

**CHAMPAIGN-URBANA CABLE TELEVISION AND  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
QUARTERLY MINUTES**

**DATE:** April 20, 2011  
4:00 PM

**PLACE:** Urbana City Council Chambers  
400 South Vine Street, Urbana, IL

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	<b>CHAMPAIGN</b>	<b>URBANA</b>
	Rick Atterberry Karen Walker Giraldo Rosales	Peter Folk Barbara Gladney
	<b>PARKLAND</b>	<b>U of I</b>
	Chris Foster	Kate Brickman

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Kyle Harrison

**STAFF PRESENT:** Jeff Hamilton – City of Champaign  
Jake Schumacher – City of Urbana

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Art Svymbersky – Comcast

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Atterberry called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Jeff Hamilton was asked to record the attendance.

**3. MODIFICATIONS TO AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was accepted as presented.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The January 12, 2011, minutes were accepted as presented.

**5. CORRESPONDENCE**

Jeff Hamilton reviewed the correspondence in the Commission's packet, including: notices from AT&T and Comcast, an email from Ms. Patti Petrie, Champaign and Urbana cable complaints, and Comcast and AT&T Annual Reports.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Urbana Cable Franchise Agreement**

Chair Atterberry reported the Commission received a printed copy of the franchise agreement in their packets. It is also posted on the City of Urbana's and the Cable Commission's websites.

Chair Atterberry reported that it appears the wrong version of the agreement was signed. In section 10.2, it says that UI-7 & PCTV can be moved to the digital tier by Comcast. This was a concern to the Cable Commission and they recommended that it be stricken. Comcast told Urbana's Council and the Cable Commission that language would be stricken, yet it remains in the signed agreement. This discrepancy is being brought to Urbana management's attention.

Commissioner Gladney thanked Chair Atterberry for noticing and working to fix the error.

### **B. Champaign Franchise Update**

Chair Atterberry reported that Champaign and Comcast are still meeting to hammer out an agreement.

Commissioner Gladney asked if Champaign's franchise will require a 5<sup>th</sup> PEG channel like Urbana's franchise.

Mr. Hamilton reported that it is. He added that once Champaign's agreement is done, both Cities will work together and request the channel.

## **7. REPORTS**

### **A. Committee Reports – None**

### **B. Staff Reports**

#### **UPTV**

Jake Schumacher reported that UPTV program "C-U Sharing the Road" won an award from the Illinois Public Works Association. Katelyn Dixon was hired as an Intern and is doing a great job. UPTV is working with a UI graduate class on videos about local non-profits. UPTV is working on PSAs for the UC2B project and also working with the Urbana Business Association on a series called "Around Town". In addition to filming the 2011 MLK Celebration, they also ran an MLK Celebration marathon on UPTV that day.

#### **CGTV**

Jeff Hamilton reported that CGTV is redeveloping their website. He also reported that CGTV completed another episode of "Champaign Connection" and an hour-long documentary on the City's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition. CGTV is also working on 20 short fire-safety "quiz-bowl" videos in partnership with the U of I and Champaign Fire Department. They are also working on two videos for the Neighborhood Services Department. CGTV also televised a candidate forum for mayoral and school board candidates.

## **C. System Operator Reports**

### Comcast

Art Svymbersky introduced himself as the new Government Affairs Manager for Central Illinois and stated he looks forward to working with the Cities and Commission again.

Mr. Svymbersky reported that Comcast has already contacted Mike Monson at the City of Urbana to work on getting the correct franchise agreement signed. Both sides have acknowledged the mistake and will work to fix it.

He reported that Comcast has more HD & 3-D channels now available via the World of More. Comcast Internet is now 105 Mb/sec at the high end and he pointed out that Champaign-Urbana has the full lineup of Comcast services – just like Chicago.

He reported that four Leaders & Achievers Scholarships were awarded locally. He added that Comcast Cares Day is April 30, 2011, and they'll be helping the Eastern Illinois Food Bank and Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

Commissioner Walker reported that her itemized cable bill doesn't match the Comcast price list (i.e. HD Starter isn't on the list) and that other customers also raised this concern to her. She also asked why some customers have to sign contracts and others don't.

Mr. Svymbersky replied that some packages require you to take multiple items off the price list & add them together. He also responded that some special promotions do require a contract (verbal now – not written).

