



Portsmouth
Cable Commission Informational Meeting
6:30 p.m. – October 9, 2008
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

DRAFT

The Portsmouth Cable Commission held an Informational Meeting on Thursday, October 9, 2008.

Cable members present were Louis Vinciguerra and Gary Lowe. Also present were Alan Brady, City of Portsmouth Communications Supervisor and Jay Somers of Comcast.

Chairman John Gregg introduced himself and welcomed the audience for preparing for the broadcast digital TV transition effective February 17, 2009. On February 17th we will no longer be receiving television reception, over the air, analog form will be coming in digital. We have found here in the City residents have questions of what is needed for reception, whether their TV will work or not. There are also questions regarding switching of channels that is associated with this. Comcast has volunteered to come to talk with us and try to answer some of those questions. There will be a presentation and then a question and answer period. This is also being broadcast.

Mr. Gregg introduced Jay Somers, Comcast Regional Representative for Portsmouth.

Mr. Somers thanked them for having him there and will explain what will happen in February 2009 called Broadcast Digital Transition (BDT). Congress mandated a full power over the air broadcast stations converting to all digital broadcasting by February 17, 2009 and return the analog spectrum their currently using to the Federal Government. The reason for BDT is being driven by the Federal Government's desire to reclaim valuable spectrum at the broadcast they were using and boxing it off for public service and commercial mobile uses. Some spectrums will be used for hand communications for emergency services providing police, fire emergency rescue. Others will be allowed for new commercial wireless services including mobile broadband.

One of the benefits of the BDT is to offer the consumer better viewing experience and access to advance services. Digital television offers a sharper clearer picture as well as a better sound. Digital television signals do not get the snowy effect that analog TV have far from the antenna that certain who do not have cable or satellite will experience.

Who is affected by BDT? If you own an analog TV set that is not connected to Cable or Satellite and functions with the help of rabbit ears or roof top antenna, you will not be able to watch Broadcast TV channels as of February 17, 2009 unless you take one of the three steps. Consumers with an analog TV set that watch over the air broadcast television via roof top or rabbit ear antenna must either connect all television sets to cable or satellite, purchase a new television set with a digital tuner or obtain a digital set top tuner that will convert digital TV signals back to analog.

How to find out if your TV is analog or digital. A TV set with a digital tuner built in to see and display over the air broadcast TV signals that will be transmitted in February 2009. Consult the owner's manual or look up information about the TV set on the manufacturer's website. Take an up close look at the TV to find out if it has an input connection labeled digital input or ATSC which is an acronym for the new digital TV format. TV set purchased prior to 1998 probably doesn't have a digital tuner. Almost every TV made before 1998 is a traditional analog set that can't display TV signals. Big screen projection TV¹ purchased between 1998 and 2004 may have a built in digital tuner. Unlimited percentage of projection TV sets generally only falls 2" in diameter or larger included digital tuners before 2004. Starting in 2004 many TV sets

featured digital tuners, however, some of the newer TV sets are purely displayed monitors that lack the internal circuitry needed to pick up digital broadcast. Sets advertised as HD ready or HDTV monitor sets, means they can display digital high definition signals but require a digital converter or cable TV connection to those signals. Consumer awareness, at least from the survey released from the Association of Public Television Stations shows a 50% jump in consumer awareness about the transition in the last four months, from 51% in November 2007 to over 6% in March 2008. Consumer awareness has increased to 64%.

How is the Federal Government Helping? Congress directed set up of \$1.5 billion coupon program to subsidize the purchase of digital to analog converters that converts analog TV's not connected to cable or another service to continue to receive over the air broadcast signals. Each household may request two coupons, supplies are limited. Coupons area available to 90 days only and need to be redeemed by retailers certified by the Federal Government, extensions are unlikely.

Coupon Distribution. Coupons look like plastic gift cards, but will carry store value. Coupons are sent to consumers by US mail accompanied by a list of nearby participating retailers, a list of coupon helpful converter boxes. In 2008 10 million coupons have already been requested.

Analog to Digital Converters. Mr. Somers passed out an example of what a converter would look like. Retailers include Best Buy, Radio Shack, Circuit City and WalMart.

Television Receiver Roles. All television receivers imported or shipped interstate after March 1, 2007 must have a digital tuner. Consumer retailers continue to sell analog only television sets. Since May 25, 2008 there are labels warning customers about limitations of analog TVs. If retailers are selling just an analog or analog TV set, they must have a display on top of that set that says this is analog and requires a digital control box. FCC has progressive enforcement with field inspectors looking for violators.

What Cable Broadcasters Are Doing to Help. Cable industry has launched an extensive consumer education program including TV advertising valued at \$200 billion with websites providing additional information. The website is www.antennaweb.org and you can call 1-800-DTV-2009.

Potential Problems Still Exist. According to a market research firm more than 9 million households display some digital TV reception problem with a switch to digital TV.

What Local Communities Can Do. Distribute copies of the DBT Fact Sheet to neighbors, co-workers and employees with FCC information and converter information.

Mr. Somers then answered questions.

Speakers: Joel Look, Glenn Gardner, Mimi Clark, David Palumbo, Richard DiPentima, Jeffrey Graper, Richard Katz, Carolyn Murphy, Louis Vinciguerra, Ed Price.

The Chair John Gregg thanked everyone for coming out and asking questions and hoped that everyone had a better understanding of the conversion. Jay Somers will be here after the meeting to answer any questions if you wish.

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine E. Boucas