

MILLBURY PUBLIC ACCESS/CABLE TV ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Municipal Office Building – Selectmen’s Meeting Room
Thursday March 15, 2012 – 7:15 p.m.

Present: Mary Krumsiek; Frank Irr; Paul DiCicco; Jeff Dore; Robert Sullivan; Lori Burrows-Associate Member; Public Access Director Kevin Krassopoulos; Tom Cohan-Charter Communications

Absent: Richard Carew; Roger Desrosiers

Chairman Krumsiek opened the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Paul DiCicco read two letters into the record (attached), one from Redevelopment Authority Chairman Leonard Mort, and one from a concerned citizen regarding Verizon FIOS service on Rayburn Drive. Regarding the Redevelopment Authority, Mr. DiCicco stated that the committee in spirit will support the project but they are not allowed by law to donate money from grant money but hope to give publicity to the project.

Chairman Krumsiek opened the Ascertainment Hearing at 7:27 p.m. (attached).
Mr. DiCicco read a mission statement.

Mr. Tom Cohan from Charter Communications was introduced. Mr. Cohan said he was here to answer any concerns they may have about the future of Charter. They are continuing to invest in their network; they were “the cable company” but now offer high speed internet and telephone service. Charter is continuing to add more HD channels as it clearly seems to be what customers want; they recently launched 3D video on demand. It is exciting and keeps them on the cutting edge of video technology and customers appreciate it; it gives customers the choice of watching something when they want to watch it. It is going quite well.

PAUL DiCICCO: Frank Irr, Bob Sullivan and I have been on this board for over 20 years. We have always talked about and insisted on service, which has been a priority over the years. What can you tell us that will sell us on the idea that Charter service is better than the other company?

TOM COHAN: We are putting all of our employees through Customer Experience Transformation. We are all focusing on the customer, from the top to customer service to the technicians. We want people to get things fixed the first time. We are giving technicians the flexibility to focus on quality vs. quantity, and allowing them to stay in the home as long as it takes to fix the problem. Traditionally you had X number of service calls per day. We are refocusing dispatch so that everyone gets the same service – first class service from the technician in the home, who will act professional and polite and respect the home (boot covers, etc.) When answering the phone, we will be polite and listen; a good part of customer service is listening. The technically inclined tend to jump in and say they know the problem, but we have a much more complicated business these days, so they need to listen as there may be more than one problem. We have phone and internet too so it may take longer in the home. Phone calls take longer as there could be a range of issues. A lot of troubleshooting, particularly internet, can be done over the phone. Every employee in New England has gone through the Customer Experience Transformation training, and I (Tom) have gone through 3 days of training myself. The next step is Tuesday this week, March 12th, we launched our “all in” campaign with customer service guarantees. If we are late for a call the customer receives a \$20 credit. If

service is out for a 24 hour period you get a \$20 credit. We are putting our money where our mouth is, and demonstrating to our customers that we are serious about it and intend to succeed.

PAUL DiCICCO: I have Charter and there is a big difference from a couple of years ago. My biggest qualm is when I called, the 4 times I called in the last few months, my call went to different locations; to Kentucky, to Canada, to the Philippines. I am bothered by outsourcing. Can we bring back people to the local area? If you call on a local business you would like to get a local person.

TOM COHAN: When there was an outage, everyone called at the same time; people got busy signals. Most large companies have gone to virtual call centers. When a customer calls you go through a telephone tree to get to where you want. You will always get directed to the next available operator so you are never waiting long. Wherever that person is, they will see your address and phone number and see your services. They won't see the weather in Millbury, MA but they will have all the information needed to respond to your service issues. They can reach out to dispatch if needed to set up a service call. We have evolved from having to wait all day for a service call, or have a 4 hour window. We now have a 2 hour window.

FRANK IRR: Right now you (Charter) are running a dual analog and digital system. I was wondering how long we will be able to use our cable-ready TVs without a box?

TOM COHAN: With the digital transition two years ago we are still required to carry the broadcast channels in analog and digital. We are moving towards all digital systems.

FRANK IRR: You are the only ones; Verizon is all digital.

