

Montague Cable Advisory Committee
Meeting was remote by Zoom
Meeting Minutes for April 23, 2024.

Meeting convened 5/7/2023 at 5PM.

Members present: Jason Burbank (chair) Kristi Bodin, Ryne Hager.

Also present: Dean Garvin joined from MCTV. Steve Ellis and Walter Ramsay joined for the town administration. Counsel Bill August also present.

Cable Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Quorum was established at 5:08 PM. At 5:10 PM the meeting was called to order.

1) Review and Approve Minutes from April 23, 2024

Burbank asked if the rubric rating of MCTV is a part of the public record, and it was decided that it was. August indicated that it could be worth sharing with Comcast as part of the documents we send to them initially, pending review. August asked that the minutes be shared with him after their approval. Minutes were approved with an amendment to include the final rating of MCTV's requirements.

2) Update of August & Epstein Contract and Estimated Cost

The selectboard has approved the contract and it has been entered into, including modified language by Kristi. Costs can cover a range depending on the method of negotiation and how August's time is used, but a \$15,000 possibility was presented, though the cost could be lower.

August stressed that the public hearing, 10-year capital needs budget, and short-term upcoming operating budget with a draft license to follow, pending authorization. Basing that license with changes on top of a recent copy from another town or our prior license may be a way to save time — with the former preferred by counsel. We were encouraged to plan the public meeting soon.

3) Plan for Ascertainment Process

a. June Public Hearing Date and Program

The earliest that a meeting could be planned was for June, and Steven urged us to schedule the meeting to occur as part of a selectboard meeting to increase participation, which would require that it land on a Monday evening. Conflicts for this, including other outreach plans, were discussed. Ultimately we landed on the 17th at 6:00PM as a likely date. We were encouraged to make the meeting hybrid by counsel to encourage participation.

As part of outreach, we were encouraged to make the message simple and ask people to speak about their needs. Probable organizations for outreach were discussed. Letters of support are also an option for those that can't attend. Impact on seniors and a senior discount are also possibilities, if customers were to speak about the need for it, as those are possible points of discussion for the contract — it's not exclusively about PEG access, just primarily. Cable access for those not yet connected can also occur through MBI grants as well as contract discussion for the households in Montague not currently connected.

We can ask for a range of things. Requesting a longer distance for those not currently connected could be a goal to push for. August noted that they currently require 20 homes per aerial mile and 40 homes per underground mile, and that density is something that could be negotiated.

b. Other Approaches to Ascertainment Data Collection

A survey to users was raised again, though details have not yet been ironed out. Counsel indicated this was not an expectation, but it could be done, and urged us to do open-ended questions asking for specific problems or concerns over Comcast's service, or things the town needs to be aware of, while being sure

Various survey options and questions were discussed, as were other peculiarities of Comcast contract negotiations and regional costs. A compliance review of the full license was mentioned as one thing that could be important to do.

4) Outreach to Comcast Relicensing Representative

We can let them know about the 17th date for the upcoming public hearing. Dean left the meeting at this point. August said he'd have a statement that will be provided to Steve.

5. Discuss Any Other Next Steps

The committee decided that the plans discussed here constitute the next steps. Namely: The joint hearing with the Selectboard.

6. Unanticipated Business

None.

The committee agreed that the next meeting will take place on June 11th at 5PM. Ryne will send Steven some initial draft questions for the survey early next week for future refinement. The meeting was adjourned at 6:39 PM following a vote.