

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY BOARD**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 11, 2012**

**In Attendance:** Kurt Krause, Chairman; Ed Ebenbach and Joe Salvati, Committee Members; E. Thomas Scarborough, Board of Supervisors Liaison and Staff Liaison Sandra Zadell, Assistant Township Manager and Stephanie Mason, Township Manager.

Visitor: Brian Jeter from Comcast Cable

**Minutes:** On a motion made by Mr. Ebenbach, seconded by Mr. Salvati the minutes from May 7, 2012 were approved.

Mrs. Zadell reviewed the one complaint we had this month regarding Comcast Cable. The complaint has been resolved so the committee took no further action.

Mrs. Zadell also reported on two Verizon Channel updates – Verizon removed two channels from their packages.

The committee then turned to a discussion of the upcoming Comcast franchise renewal with Mr. Jeter. The current contract expires on March 4, 2013.

- Mr. Jeter laid out his view of the time line. He is aiming to get an agreement ready to go by September to the Board of Supervisors so that everything will be ready for the 3/4/2013 renewal.
- Mr. Jeter agreed to send the most current agreement to the TAB Board to review by the first week of July 2012; he also answered initial questions, as posed in the letter from the TAB Board sent June 4 from Mr. Ebenbach to Comcast. He stated that Comcast's goal is not to build a fiber optic network to the homes. When they switched the network to an all-digital network they gained a lot of bandwidth, so they will not need to do much construction of infrastructure in the next 10 years. They feel that the suburban Central Bucks cable system is not overly taxed at this point.
- Mr. Jeter also reported that since the last franchise negotiations, their performance monitoring for our community has improved. He said like PECO they can now see the pockets of outages etc.
- The TAB Board and Mr. Jeter discussed the grant dollar request that the committee had outlined in their letter to Comcast. Mr. Jeter stated that the amount of the grant is dependent on what the Verizon agreement grant is. Most likely Comcast will be willing to match whatever the Verizon grant is, with extra incentives if the committee decides to do a longer than 10 year renewal term , such as for 12 or 15 years. He explained that a \$10,000 - \$12,000 grant would be "normal" for a 10 year term and for a community of our size based on \$5 per

subscriber and higher for the longer terms. He went on to say that since the last franchise agreement Comcast has lost significant market share. They now have about 2200 subscribers in the Township; in the previous contract they had about 20% more.

- Mr. Ebenbach asked Mr. Jeter about the possibility of our Government Access Channel being able to utilize surplussed Comcast production equipment. Mr. Jeter said that he would check with his contacts.
- Mr. Ebenbach also raised the issue of the quality of our signal received by the typical subscriber as compared to the quality of other channels on the system. Mr. Ebenbach is concerned that our channel may be losing quality in the transport and encoding processes used to add our signal to the system. Mr. Jeter said that he will arrange for a Comcast technician to meet with Mr. Ebenbach to look at our set up and see where the issue lies.
- Mr. Jeter suggested the website classroom.org for good content for our channel.
- The committee asked Mr. Jeter about the possibility of the Government Access Channel having both an HD and a regular Standard definition presence on the system over the next ten years. Mr. Jeter said that Comcast's policy is to only provide a single channel for government access purposes at this time. Mr. Ebenbach acknowledged hearing his answer but reiterated that he wanted to continue the discussions on this issue in that the gradual transition of the TV viewing population to receive and prefer HD signals was well underway and expected to continue in our community.
- Mr. Ebenbach then asked what would happen if Doylestown Township did produce HD content and handed it off to Comcast, would they reduce the format? Mr. Jeter did not have an answer.
- The next issue that the committee and Mr. Jeter discussed was regarding high speed internet. The Committee would like incorporate free high speed internet into our franchise agreement for the next 10 years for the Township building. Mr. Jeter stated that Comcast did not want to lose any Business Class customers, and could not consider providing the current Township access at no charge. He went on to say that in some cases the school districts do get free internet but it is a residential class account, not a Comcast Business Class account. Mr Salvati suggested that Comcast provide a free residential class account for TAB use in addition to the present Comcast internet services the TAB receives. Mr. Jeter said he will look into this and get back to us.
- Mr. Jeter also stated that our next franchise payment can certainly be done through ACH as we requested. He will get the paperwork to Ken Wallace our Director of Finance.

- Mr. Ebenbach also requested 30 day payment terms for the Franchise fee payments, Mr. Jeter stated that 45 days is ideal for Comcast, and that he didn't think he could move on that item.
- Mr. Salvati also requested that Comcast provide On Demand access to the Doylestown Twp's Board of Supervisors meetings in the Comcast local government category listing within its free On Demand service tier. Mr. Jeter said he would look in to that request.
- The action items that Comcast left with were:
  - They will watch the channel to see about the potential loss in quality of the video that we send to them.
  - They will send out a tech and coordinate with Mr. Ebenbach to review the quality of the channel.
  - Mr. Jeter will get a draft agreement to the Committee for their review during the first week of July, before July 9<sup>th</sup>, he will also prepare a side agreement which will address the TAB's new free residential class internet access account. . He will also include information about the grant funding, showing amounts that correspond with length of the franchise fee agreement. He will also send a gross revenue comparison definition in our new agreement in July.
  - Mr. Jeter will coordinate a meeting between Comcast production people and Mr. Ebenbach to see if there is any surplus equipment or guidance that they could provide the Township as it continues to work at improving the quality of the channel's signal.
- Mr. Jeter also outlined some new additions; he stated that in their service Comcast is putting all of their HD channels together; they are eliminating the 200 channels. There will be increased features on the guide and there are certain Wi-Fi hotspots throughout the community, he will let us know where they are.

The committee thanked Mr. Jeter for his visit and meeting participation, and then went on with other matters.

Ms. Mason, Township Manager joined the meeting at this point and explained her concerns about potential new 4G cell towers. They can be installed on existing poles, and where poles exist there is no problem. The problem arises when the utilities are buried underground and this new 4G tower requires a 25' pole. This issue is currently in a lawsuit and may be adjudicated during June. Our solicitor will keep us informed.

Mr. Salvati asked if the poles would be multipurpose or if just one carrier would use each pole, Ms. Mason did not know the answer. We will follow up with that once we get more information from our solicitor.

Mr. Ebenbach reported no change in the budget this month. Some items just moved from the committed to the paid column.

Lectern Project: Mr. Ebenbach reported that Mr. Schea visited the site, took pictures and measurements and is now at the stage of purchasing materials for the lectern project.

The committee discussed the 2013 budget requests and decided that they will have that together by the end of August for the upcoming budget season.

They discussed the web streaming project and their impression that the Board of Supervisors seem to be happy with the project. The committee agreed to make a presentation at the August 21 Board of Supervisors meeting recommending that the Township continue web streaming in 2013 and beyond.

Mrs. Zadell reported on the records retention project. She reported that all the records that were marked to be destroyed have now been destroyed.

Mr. Krause reported on the Nexus log-in error that continues to happen. He has a tech report request in and he will continue to check on that.

Mr. Kraus and Mr. Ebenbach will educate Mrs. Zadell on a work-around for this issue.

The committee also decided to put the station ID's that Mr. Salvati created into the slide rotation.

The committee decided to move the July meeting to July 9<sup>th</sup> and the November 5<sup>th</sup> meeting to November 12<sup>th</sup>.

The TAB committee adjourned at 9:15pm.