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DRAFT
Sandown Cable Access Board Meeting
Town of Sandown, NH

Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 24, 2013

Type of Meeting: Public

Method of Notification: Public posting – Town Hall & Post Office

Meeting Location: Town Hall, Second Floor

Members Present: Susan Godin – Chairman, Loraine Borin, Chris Donnellan – Station Manager and Brenda Copp – Selectwoman Ex-Officio and Gordon Champion.

Recording Secretary: Sue Reynolds

Meeting was called to order by Susan Godin at 7:00pm.

Susan asked the Board to review the minutes of Tuesday, August 27,, 2013.

Motion by Loraine Borin to accept the minutes of Tuesday, August 27, 2013 as written.

Seconded by Brenda Copp.

In Favor Brenda Copp, Susan Godin and Loraine Borin.

Motion passes unanimously

Brian Christiansen is present from Comcast to begin the Cable negotiation process.

Brenda Copp let Brian know that Gordon Champion has been appointed by the BOS to represent the Town in the upcoming negotiations.

The Cable Committee will be presenting Brian Christiansen with a list of questions in regards to the upcoming cable contract.

29 **1 When did Comcast notify the Town of Sandown that the renewal of its cable**
30 **television license needed to be renegotiated? Does Comcast consider tonight's**
31 **hearing as an "Ascertainment Hearing?"**

32 Brian said he does not have a copy of the 626 letter that would have been sent to the
33 Town 30 – 36 months prior to the contract expiring. Gordon Champion provided
34 Brian with a copy of the letter, which was dated August 15, 2011. Brian also stated
35 he would consider this to be a Public Hearing. Brenda Copp asked what an
36 Ascertainment Hearing is and Gordon Champion explained that it is a more formal
37 hearing, and this could be considered an Ascertainment Hearing as the public has
38 been invited to attend.

39

40 **2 Would Comcast please explain its position/preference regarding formal vs.**
41 **informal proceeding?**

42 Brian said Comcast would prefer to renew the contract informally. He said in the 10
43 years he's been doing this he has never finalized a contract under the formal process.

44

45 **3 Does Comcast have an ideal license extension period such as 5 or 10 years?**

46 Brian said Comcast likes to see a 10 year contract, but anything is negotiable. Brenda
47 asked about proposing a 5 year agreement as technology is changing rapidly. Brian
48 stated when doing cable television negotiations you can't take technology into
49 consideration as you can't dictate technology.

50

51 **4 Considering the cable television license expires on July 29, 2014, what events**
52 **does Comcast envision occurring prior to the expiration, in order to reach a**
53 **timely resolution of the renewal?**

54 Brian said he envisions an informal process where ideas and documents are
55 exchanged between Comcast and the Town of Sandown. He said negotiations should
56 be starting very soon and this is a wonderful first step.

57

58 **5 What is the current financial position of Comcast as a corporation? How many**
59 **subscribers does Comcast serve nationally? How many television subscribers**
60 **does Comcast serve in Sandown?**

61 Brian stated the financial position of Comcast is strong and encourages the Cable
62 Committee to research the SEC filings, they serve over 21 million video customers
63 countrywide and almost 1,800 in Sandown.

64
65 **6 Does Comcast envision any further rebuilding of its infrastructure in the Town**
66 **of Sandown over the next 5 years?**

67 Brian said they are always expanding and upgrading the infrastructure. He also said
68 since they added fios they are always expanding the nodes that goes along with it.

69

70 **7 Because Sandown cannot take advantage of Comcast bundled services (triple**
71 **play – telephony, cable and internet) will Comcast explain why it will not offer**
72 **telephone service to the residents/subscribers in Sandown?**

73 Brian explained that there is a triple bundle in town that includes cable, internet and
74 home security. He said they do not offer telephone service as the town is provided
75 telephone service from Granite State Telephone. He said Granite State has a rural
76 exemption from the FCC and they are exempt from competition so Comcast is not
77 allowed to offer telephone service legally in the Town. Brenda said there was a
78 former selectman that looked into this a few years ago and they were told in order for
79 the Town to allow another carrier then Comcast would need to petition the FCC and
80 if this is true why isn't Comcast doing this. Brian stated that he is not a lawyer and
81 there is a petition process and Comcast was told that Granite State would have the
82 right to fight the petition process. Brian also said that Granite State is exercising their
83 rural exemption and they haven't given any indication that they are willing to part
84 with it. Brenda said regardless of how Granite State feels Comcast should be
85 petitioning the FCC on behalf of the Towns. Brian said he has done his best to
86 answer the question and this is something that he will get back to the Committee on.
87 Chris Donnellan said in regards to the Public Utilities Commission said on their
88 website that Granite State was given the option to allow competition and they denied