Commissioner Folk stated that he is pleased with the FCC/FTC's requirements on the Comcast-NBC merger. He asked what the impact of the merger will be locally.

Mr. Svymbersky replied that Comcast has started working with NBC on these details and corporate is figuring out what they need to do. Comcast will improve outreach in the community and some low-income internet packages will be available locally too.

Commissioner Gladney asked what "Xfinity" is.

Mr. Svymbersky said "Xfinity" is how Comcast is branding their new products. If you have Comcast, you have Xfinity.

Commissioner Gladney replied that some of this can be really confusing and maybe Comcast would consider having a call-in show so customers can ask questions.

Commissioner Foster reported that at his home, he can't receive some local HD channels (15 & 17) via analog cable.

Mr. Svymbersky said that he would check into it & report back to the Commission.

Chair Atterberry offered that sometimes old taps or filters are in the system and need to be removed.

Chair Atterberry asked why CGTV was replaced by a religious channel earlier this week.

Mr. Svymbersky said he is waiting for a written response from the DAC as to what the exact problem was, but that the problem was quickly resolved once reported by the City. Only the digital channel was affected.

AT&T U-verse – No representative present.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Broadband Access Committee Report Update**

Commissioner Folk said the BAC made some progress on a report outline last summer. He reported that the BAC is now reviewing a draft report. The report was written largely by Commissioner Folk, but the outline was written by the BAC. The BAC needs to meet & discuss the report before presenting it to the Commission. He hopes to do that before the Commission is (possibly) disbanded.

Chair Atterberry said a special meeting could be held when the report is ready to be presented.

Commissioner Gladney asked if the BAC is involved with UC2B.

Commissioner Folk responded that the BAC assisted with the UC2B grant application, but the two aren't the same. UC2B will be an independent internet provider. The BAC is operator-independent. He would like a group similar to the BAC to continue advocating for increased broadband access community wide.

Commissioner Gladney asked that if the Cable Commission is dissolved, how will the community understand what is going on?

Commissioner Folk said there is some hope UC2B can fill that role, but they have a huge project to fulfill first. It would seem to be a conflict for UC2B to advocate the use of other providers – they'll advocate for the use of UC2B services. He reported that UC2B will establish a Committee for Digital Equality which will address some of the BAC's concerns.

Chair Atterberry asked if a body like the BAC could continue on its own initiative if the Commission is dissolved.

Commissioner Folk said he doesn't think so; it needs a mandate from the City Councils. The BAC members are very busy and are involved in many related activities. He thinks someone above UC2B will need to mandate this.

## **B. Future of the Cable Commission**

Jeff Hamilton reported to the Commission that the administrations from both Cities will recommend to their City Councils that the Cable Commission be dissolved. The main reasons for this are related to budget and staffing. The City of Champaign has cut \$13 million dollars over the past years and some services are being cut to afford core services (police, fire, and public works). City staff is being laid off and Mr. Hamilton's department is having a 10% staff reduction. He expects to receive many new duties as a result. An average 8-10 hours of staff time are spent on each Commission meeting and the Commission averaged 30 meetings over the last 2 years (expected to fall now that the BAC has reduced the frequency of their meetings). The state video franchising law also took away some of the responsibilities the Commission had over customer service and other issues. Should the Commission be dissolved, staff will continue to handle cable complaints for customers and hold AT&T and Comcast accountable to their obligations. The cities will need to step up and fill the public education roll that the Commission has provided. The Commission will continue to exist until the City Councils take action to dissolve it. Champaign's Council approved dissolving the Commission in a non-binding straw poll last January.

Commissioner Folk asked Mr. Hamilton to explain the number of staff hours spent on meetings.

Mr. Hamilton explained that includes the number of hours preparing for, attending, and writing up the minutes. Also includes preparing the packets, copying, reports, agendas, etc.

Commissioner Gladney said that many of the meetings were to negotiate the franchise and those will cease soon.

Mr. Hamilton reported that work on the franchise renewal wasn't included in his numbers, as that was City business, not necessarily Commission business.

Commissioner Walker said that the Commissioners provided a lot of volunteer hours on various projects, including PEG marketing. She hopes that hard work isn't wasted.

Commissioner Folk asked Mr. Schumacher about the impact this might have on the UPTV Commission.

