings should be included in the City website's City Council section. Hardy said he will discuss this with City officials. Hardy said there has not been much movement on the federal legislation, H.R. 3724, which seeks to protect local access channels.. Mekies suggested the City write a letter. Bergus suggested that if the City Council were to pass a resolution it may carry more weight. Hardy said he will prepare a letter.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Bergus moved and Mekies seconded a motion to approve the amended October 26, 2009 minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

Hoerschelman congratulated PATV on their 20-year anniversary.

SHORT PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

CONSUMER ISSUES

Hardy referred to the complaint report in the meeting packet and noted the number of complaints was down. Hoerschelman asked if the City Channel had run any public service announcements informing the public of the on-line complaint form. Hardy said has been thinking of producing more PSAs and one on the complaint form would be a logical PSA to produce. Mekies said each complaint represents the dissatisfaction of more subscribers that just the one filing a complaint. Mekies noted the document in the meeting packet on the JD Powers consumer satisfaction survey that showed Mediacom's Internet service is not fairing well. Mekies said the complaint regarding the gap between advertised top speed and actual speed is a cause for concern.

MEDIACOM REPORT

Hardy said Grassley informed him that he would be unable to attend the meeting due to a need to be in Waterloo. Hardy distributed a letter Grassley sent him asking for City support in Mediacom's appeal to the FCC regarding their dispute with Sinclair regarding retransmission consent negotiations. Hardy said he recommends the Commission wait until the negotiations are further along and if at some point the Commission wants to write the FCC, this letter could serve as a model. Mekies asked who wrote the letter. Hardy said the letter was written by the City of Waterloo. University of Iowa President Sally Mason has also written a letter and other cities have supported Mediacom's effort. Bergus said that Mediacom has claimed that Sinclair is in violation of the FCC's ownership rules and said that if the Commission wants to write the FCC that it should be based on specific claims rather than a more general appeal for the FCC to do all they can to help resolve the impasse. Brau said that the City of Iowa City had filed comments with the FCC a few years back in regard to a larger media ownership proceeding that pointed out the detrimental impact Sinclair's local marketing agreement with the FOX channel had on local news. Hagen asked if Sinclair was dropped if the Quad City channel could be added to the line-up as happened three years ago. Hoerschelman said Mediacom would be unable to do so as they lost a lawsuit on that matter. Hardy said Mediacom has indicated they will seek an injunction to prevent Sinclair from pulling their signal if an agreement can not be reached. Hoerschelman said there seems to be a sense of the Commission to write a letter to the FCC regarding the issue. Hardy said could draft a letter for the Mayor to sign and will circulate a draft to the Commission. Mekies moved to request that the City write a letter to the FCC expressing a concern for

consumers if there is an interruption in service of the CBS channel. Hagen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA REPORT

No representative was present.

KIRKWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Meany reported Kirkwood students will be producing a monthly newscast. Other productions include the Involvement Report and the Mater Gardner series. Two volleyball games were covered live and one on tape. They were quite successful and more games will likely be covered next season. Basketball games will also be covered. Efforts are underway to tape the Iowa City campus Successful Student Seminars, which work to prepare students for college. Work is also in process on a history of community colleges.

PATV REPORT

Goding reported that two board member positions were filled at the annual membership meeting. The awards program from the annual membership meetings was cablecast live. The Live and Local program is now 10 years old. PATV will be closed for Thanksgiving Nov. 26-29. The Smartest Iowan show will be taped at the Iowa City Kirkwood campus in conjunction with the Student Life department, which has organized 8 teams for a tournament. The next guidelines workshop will be Dec. 7 at 2:30 p.m. The next board meeting will be December 19 at 7 p.m. PATV will be closed Dec. 24-Jan. 2.

SENIOR CENTER REPORT

No representative was present.

LIBRARY REPORT

Fisher reported an equipment problem has made cablecasting from the Storytime room impossible. Repairs are expected within two weeks. In November six adult and seven children's programs were shot. The International Mondays and International Authors programs will be carried in the spring. The first of the winter Project Green gardening program series was recently recorded. The creators of the film "King Corn" recently showed their documentary at the library and the discussion section was carried on the channel. Eight productions are scheduled for December.

IOWA CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Hoyland reported the school board meetings will start to be very long, expecting to start at 7 and going until 11 or 12. The school boundaries committee meetings will be recorded and cablecast. Superintendent Plugge did not respond to Hoyland informing him that North Liberty was making their recordings of the West High football games available for cablecast on the school channel.

