



# EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Information Technology Division

Memorandum

## INFORMATION ONLY

To: Mayor Diane Marlin and Urbana City Council Members  
From: Sanford Hess, Jason Liggett, Jake Schumacher  
Regarding: Feasibility of a New Public Access TV Channel  
Date: January 14, 2020

Council Members,

In February 2019, we presented a plan to research the feasibility of launching a new public access channel in our community. The plan sought a community partner to take on the supervision and programming of a new fifth channel for public access, allowing the City to reduce staffing. This plan would have included a reduction of 22 hours/week of staff time in fiscal year 2020 and a further reduction of staff time in fiscal year 2021.

This memo is a status report and summary of our findings.

### **The Proposed Timeline presented in February was:**

**January – July, 2019** – Jason and Jake will solicit input from the UPTV Commission, cable providers, UPTV members, and others. *This was completed and presented to Council in August 2019.*

**July - January, 2020** - Jason and Jake will try to find the best partner to take over the fifth channel and will work out a transition plan of operating the fifth channel. *This was completed and a summary appears below.*

Should a partner NOT be found, then we will request that Urbana City Council either increase funding for UPTV or consent to eliminate Public Access programming. This will be included as part of the 2021 budget request.

**July 1, 2020** – If a partner is found, and it is financially and technically feasible, the City will launch the fifth PEG channel. Jake will schedule and promote the fifth channel during the transition period.

**December 31, 2020** – The City will eliminate Jake's part-time position, thus producing another permanent reduction in UPTV staff time of 18 hours a week, as the chosen organization would fully assume control of the fifth channel. The City would continue to run its own channel broadcasting Government and Education Access programs, with Jason as Station Manager.

### **Status Report: Research and development of a new public access channel**

Over the last six months, we presented the opportunity to operate a public access channel to community organizations, which have:

- Significant involvement with the widest variety of community segments;
- Interest, and preferably expertise, in digital media of some sort;
- A commitment to free speech and active representation of differing viewpoints.

Although there was interest from organizations, we did not receive any formal proposals to operate a new channel. The UPTV Commission, public access producers, and community members expressed a desire for the City to continue to offer public access programming on UPTV.

### **Next Steps**

The Mayor will include her proposal for UPTV funding as part of the overall FY21 budget proposal.