89 it. He wanted that to be noted in the minutes. Gordon stated that Comcast has made
90 it very clear to the Town that they are being penalized because they don't have the
91 option to take a package that would include telephony. Gordon said the question is
92 being posed to get a clear answer once and for all as there have been a lot of rumors
93 out there. He would like to know what they can do as a Town to reduce rates for
94 subscribers. Chris said Comcast would support the Town any way they can but he
95 feels the Town would be better off going to the Federal Delegation to get a rural
96 exemption lifted as it is a Federal Law. Brenda said that she is a Comcast customer
97 and has Granite State as well but she said that Granite State doesn't hold the airways
98 and she switched to a wireless telephone company for \$20.00 per month for unlimited
99 long distance.

100
101 ***8 & 9 What is the Gross Annual Revenue for cable services in the Town of***
102 ***Sandown? And Under the present agreement Sandown receives 2% of Comcast***
103 ***Gross Annual Revenues, how much money did Sandown receive for PEG***
104 ***access funding in the latest disbursement?***

105 Brian said he was not prepared for these questions but will get the information to
106 Susan. Gordon asked Brian to give the Committee the revenue of 2%, 3%, 4% and
107 5%. Chris said the amount of the last check he received on March 4, 2013 was for
108 \$13,222.02 and they get checks twice a year.

109
110 ***10 What restrictions, if any, are imposed under federal or state law, or Comcast***
111 ***policy, as to how the PEG Access money is spent by the Town of Sandown?***

112 Brian said there are no restrictions in the State of NH.

113
114 ***11 What constitutes "Gross Annual Revenue" for computation purposes in***
115 ***determining PEG payments?***

116 Brian said this can be found on page 7 of the franchise agreement, which states it
117 comes from the video product.

120 ***12 Does Comcast offer any discounts based on a subscribers age, military service***
121 ***or ability to pay for Basic Cable services?***

122 Brian said they do offer a senior discount in several communities. It is not just based
123 on age but on financial need as well. This can be considered during negotiations and
124 Brenda asked if Comcast would consider a low income package instead of a senior
125 package and Brian said no. He said there are many “worthy” causes out there and
126 they wouldn’t know where to draw the line. He also said they offer packages from
127 mid teens up to \$200.00 per month so there is something for everyone’s budget.
128 Brian did say they offer an Internet Essentials package for school aged children
129 grades K-12 whom receive free or reduced lunch.

130

131 ***13 Should Sandown receive any capital grants for its PEG Access equipment what***
132 ***restrictions, if any, are imposed by Comcast on the receipt of such funds?***

133 Brian said there are no grant restrictions and there is more information under the PEG
134 section of the franchise agreement.

135

136 ***16 Has Comcast surveyed the PEG Access equipment currently in use at the***
137 ***Sandown (CH17) studio? If not, would Comcast perform an audit of equipment***
138 ***currently in use?***

139 Brian said they have not performed an audit but would be willing to do so. He asks
140 what are they assessing and Chris said equipment deteriorates over time and he’d also
141 like Comcast to look into the way the Town Hall is wired. Brian said he would be
142 willing to work out a date for the audit.

143

144 ***14 How many free drops is Comcast currently providing to the Town of Sandown?***
145 ***How many schools are receiving free Basic service and how many municipal***
146 ***buildings are currently being served?***

147 Brian said he doesn’t have a number of buildings and schools in the Town but
148 Comcast provides free drops to municipal buildings and schools that are along the
149 cable route. If it is not in place he will see that it gets put in place.

150

151 **15 Does Sandown currently have an Institutional Network in place, connecting and**
152 **service its municipal buildings?**

153 Brian stated that Sandown has a video return line and not an institutional network as
154 defined in the cable act. Chris asked what the difference is. And Brian said the
155 institutional network is capable of transmitting data telephony amongst municipal
156 buildings and video return lines do not.

157

158 **17 Would Comcast consider other origination sites for its PEG Access Cable-casting?**

159 Brian said yes, they had previously discussed possibly using the recreation center. Brian
160 said he wasn't sure of the official address of the building.