Hoyland said the district had expressed concern that it would be unfair to carry the West High games if City High was not carried. Many of the high school music programs have been recorded. The City of Coralville provides many West High programs and a volunteer has provided recordings of City High. PATV continues to provide the Education Exchange program. Hagen said if the West High football games were cablecast, it could spur coverage of the City High games. Hagen asked if junior high students are producing video. Hoyland said Northwest Junior High had a video production class at one point, but does no longer. Mekies said the school board and administration appear to recognize the value of the channel when it wishes, but they need to recognize that it is difficult to provide coverage of meetings or events such as the Roosevelt school issue or the school boundary changes if the infrastructure has been neglected. If the school channel suddenly were not present, parents would be up in arms. Hagen asked if administrators inquire into or receive reports about the activities of the Commission and the school channel. Hoyland said the administrative structure with regard to the school channel is not clear and some administrators who might play a role have chosen not to. Bergus said parents are best positioned to pressure the school administration to improve the channel and the Commission may need to do a better job informing the public of the possibilities for the channel. Hoerschelman said he has considered going to a school board meeting and make a public appeal. Hoyland said there is an open discussion at the beginning of each meeting in which the public can address the board. A letter to the editor might also be an option. Hagen noted that letters have been sent in the past and maybe a public appeal would be more effective. Hardy said a more proactive approach by the City by assisting the schools and contributing to the channel's efforts might help the school district see the value of the channel. Hoerschelman suggested reaching out to the parent organizations. Hardy suggested that he, Hoerschelman and Goding meet to discuss how parents and school organizations might become involved. Mekies said the parent teacher organizations should be contacted and cautioned against the other access channels taking over the school channel activities. Burges said there is value in producing programs for the school channel regardless of who does it and the Commission should strive to facilitate more programming. Hoerschelman said outside assistance from other access channels could develop capacity and skills inside the school district so that over time more could be accomplished by the school district. Bergus said the school district is a nonprofit and asked if there is a City policy regarding the City not doing productions for the school district because they have their own channel. Hardy said he does not want to do work for the school district and said if there was some way the City could help the school district do the work for themselves by using volunteers, faculty, students, and parents to get started and move in the right direction it could become a community force. Mekies said this has been worked on for a number of years. Meetings were held with faculty and at one point it was agreed that there would be a stipend made available for a teacher to oversee student production activities. Hardy said those initiatives lead to the school hiring a staff person who has since been terminated. Mekies said the Commission worked with that person to fund a stipend for a teacher. Hardy said that initiative stopped after the school employee was terminated. Hardy said to fund a teacher stipend would be a commitment for multiple years and that commitment could not be made. Hardy said the City couldn't make a commitment for long-term personnel assignment. Mekies said it would be \$500. Hardy said at the time the stipend was seen as start-up funds. Hardy suggested that a bottom-up approach be adopted in which the members of the Community Television Group work with community groups and individuals to build capacity. Perhaps a merging of access channels activities would be productive. Mekies suggested taking funds from the allocation that goes to the Community

Television Group each year and offer it to the schools for a teacher stipend. Hardy said the allocation to the Community Television Group has not been used for a while and that will be looked at. Hoerschelman and Hagen said the funding of stipend could be tried for a year.

CITY CHANNEL REPORT

Hardy reported the Media Unit was very busy over the past month. Among the productions were two River Front Crossings workshops, the Police Citizens Review Board forum, the Human Rights Awards, the fire station ground breaking ceremony, a fire prevention week program, a program on hazardous waste mitigation, the McCollister bridge opening ceremony, and a program at the Herbert Hoover Library. The Community Television Service assisted Senior Center Television with a production at the Englert featuring the Generations of Jazz concert. Other productions include a League of Women Voters forum on water quality issues and an episode of the Mercy Hospital cooking show. Among the upcoming productions are programs for the Dollars for Scholars and the Johnson County Community Foundation.

Bergus said she went to the City website looking for the video voter information and found no information or links to the City Channel website and said most people wouldn't know to go the City Channel 4 website. Steps should be taken to make those links. Brau said the City Channel had a presence and a link on the City's website that was lost when the City redesigned their website. Bergus said a link to the City Channel 4 content on City Council meetings should be included in the City website's City Council section. Hardy said he will discuss this with City officials. Hoerschelman said the cable TV complaint form should be on the City website as well.

ACCESS CHANNELS AND THE DIGITAL TRANSITION

Hardy said he is waiting for the legal department opinion on copyright issues. Hardy said he and the legal department have identified the sections of the franchise that need to be changed. Hardy hopes to have all the work finished by the second week in December. Bergus asked if a public hearing would be needed. Hardy said he is unsure. Bergus said subscribers need a 30-day notice as well and said all elements of the process need to be considered so the time frame is not extended any longer than it need be.

TRIENNIAL REVIEW

Hardy said the service committee section is waiting on a review of some his findings by the legal department. Hardy said he should have an outline ready for the Commission to review at the next meeting.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Hardy said there has not been much movement on the federal legislation, H.R. 3724, which seeks to protect local access channels.. Mekies suggested the City write a letter. Bergus suggested that if the City Council were to pass a resolution it may carry more weight. Hardy said he will prepare a letter.

ADJOURNMENT

Bergus moved and Hagen seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously. Adjournment was at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brau
Cable TV Administrative Aide