TOM COHAN: We are moving in that direction for a good reason. It allows one to make more efficient use of the bandwidth. People are demanding more HD channels and we put channels in HD by going through our expanded lineup. Others may have more HD channels but we choose the ones that are the most popular to go to HD because we have limited bandwidth. As we go to more digital we will be able to add more.

BOB SULLIVAN: I have a set-up with my major TV having a box and my auxiliary TV has just a line. When I am using the TV with the box, the sound doesn't match the movement of the people who are speaking. Is that a problem in the transition?

TOM COHAN: You should request a service call. What happens in the digital world, everybody of our age is used to broadcast channels, snowy pictures, rolling bars; there was a whole range of symptoms for technical problems. Today it all comes out to be digital it is either on or off. The audio may be a little out of synch. When you see tiling or freezing or audio out of synch we have to track down what it is.

PAUL DiCICCO: On the subject of the boxes, when Comcast in the Boston area and down the Cape went to little boxes for every TV they offered 2 boxes for every customer. Any chance you (Charter) would offer something like this? Is it something we can discuss in our contract?

TOM COHAN: We are looking at what other companies have done when they have gone all digital, and looking at how many should be free. We want people to have boxes – there is technology in those boxes.

PAUL DiCICCO: The point I am trying to make is anything over 2 they charge a monthly fee for each box. I think we should be allowed to buy the boxes outright, not to spend money per month per box.

JEFF DORE: Are you planning a conversion to digital?

TOM COHAN: With all digital you will need a box for every TV.

LORI BURROWS: With my Dad's last move he had a TV and a VCR that was not hooked up when the TV guy came. The Charter technician cut off the ends of the extra 2 foot cables. I was livid. It was last year; when I called they said this was their policy.

TOM COHAN: I am not sure, if you have loose wires you may have leakage involved, it could cause interference. We have equipment that measures leakage. Per the FCC we have to go through towns twice a year to measure leakage. I will fix that.

MARY KRUMSIEK: I have 2 different HD boxes; a Cisco and a Scientific Atlanta. I am always having to reboot; if I DVR something it is all broken up. I was told by Charter that the signal is so weak in my neighborhood. (Mr. Cohan said he would be happy to look into it).

KEVIN KRASSOPOULOS: Are you looking for a 10 or 5 year contract?

TOM COHAN: Everything is negotiable but we are looking for a 10 year contract.

(Currently in Millbury Verizon has a 5 year contract; the Charter contract expires in March 2013 and the Verizon contract expires March 2014.)

BOB SULLIVAN: I realize we are just doing a cable contract. Charter customers who have the bundle of internet telephone and cable; only the cable is negotiable, there is nothing else in the contract? Is there a reason they are separate?

TOM COHAN: Correct. Cable has historically been negotiated town by town. There are at least 20 states that have switched to state-wide franchising – the towns are completely out of the picture. Verizon tried to do that in MA and there was a lot of opposition; it did not pass 3 years in a row and it is unlikely to ever pass. Telephone has historically been regulated by the FCC and at the state public utility commission level. Internet is not a regulated service.

PAUL DiCICCO: The service or product that they are selling, the telephone and the internet, is marketable, if anything it is for our protection as a citizen. If they screw up on one (service) the customer has a right to say you are going to lose all 3 of my services. We now have 2 cable companies and this is good for the customer.

BOB SULLIVAN: Customers who have all 3 with Charter or another company are less likely to switch; if you only had 1 service the switch would occur on an impulse.

TOM COHAN: We are in a very competitive situation with Verizon; we have fewer customers than when they came to town. Residents of Millbury have a choice; a lot have decided that they like Charter.

JEFF DORE: Are people doing the installations aware that installs at town buildings get free cable? I had a situation where service at a fire station had been shut off.

TOM COHAN: All the technicians are aware of this; customer service may not all be aware. All buildings in town have free cable TV.

Motion made by Frank Irr, seconded by Bob Sullivan to close the public hearing at 8:00 p.m.
Motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday April 19, 2012 at the Cable Studio (at MHS).

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Frank Irr, seconded by Bob Sullivan to adjourn the meeting at 8:03 p.m.
Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Joyce Ostrowski, Secretary




Mary Krumsiek, Chairman



Frank Irr, Vice Chairman

Robert Sullivan, Clerk

Richard Carew



Roger Desrosiers



Paul DiCicco



Jeff Dore