161

162 **18 Would Comcast consider establishing another cable-casting studio at a Sandown**
163 **school so that student and teacher programs can be broadcasted over Channel 17?**

164 Brian said yes it is possible and is negotiable.

165

166 **19 Gordon states that when ordering "On Demand" programs when you continue to**
167 **hit the "ok" button you eventually purchase the program but when you hit the same**
168 **button while on a non on demand channel it takes you to the previous channel.**

169 Brian said that Comcast is looking into a new platform with a new remote as well and he
170 thinks the ordering process is different with this.

171

172 **20 What is the current Comcast policy regarding handling of consumer complaints,**
173 **filed directly with Comcast, from Sandown residents?**

174 Brian said all written complaints are kept on file for 2 years and can be shared with the
175 Town of Sandown. Brian said most complaints are verbal and they are not kept track of.
176 Chris Donnellan said he received a complaint from a resident and he referred them to
177 Comcast and Comcast told them to contact the BOS. Chris suggested they contact
178 Comcast again then go to the Attorney General's office. Gordon Champion said the BOS
179 are responsible for resolving issues between subscribers and Comcast.

180

181

182 **21 Does Comcast plan to offer ALA Carte programming in the future?**

183 Brian said he does not know.

184

185 **22 Will Comcast submit a proposal unsolicited or wait until Sandown submits a**
186 **summary of community concerns (Request for Proposal – RFP) before submitting its**
187 **Proposal?**

188 Brian said Comcast can provide Sandown with a proposal as this is an informal process.
189 He said they have a generic contract for municipalities and they are adjusted per each
190 Towns needs.

191

192 Brenda Copp asked about Comcast providing equipment to the Town of Sandown and
193 Brian said it is negotiable but he recommends that you would request a dollar amount and
194 not the equipment itself.

195

196 Brian said he will email Susan the unanswered questions of tonight's meeting and she
197 will forward that to the rest of the Committee. Gordon said the Committee will meet
198 further tonight and possibly another meeting to review put together a complete list as to
199 what they would like included in the renewal contract and get it to Brian.

200

201 The Committee thanks Brian for coming in to talk with them.

202

203 Chris Donnellan reminds the Board that the next meeting is the last Tuesday in October.

204 The Committee agreed to meet on Tuesday, October 8th at 6:30. Gordon said he has
205 been reviewing other Town's contracts including Derry as it is very similar to
206 Sandown's. He said he would like to keep the 5 year renewal in our "back pocket" and
207 use this at the end of negotiations if needed. He also said the grant money can be
208 negotiated as well. Gordon also said he would like to see a studio be put into one of the
209 school's in town to provide a great learning tool for students and teachers as well.

210 Brenda said the schools should be contacted first to see if they even want it in the
211 schools. Brenda suggested using the recreation building where a lot of different

212 programs are held. Chris said he is all for this he is just concerned as to who will be
213 responsible for the equipment while it is off site, but feels it would be worth looking into.

214

215 Gordon said he will continue to review the current agreement and make the changes he
216 feels necessary. He said he will email it to the Board prior to the next meeting so the
217 Board can be ready to discuss it at the next meeting.

218

219

Station Managers Report

220 Chris said there was an issue with the server that generated the website. He said that the
221 Town changed internet providers for the service at Town Hall and the IP addresses on the
222 servers changed. Chris said all is up and running now. Chris said that Armon contacted
223 him and it appears that the cable server does not meet their level of security and the new
224 system is going into effect on October 1st so he has a week to update everything that is
225 needed. Chris said he sent the email from Armon to Tyko Media Systems so see if they
226 can help him.

227

228 Chris said that Donna Green is finding the new show Sandown Round Up is becoming
229 too much and she asked to discontinue it at this time. Chris suggested keeping the show
230 and eliminating the Board Round Up portion of the show. Donna agreed this would be a
231 lot easier for her as she won't have to watch all of the meeting to get the Board's
232 decisions.

233

234 Chris said that Dan is still learning the ropes but he is doing a great job.

235

236 Brenda asked Chris if he has looked into screens for the Town Hall and Chris said he
237 hasn't had time to do this but he will try to in the near future.

238

239 Susan Godin announced that the workshop will be held on Tuesday, October 8th and the
240 next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 29th.

241

242 Meeting adjourned 8:30

243 Respectfully submitted,
244 Sue Reynolds