



**Portsmouth
Cable Commission Meeting
11:00 a.m. – December 1, 2005
Bedford and Manchester Community Access Television Visit**

**The Portsmouth Cable Commission met on Thursday, December 1, 2005 at 11:00
am at City Hall for visit to Manchester and Bedford NH**

- I. Call to Order** - The following were present:
John Gregg, Chairman
Louis Vinciguerra, Commissioner
Kathleen Pearce, Commissioner

Also present were Alan Brady, City of Portsmouth Webmaster and Jason Whittet of Comcast, Manager of Government and Community Relations.

Chairman John Gregg called the meeting to order at approximately 1:15 p.m.

The Commissioners met with Bill Jennings, Bedford Station Manager; Keith Hickey, Town Manager and Colleen Richardson at the Bedford Public Access Station (BPAS).

We met at their new studio which houses the Council Chambers where we met. The Town Council appoints the Board of Directors who oversees the PEG policy and operations. They have a three-year term.

They currently have 2 channels, government and education which is not used much as they do not have their own high school. They have the capability to have a dedicated educational channel as they have been approved and will be building a new high school.

They have 100 producers, 6 of which are very active. They have two managers, one focusing on marketing and the other focusing on scheduling and administration.

With regard to censorship all programs are produced. Controversial programming requires 25 residential signatures to have shows produced. These programs are shown after 1:00 a.m.

Bedford has approximately 6900 subscribers with 6500 viewers. They have a survey done in conjunction with voting and community television ranks high.

Bedford's current budget is \$212,000, receiving 4% from Comcast which goes back into cable.

They feel Portsmouth would benefit from a public access channel as they recently produced a program at Strawberry Banke which cannot be seen in Portsmouth as we do not have an access channel.

After touring their elaborate studio and equipment, the Commissioners thanked Bill and Colleen for their time and information and left for Manchester.

The Commissioners then met with Joe Lahr, Executive Director and Station Manager of TV23 at Manchester Community Access Media Public Access (MCAM-TV23). Before sitting down for discussion, Mr. Lahr gave them a tour of their studio which is in a large old mill. We then sat down in their conference room for discussion. Manchester has three channels, government, education and public access. In March of 1992 the Public Access was formed between the City and managed by the school. They received approval for the non-profit (501C3, Business Charity) in October 2003. The non-profit was started in April 2004 after a 13-1 vote. They went to the Mayor and the Board of Alderman of eleven persons formed a steering committee of five persons for the proposed non-profit. There is a contract with the Alderman for ten years, reviewed every three years. On October 1 of each year they receive \$231,000. The City received a \$1.3 million money grant from Comcast for facilities and equipment only, this was the only time it was not passed through.

Out of Manchester's 5% franchise fee, MCAM receives 20% which is approximately \$200,000 annually.

MCAM identifies themselves as a media center not just TV. Their Mission is to take Public Access portion of the PEG for any resident wanting to create television programming and broadcast same on Channel 23.

Chairman Gregg asked about the kinds of programs they show? There are 70 active producers, one-half of whom are very active. They operate 24 hours/day with 27% programming religious; 20% political and the balance of 53% varies. Issues of censorship is left up to the producer.

Manchester has a population of approximately \$107,000 people, 40,000 subscribers with 5,000 homes tuning in.

Mr. Lahr stated that Comcast would be willing and happy to give them another channel if they were able to show them they have a plan and scheduled programming. The commissioners thanked Mr.Lahr for his time and information and headed home.

MOTION made by Louis Vinciguerra to accept the draft meeting calendar for 2006. Seconded by Kathleen Pearce. Motion Passed.

Approval of Minutes – Minutes of the November 3, 2005 meeting were accepted as presented.

Chairman Gregg recommended for the January meeting discussion of where we are going and to form a plan. It was also recommended to start the January meeting earlier or extend it later to allow time for discussion. Discussed the need to schedule a future ascertainment hearing and also determine whether or not more than one ascertainment hearing is needed.

There was discussion as to whether a survey should be prepared for the community in order to obtain their interest in Public Access TV, the extent they watch Channel 22 and what it is they watch and their thoughts on Comcast performance. Discussion of how to get the survey out to the general public. Louis Vinciguerra suggested including in all water bills. However, a good number of them are sent to landlords of renters, it was decided this was not a good idea. Some suggestions were newspapers including the Wire and also Channel 22.

VI. Adjournment:

MOTION to adjourn made by Kathleen Pearce. Seconded by Louis Vinciguerra.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine E. Boucas