

Cable Television Committee

Minutes

March 13, 2001

These are the approved minutes of the Sudbury Cable Committee meeting at the Sudbury Firehouse that was held on March 13, 2001 at 7:30 PM.

In attendance were Jeff Winston, Hal Barnett, Fred Walker, Peggy Fredricksen, Michael Daitzman, Michael Pincus, Mark Thompson, Marty Greenstein, and AT&T Broadband (ATTB) people Rob Travers, Michael Morrissey (local access studio director) and Mark Crory.

The Committee was put into shock by an announcement by Rob Travers in response to a question by Jeff Winston that cable modems (which would allow for high speed digital Internet connections to ATTB customers) would not be offered to Sudbury until next year, or at least very late this year. This, Jeff later related, is in contradiction with statements made by the company during Committee meetings prior to the license renewal/transfer, conversations he had held with ATTB people, and at the public hearing held last year in Maynard that considered the request for transfer of the formerly Cablevision licenses in the MetroWest to ATTB.

Rob said that ATTB wanted to first consolidate customer service and billing. They also placed commitments that they made to their franchises (license requirements) and putting high speed digital capability on completed improved systems at a higher priority than providing the requisite new digital head end equipment onto partially completed systems such as ours. It came down to the availability of money, although he ceded that performing this work for Sudbury would cost "under \$1,000,000".

Our license requires that the system be able to run at 750 MHz by July 1 of this year but it is silent on the issue of providing high speed digital service. This is exclusive, of course, of the I-Net which is installed. Acton is in a similar situation as us, although they already have 750 MHz service.

Rob stated that on the average 8-10% of the homes with cable who can opt for cable modem service do so in the first year. Wayland, a town with this service for years, has maybe 20% signed up, but Rob is unsure.

Jeff proposed, to no objection, to prepare a letter to the Selectmen asking them to contact the State Commission on this issue. He also indicated that he may submit an article to the Town Crier stating the situation. Finally, he is considering contacting the committees in other towns with the intent of raising a unified voice.

Rob, as required, provided the "Annual Report on Line Extensions in the Town of Sudbury". This report shows that extensions were built on nine roads, extending service potentially to 73 homes. 1.76 miles of underground cable were laid and 0.08 miles were strung on poles. Rob clarified that the report only listed the line extensions built and powered up in the year 2000, and did not include build-out done as part of their commitment to cable the entire town.

Committee person Michael Daitzman claimed that his house remains uncabled. Jeff indicated that the license calls for a daily monetary penalty if the condition continues past July 1.

Rob claims that ATTB sent out documentation of their insurance bonds, etc. to the Town last week.

The revolving fund for the Cable Committee comes up for approval at the upcoming Town Meeting.

Michael Morrissey presented a list of equipment that he proposes that the AT&T Broadband buy. In this list was an Apple 733 MHz DVD/CD burning computer. The committee voted unanimously to purchase this along with Final Cut Pro, which is non-linear editing software, a 20" Trinitron monitor, speakers, and a SCSI adapter

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cable. This equipment, by license, must be obtained by ATTB within 15 days. The cost is over \$4k list price but Peggy expressed the hope that ATTB could get it for less.

The remainder of the list was dealt with separately because it was somewhat controversial. The question before us was whether to purchase camcorders using the DVCPRO tape format or whether to purchase similar cameras employing the DVcam format. The other items on the list, major components being tripods, a linear editing deck, and a video switch. The total cost was about \$20,000.

The debate between the two formats came down to consistency with Acton (which had or was about to get DVCPRO) and consistency with mini-DV which many people have in their home cameras. The cost difference was not very large. Fred Walker spoke favorably about DVcam and Mike M. was initially favorable to DVCPRO. Ultimately, Mike agreed to DVcam and the committee voted for that format. Mike and Peggy are assigned to price out that equipment.

Jeff stated that the original Town Hall equipment estimate was for \$30,000 but somehow the estimated cost has gradually come down to \$20k.

He would like to see a complete list of equipment needed for the hall. There was some debate over the number of cameras needed (3 or 4) and someone had the idea that the electronic output of the projector used to project slides directly from a laptop could be wired directly into the video switch, thereby saving a camera. This technique could also be used for Town Meeting if cabling can be acquired. Jeff will talk to the Town Manager about finalization of the plans for the video equipment installation and building modifications required to make a control room. Mark Thompson said that he received an estimate from a carpenter for the mods of about \$2300.

Mike M. reports that production at the studio is at a high level. He will be teaching a four week photography course starting this month. There is an intern working at the studio, at an official level of four hours or so per week but actually beyond that.

Mike will present a programming report, as required, next month.

The interference between channels 54 and 61 continue. This despite a new cable into the building. During the snow storm of last week, other channels were also not received well but that is better now.

Rob will check up on the progress to put cable drops on every floor of the Flynn building. There are none now.

We adjourned roughly at 9:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marty Greenstein