Jake Schumacher said he wasn't sure because the two groups are interrelated in some ways. He reported the UPTV Commission is needed and that they might be asked to assume some of the Commission's duties. He added that marketing of the PEG channels will continue.

Commissioner Folk said he is concerned about the development of the 5<sup>th</sup> PEG channel. He recognizes the budget & staffing issues but hopes the value of what the Commission does can continue. He agreed the costs to operate the Commission should probably be eliminated in place of staff layoffs.

Commissioner Gladney said she thinks this is a real loss for our community and that the cities will miss the dedicated volunteers that have served them. She understands the financial constraints but said those problems will go away with time.

Commissioner Brickman said she never understood why the Commission exists since it has no power. She reported that the Councils have all the power & often ignore the Commission's recommendations. She pointed out there is rarely public attendance at the Commission's meetings. She said the PEG channels can meet to continue marketing efforts.

Commissioner Folk agreed that the Commission doesn't have any power & was surprised they weren't actively involved in the franchise negotiations. He added that Chair Atterberry was much more involved in the negotiations than any other Commissioner.

Chair Atterberry reported the Commission had lots of input in the Needs Assessment process. He represented the Commission during all of Champaign's negotiations but Urbana didn't have a Commission representative after the Cities stopped negotiating jointly. He added that it's hard to defend the Commission's existence when public safety officers are being laid off. He pointed out that Champaign has already eliminated the Liquor Advisory Commission, so he is a bit concerned that the public input opportunities will get watered down in Champaign as boards & commissions are eliminated.

Commissioner Folk suggested that perhaps the Commission could meet as-needed to address specific Council questions; involving less meetings and funding. He pointed out that the Commission discusses technical topics in detail; which doesn't often happen at the Council level.

Commissioner Brickman stated that commissions are important but that it is hard to ask for funding if it means people lose their jobs. She understands why the cities can't wait any longer and need to make these cuts.

Commissioner Gladney said UPTV wouldn't exist but for the public & Cable Commission.

Commissioner Walker said the public may not attend the meetings, but they contact her at home and other Commissioners routinely. Staff will now need to handle that extra work.

Commissioner Foster agreed with the others, and said that this is not a reflection on what the Commission has done. He reported that the Commission has gotten a lot of good things started and that the PEG channel coordinators can continue to build upon that.

Commissioner Rosales said the Commission serves as the voice of the community, but at the discretion of the Mayors and Councils. He added that he hopes the Champaign Council will reconsider. He said that the Commission's minimal budget is not impacting the Police Department budget. He suggested that perhaps a Commission Secretary would take on the administration role and free up City staff resources.

Jeff Hamilton said this decision is not a reflection on the Commission, but on the economic crunch we're under. He is very pleased with the Commission's public education efforts over the last several years.

Commissioner Folk said that before the Councils vote on eliminating the Commission, he would propose the Commission hold a special meeting so they can develop a letter explaining the

Commission's value & perhaps make recommendations that would reduce the budgetary and staffing strains on the cities.

Chair Atterberry agreed that a special meeting to handle that and address the BAC Report is a good idea.

#### **9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION - None**

#### **10. COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS**

Commissioner Foster reported that PCTV completed the Parkland Challenge and will air them in May. PCTV also televised a candidate forum & have several new PCTV shows, including "Learning to Grow" and "If You Liked... You'll Love". They will also begin to stream their channel live sometime soon. PCTV also televised some basketball games this last season.

Commissioner Brickman reported that UI-7 will carry a live feed of both commencement ceremonies. She also reported that some UI Journalism newscasts recently won awards.

Commissioner Folk said there were some items from the last meeting that weren't addressed: NATOA conference attendance, development of a PEG marketing plan, and holding a study session regarding establishment of the 5<sup>th</sup> PEG channel.

Chair Atterberry announced that this was Commissioner Gladney's last meeting & he thanked her for her 20 years of service.

Commissioner Gladney thanked the Commission. She reported she really enjoyed serving and that she has donated her Commission files to the Urbana Library.

#### **11. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND ADJOURNMENT**

The next study session was set for July 13<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. in the Champaign Council Chambers. The next quarterly meeting was set for July 20<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. in the Urbana Council Chambers.

Chair Atterberry reported it was likely they'd hold a special meeting before that.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Hamilton  
Telecommunications/AV Technician