

## Wellfleet Cable Advisory Committee (WCAC)

Minutes of Meeting on August 20, 2005, at 4:00 PM, Wellfleet Library

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TOWN CLERK

### Attending

- Betsy Williams - Wellfleet Library, former member of WCAC 1999
- Tom Cole - Retired Producer of Nightbeat, former Comcast Public Access Dir. for L.C.
- Susan Messina - Computer Teacher, Community Volunteer
- Larry Greeley - Resident of Brewster, member of Brewster CAC & FLCCM, Producer (videotapes Wellfleet Selectmen's Meetings available for viewing in the Library)

### Presentation by Larry Greeley

Larry Greeley was invited by the temporarily appointed members of WCAC to give an overview on the issues of Public Access between Towns and Comcast Cable Co. Larry compiled and provided a packet of information entitled "Lower Cape Informational Session, Presenter Rika Welsh" dated July 23, 2005, which includes history and background information on the P.E.G. portion of the contracts previously negotiated between Comcast Cable and the Lower Cape towns of Brewster, Eastham, Orleans, Provincetown, and Wellfleet. Copies will be given to each of the Wellfleet Selectmen and the Town Administrator, *(copy in WCAB files, orange cover page)*

### Overview of P.E.G. - Community Public Access Broadcasting

Recently, Comcast Cable has made clear that it no longer wants to provide the services of owning, maintaining, and staffing community cable studios and filming equipment. Instead, Comcast's intention is for each town to own and operate its own local programming, if towns so choose to continue providing these services. Local programming would include such community resources as bulletin board listings of town information and events, governmental meetings, selectmen's meetings, town meetings, candidate debates, school events, parades, festivals, library activities, etc.

### P.E.G. Channels

P - Public	Ch.17 - Serves all the Towns of the Lower Cape
E - Education	Ch.18 - Wellfleet Only (each town to have their own Ch.18)
G - Government	Items of interest to the entire Lower Cape can also air on Ch.17

### Payments for the Right to Use Public Ways (Rent)

All cable companies are currently required to allot a maximum 5% of their gross revenue from cable subscribers per town, to be returned to each town for P.E.G. This allotment should be considered a Rental Payment for allowing private cable companies to dig up, run wires and drive trucks over public ways and residential properties.

In the past, it is noted that there are significant differences in equity in the contracts between Comcast and each of the Lower Cape towns.

### **Breakdown of Gross Revenue for P.E.G. in the Lower Cape Towns**

- Wellfleet 2% at the request of Town, with Tardy Penalty 2% over PRIME
- Brewster 1.5%
- Eastham No funding / One Access Point (Nauset Regional Schools)
- Orleans 2.75%, Tardy Penalty 3% (No pass-through) / Full-Time Live Channel
- Provincetown \$2800 Annually, Total \$25,000 / (No pass-through)
- Truro 3% (No pass-through) / Free internet for town entities, runs out this year

It is our understanding that Orleans, for example, has “banked” approximately \$260,000 so far from their past contract, to be used in the future. Harwich collects \$100,000 per year, with no pass through fee. Truro has approximately 1100 cable subscribers and negotiated a 3% payment of approx. \$45,000 annually.

Wellfleet’s contract calls for a potential of 2% of gross revenue for the Town to activate Ch.18 (Wellfleet’s exclusive local channel). This amount would be approximately \$27,000 per year. This money has not been collected by Comcast so far, and may be a pass-through fee from each cable subscriber in Wellfleet.

### **Pass-Through Fees**

These fees are being discussed as to whether they should be taken out of the *cable company’s gross revenue* rather than be *billed to cable subscribers*. It is unclear, at this time, whether Wellfleet’s contract calls for pass-through fees to subscribers.

Article 13 in the Wellfleet contract with Comcast states that the Town can request general reports from Comcast on financial information such as Gross Revenues, etc.

WCAC will discuss the pros and cons of activating this revenue and how much money would be billed to each subscriber. A local organization, Friends of Lower Cape Community Media (FLCCM), will look into whether this money can be collected retroactively

### **License Fee**

The current contract between Comcast and Wellfleet also calls for a payment to the Town of .50¢ per subscriber (approx. \$1400) as a Licensing Fee, a cost which is “passed-through” to cable subscribers, not taken out of Comcast’s gross revenue.

### **Channel 18 Grant**

In addition, Comcast made a \$10,000 “capital grant” to Wellfleet over a period of 10 years. This grant is in actuality a loan and is also collected by Comcast as a pass-through fee to cable subscribers, with 11.4% interest to the Town.

### **Possible Use of Funds**

- Purchase of updated broadcasting equipment, such as a portable production studio.
- Full or part-time staff member(s) to videotape town activities and events.
- This money can also be used to fund related activities currently paid for by the Town, freeing up money to subsidize other revenue streams (Police, Fire, School, Library).

## **Broadcast Equipment**

Anycast System by Sony (~ \$24,000) is a state-of-the-art, user-friendly, portable broadcasting system, used with any media, which includes 2 robotic cameras and editing equipment. Anycast has an excellent reputation, and Sony has sold approx. 10,000 systems so far with virtually no complaints.

Note: Towns do not have to buy equipment or request technical assistance from Comcast. WCAC will look into other broadcasting systems as well.

## **Lower Cape Consortium**

The Friends of Lower Cape Community Media (FLCCM) are in the process of forming a coalition among the towns for the purpose of sharing information and gaining leverage in upcoming cable contract negotiations. Eastham is the next scheduled contract in June 2006. Wellfleet's contract will be coming up in 2009.

In addition, towns may wish to pool resources and share use of a studio and staff. For example, Yarmouth currently maintains a technically advanced, well-used studio which they might be interested in sharing. Harwich has a paid position of ~45 hours per week. There is currently a studio in Orleans which needs some updated equipment and editing software.

## **Purpose**

The goals of the Wellfleet Cable Advisory Committee will be to look into the above considerations and provide advice to the Town prior to the next cable contract. At this point, WCAC is gathering information and has joined FLCCM in preparation for offering informed consultation. There are currently 3 members who may be appointed to this group by the Selectmen, with the intention that if this becomes an official town Committee there should be a total of 5 to 7 members.

## **Presentation to the Wellfleet Board of Selectmen on August 23, 2005**

The Cable Advisory Committee has asked Larry Greeley of Brewster to present an overview to the Wellfleet Selectmen at their next meeting. Larry will also distribute packets of information for the Selectmen and Town Administrator (*red folders*).

**Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM. Next meeting to be determined.**

**Respectfully submitted by  
Susan Messina**