

Cable Television Advisory Council of Litchfield County
Wednesday, January 14, 2014

The regular meeting of the Cable Television Advisory Council was held on Wednesday, January 15, 2014, at 6:30 p.m., at the Oliver Wolcott Library on South Street, in Litchfield, Connecticut. A quorum was present: John Luciano, Vice-Chairman, Torrington; Lucille Paige, Torrington; Diane Knox, Treasurer, and presiding Chairman for this meeting; Jeff Dunn, Thomaston; John Angevine, Warren; Andrew MacDavid, Cornwall; Jerry Gault, Litchfield. Absent: Stephen Simonin, Chairman, Litchfield.

Also present: Jennifer Young, Michael Chowniac, Charles Schuller, Lee Schroeder, Adam Falk, all representatives of **Cablevision**; Klaren DePalma, Meredith Corp. representing WFSB. From the Connecticut Legislature: Representative Michelle Cook, 62nd District; Representative Jay Case 63rd District; Senator Kevin Witkos, 8th district; Representative Roberta Willis, 64th District.

Mrs. Knox called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Upon a motion by Mr. Luciano, seconded by Ms. Paige, the agenda was amended to move item 8, *Cablevision* Representatives' reports up to Item 5 on the agenda. Motion carried unanimously. Mr. Gault, seconded by Mr. Angevine voted to accept the agenda as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Participation: Jack Healy, Litchfield stated that *Cablevision* is under contract between their company and each subscriber. As this contract is being breached by the loss of CBS, Channel 3 signal as promised in the "contract", *Cablevision* is legally obliged to honor said contract.

Bob Kenagy, Litchfield, feels a credit or reduction in each subscribers invoice should be reduced to reflect the loss of channels to *Cablevision* customers.

Harry Mueller, Torrington, feels that the two opposing parties should be working toward a compromise instead of acting like school-yard brats.

Patrick Ryan, Litchfield stated that he has endured 8 years of continued price increases from *Cablevision*, which he feels, constitutes a breach of the original contract.

Beth Michalec, Torrington, feels every *Cablevision* customer is being held hostage, despite each customer having a contract. These costs keep rising on a regular basis.

James Schultz, Warren, stated that WFSB is a good provider for overall information vital to all members of the community. He wants WFSB back and feels a credit is due each and every subscriber due to this loss of Channel 3, WFSB.

Edward.....,Litchfield, feels strongly that *Cablevision* is holding the subscribers hostage. Friends of his living in New Rochelle, New York are paying \$62. less for their receipt of WFSB, CBS. Where is local management on this?

Michael Hovey, Morris, feels *Cablevision* charges are too high for the programming that is available to its customers. Too many Spanish channels that are mandated on any tier for those who speak English only.

Leslie Caron, Bantam, feels that the customers are not getting the program satisfaction for what they are paying for and the prices keep going up, regardless.

Brook Patnour, East Litchfield, is upset that customers cannot choose only those channels they wish to view and pay for.

Terry Falon, Morris, wants the return of WFSB, with a rebate. He is looking for other TV providers other than Cablevision.

Karen Macks, Morris, recently moved with her husband to this area; previously had Comcast. Feels a lack of communication from *Cablevision* and wants only those channels she chooses and pay only for them.

Adam Falk, Vice President of Government Affairs for *Cablevision*, stated that *Cablevision* is doing everything possible to address this problem (loss of CBS, WFSB). *Cablevision* is willing to pay the price for airing WFSB in Litchfield County. However, the problem is that WFSB wants *Cablevision* to pay for WFSB's costs for viewing in Fairfield County. He announced that a lawsuit has been filed by *Cablevision* against Meredith (corporate owner of CBS, WFSB) to restore Channel 3, WFSB to the customers while the negotiations are ongoing.

Mr. Klaren DePalma, representative from WFSB, CBS, stated that *Cablevision* refused to negotiate for three separate Channel 3 signals, and that *Cablevision* stated, they would "never, ever" pay for fees that belong to Fairfield County viewers. WFSB wants to negotiate for an entire packaged system to *Cablevision*, and not cut it up.

Council member Jeff Dunn, Thomaston, asked why does there have to be a blackout while negotiations are still going on? These negotiations began in September 2013, why has it taken so long to come to an agreement? Can a third party – arbitrator - be brought in to bring about a settlement for this dispute?

Mr. Falk, *Cablevision*, replied an arbitrator cannot enter the negotiations because both companies are private, not public utilities.

Councilman, Andrew MacDavid, Cornwall, asked if Fairfield is a part of the New York market? Mr. Falk responded that Congressman Blumenthal wants the FCC to intervene to have *Cablevision* to carry WFSB as a local entity.

Council member Jeff Dunn stated that Litchfield County should be a stand -alone with *Cablevision*, and not locked in with Fairfield County.

Council member, John Luciano, asked who is holding the "switch" – physically holding the switch that can turn on Channel 3 back to the customers? Mr. Falk stated that WFSB has the "switch".

Council member, Jerry Gault suggested the switch be turned on and that negotiations should go to litigation or to the legislature. Mr. Falk stated that area legislators have made attempts to intervene in behalf of their districts.

Mr. DePalma, WFSB representative stated that when *Cablevision* states they will "never, ever" negotiate for prices submitted by WFSB, then negotiations cannot move forward.

State Representative, Michelle Cook, stated that the "feed" should remain turned on for the *Cablevision* customers while negotiations carry on. This was also stated by Representative Jay Case, and Representative Roberta Willis.

Councilman, Jeff Dunn, reminded everyone that this issue may be in breach of the state license that governs the providing of cable television to Connecticut customers. Mr. DePalma, WFSB, stated that there are ways to get around using the cable signal, antenna, etc.

Councilman, Diane Knox, agreed with Mr. Dunn in that there may be a result from the loss of WFSB in that is of viewership.

Councilman Knox, thanked all those in attendance, along with the State representatives, *Cablevision* personnel and Mr. DePalma from WFSB.

Returning to the formal agenda, a motion by Ms. Paige, seconded by Mr. Dunn resulted in a unanimous vote to continue the high school scholarship program, as conducted in the past.

Upon a motion by Mr. Gault, seconded by Mr. MacDavid, the minutes of the Sept. 12, 2103 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.

Mr. Knox rendered the Treasurer's Report: Balance \$453.00 as of 1/15/14. Motion to accept the Treasurer's report as submitted was made by Ms. Paige, seconded by Mr. Luciano. Motion carried unanimously.

Under Town Representatives' report: Mr. Dunn asked if CBS "on demand" is off the air. Mr. Falon replied that it was.

Councilman, Lucille Paige questioned if there was any change to the customers of *Cablevision* in that the poles that carry the wires have been sold by AT&T to CL&P. *Cablevision* replied that a contract is still being put together between CL&P and PURA.

Councilman Diane Knox, stated her problem with the clock on her DVR; Councilman Jerry Gault added his question about the clock and timer on his DVR. *Cablevision* rep, Jennifer Young answered their questions to their satisfaction.

Councilman, Jeff Dunn asked if there was any other Cable company/provider serving small areas.

Councilman, John Luciano, asked why the "IO" on *Cablevision* takes so long to move to next channel.

A consensus of all the Councilmen was to issue a joint statement on behalf of the Council to be made to the public concerning the WFSB, CBS dispute with *Cablevision*.

Upon a motion by Mr. Angevine, seconded by Mr. Dunn, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucille A. Paige, Secretary

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE CABLE TV ADVISORY
COUNCIL IS THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2014 AT
6:30 P.M.