



**Portsmouth
Cable Commission Meeting
3:00 p.m. – June 1, 2006
Conference Room A, Seybolt Building, Municipal Complex (City Hall)**

The Portsmouth Cable Commission met on Thursday, June 1, 2006 at 3:00 p.m.

- I. Call to Order** - The following were present:
John Gregg, Chairman
John Bohenko, City Manager
Kathleen Pearce
Brian Gregg, Alternate

Also present were Alan Brady, City of Portsmouth Communications Supervisor and Suzanne Woodland, Assistant City Attorney. Also present were Gail Pare, Newington Cable Committee; Susan Rizkalla and Mike Schwartz, Co-Chairman Town of Rye Communications Committee.

- I. Call to Order** - Chairman John Gregg called the meeting to order at approximately 3:10 p.m.
The Chairman welcomed the representatives from Newington and Rye and the Committee introduced themselves.

- II. Discussion with other Communities concerning PEG access (Newington and Rye)** – Chairman Gregg outlined the purpose of the meeting by saying that Portsmouth is preparing to negotiate a new cable contract with Comcast - the current one expires at the end of 2007. Through public ascertainment hearings, the Commission has learned that there is some interest on the part of the public for public and educational channels. The Commission would like to open a dialogue with surrounding communities (Greenland, New Castle, Newington, and Rye: the ones that send students to the Portsmouth High School) to see if there might also be some interest in education and public access channels and, therefore, working together to develop them. If so, one approach might be to set up a nonprofit organization to oversee the public access channel.

Gail Pare stated that Newington has been approached by Verizon with regard to offering cable services in their community and suggested we consider how a contract with Verizon would factor into negotiations with Comcast for PEG access capabilities.

She reported that Newington's contract expires in 2007 as does Portsmouth. Newington's school system which is from K-6 is developing a media committee that is interested in doing some level of production at the elementary level and that there is some interest in being able to do live broadcasts of their town meetings as well. The Selectmen established a cable advisory committee. There are five members, and they are exploring what is out there and the possibilities. They have done one mail survey assessment with limited returns and are planning a couple of meetings. Presently, Comcast serves 270 households out of 920 residents and approximately 350 households in Newington.

Susan Rizkalla stated that Rye has 2100 households with 68-70% cable usage. Ms. Rizkalla suggested that the communities would be a stronger unity for negotiating with Comcast if the contracts expiration dates were in unison. However, Rye's contract will not expire until 2009.

The Chairman stated he recalled that in a recent meeting with Karen Anderson, City Manager of Greenland, he was told their contract with Comcast would be expiring in 2007.

In response to the suggestion of coordinating contract expiration dates, City Manager Bohenko stated that contracts with cable companies can be extended six months.

Mike Swartz stated from a selectman's view there has not been a lot of interest in Rye for broadcasting meetings and suspects there might be some interest in doing more remote on-site school plays, etc. He asked for some idea of how much it would cost to support a public access channel.

Chairman Gregg stated within the next few months Portsmouth will be laying out cost scenarios.

Susan Rizkalla handed the members of the Committee a sheet of frequently asked questions and the answers and felt it would be helpful to Newington.

Kathleen Pearce asked the Chairman if he has come across any other towns that are using the multi-town approach to providing public access television. The Chairman responded that it is fairly common. There are communities in NH that are working together, but it is apparently not always a bed of roses in that there is the need to maintain funding across multiple communities rather than just one.

The Chairman offered to share the results of cost scenarios with other communities at a later date.

As a next step, City Manager Bohenko suggested that it would be helpful if the Boards of Selectmen send a letter to the Portsmouth City Manager describing

their interest in working cooperatively to develop PEG access delivery capabilities. Gail Pare clarified that Portsmouth is looking to determine interests and not a commitment at this point.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

III. Approval of Minutes - Voted to approve and accept the minutes of the April 4 and April 6, 2006 meetings.

IV. Scheduled date for August Public Ascertainment Hearing – The Chairman asked the committee to place the date of August 16 at 7:00 p.m. on their calendars. The Chairman’s thought for making the public aware of public access is to produce a video(s) that could be shown the week preceding the Ascertainment Hearing, making people more aware of what public access television is and, therefore, be better prepared to express their views – pro or con - at the August 16th hearing. The Committee felt this was a good idea, and the City Webmaster will proceed along these lines. The Chairman would like to arrange for press coverage in the newspapers. The City Manager suggested the City’s electronic newsletter.

V. Other Discussion – The Chairman asked Brian Gregg and Kathy Pearce how they were progressing in summarizing the detailed comments obtained during Ascertainment Hearings and from correspondence. He suggested that they complete a draft for the July meeting and be prepared to update it with results of the August Ascertainment Hearing.

VI. Non-Public Session at the Chairman’s discretion - MOTION made by Kathleen Pearce to go into non-public session. Seconded by Brian Gregg. Motion passed.

Discussion with Legal counsel regarding our approach to negotiations with outside counsel.

MOTION made by Brian Gregg to close non-public session, seconded by Kathleen Pearce. Motion passed.

The next meeting is scheduled for **July 13th at 3:00 p.m.**

VII. Adjournment: MOTION to adjourn made by Brian Gregg. Seconded by Kathleen Pearce. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted, _____
Elaine E. Boucas