

**CHAMPAIGN-URBANA CABLE TELEVISION AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES**

DATE: July 14, 2010
4:00 PM

PLACE: Champaign Council Chambers
102 N. Neil Street, Champaign, IL

MEMBERS PRESENT: **CHAMPAIGN** **URBANA**
Rick Atterberry Peter Folk
Giraldo Rosales

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
Kate Brickman

MEMBERS ABSENT: Barbara Gladney, Chris Foster, Karen Walker, David Gehrig, Kyle Harrison

STAFF PRESENT: Jeff Hamilton – City of Champaign
Jason Liggett – City of Urbana

OTHERS PRESENT: Greg Gomolka, Deb Piscola, Will Samples – Comcast

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:12 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The proposed July 21, 2010, quarterly meeting agenda was approved as presented.

3. COMCAST’S “WORLD OF MORE” PRESENTATION

Greg Gomolka, Deb Piscola, and Will Samples were introduced and thanked the Commission for the opportunity to make their presentation on the World of More.

Mr. Gomolka provided an overview of how Expanded Basic customers will be affected.

- Expanded Basic is moving to a digital-only format in order to free up bandwidth for more/new cable services.
- Customers will need a digital transport adapter (DTA), cable box, or cable card to continue getting Expanded Basic channels.
- Expanded Basic customers can have 3 boxes per house for free (\$1.99/additional box).
- On 2/15/10, Comcast sent affected customers a letter with details about the change.
- DTAs can be picked up at the local office or customers can order a self-install kit via phone or Internet.
- Professional installs by Comcast technicians are also available for a one-time fee.
- The tentative date for the cutover is 11/16/2010. After the cutover, customers who failed to install DTAs will lose any channels above the Basic tier.

- Basic-only subscribers don't need the boxes/adapters.

Will Samples then demonstrated how to hook up a DTA. He said it is important for the customer to follow the instructions exactly as printed, including connecting the coaxial cables before plugging the DTA into the electrical outlet. The customer then goes online or calls Comcast to activate the DTA(s). It takes 5-10 minutes to complete the whole install. Help is available to any customer having problems.

Deb Piscola discussed why Comcast is making this technological change:

- Allows Comcast to provide more HD & on-demand choices.
- Faster Internet speeds
- More channel options & services
- 3D programming options
- She reported that local school & municipalities are being helped with ordering DTAs
- The switch will not be made until the vast majority of subscribers are ready (have DTAs).

Question & Answer

- Commissioner Rosales asked how many analog-only customers are in Champaign-Urbana.
Ms. Piscola reported that the majority of their customers (60% perhaps) have at least 1 digital box.
- Commissioner Rosales asked what the cost of the box is.
Mr. Gomolka said customers will receive up to 3 digital devices (boxes or adapters) per household at no charge. Ms. Piscola added that additional DTAs are \$1.99/month.
- Commissioner Folk inquired about what will happen to Basic service.
Ms. Piscola replied that Basic-only subscribers will continue to receive their programming as they do today. They don't need to do anything.
- Commissioner Folk asked if over-the-air high-definition (HD) programs can be received via a DTA.
Ms. Piscola said the DTA doesn't pass HD signals through to the TV. She offered that Comcast will probably have a DTA that will pass through HD signals some time in the future.
- Commissioner Folk asked what the customers options are to get HD programming.
Ms. Piscola said a new whole-house HD service fee covers HD signals for all the TVs in a customer's home. Customers also pay for each HD-capable digital box. Chair Atterberry added that customers can also use an A/B switch to hook up an antenna & DTA to the same TV, but is isn't pretty or convenient.
- Commissioner Folk said municipalities and school have a lot of TVs, and asked how they will be accommodated.
Ms. Piscola said they've found that schools don't use cable in class as much as they'd thought. Schools are encouraged to take their 3 free DTAs now and to share them throughout the school as needed. Mr. Gomolka said he's been working with the City of Champaign and schools on this now. Ms. Piscola said they prefer to have all the

complimentary accounts done 45 days before the cutoff. A special Comcast team is working with all the schools.

- Commissioner Folk asked how many analog channels are being freed up. Mr. Samples reported that about 50 analog channels would be involved.
- Chair Atterberry said he appreciates the goal of freeing up bandwidth, but customers are already complaining about the limitations of the DTAs. He reviewed a recent cable complaint filed with the City and the numerous problems the DTA requirement causes. Ms. Piscola replied that Comcast has many different types of users, and they are trying to meet the needs of both simple and high-level television users and equipment. She said this doesn't require a cable system rebuild which would also inconvenience people. Customers will be able to order their free DTAs even after the cutoff date.
- Chair Atterberry said unplugging the DTA for a long time required him to call Comcast multiple times to get it reactivated. Resetting the box can take up to an hour.
- Mr. Staples responded that the boxes don't normally take that long to be activated.
- Chair Atterberry said the boxes are always drawing power and can't be turned off; a sustainability issue and concern for many residents. He also reported that the RF generator built into the box can cause interference with other TVs in a customer's home.
- Jeff Hamilton asked if owners of new TVs with digital tuners will still need a DTA.
- Ms. Piscola replied yes, even people who bought new digital televisions will still need a DTA, cable box or cable card.
- Commissioner Folk asked if some TVs can work without a DTA/box.
- Ms. Piscola said yes, some TVs take cable cards which can be leased from Comcast instead of a box or DTA. New TV technology in the future may no longer require boxes/DTAs at all.
- Commissioner Folk said he hopes Comcast will work with manufacturers to offer more customer-friendly devices in the future.
Ms. Piscola said she thinks the industry is already moving in that direction.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Hamilton
Telecommunications/AV Technician

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