

MINUTES

CABLE COMMISSION PLANNING SESSION

Thursday, January 22, 2009,
at 10:30 a.m.
held in
Conference Room A, City Hall

The meeting commenced at 10:40 a.m. and all members of the Cable Commission were present: Chairman John Gregg, Nancy Beach, Kathy Pearce, Brian Gregg and Gary Lowe. Also in attendance were Alan Brady, Communications Supervisor, and Suzanne M. Woodland, Assistant City Attorney.

1. Opening. John Gregg provided an agenda for the planning session concerning public access as well as opening remarks. The Committee reviewed and concurred with the organization of the day's topics and the ground rules for discussion. Committee members individually identified their expectations. The Committee used a "parking lot" concept for ideas that were not on topic but important to preserve.
2. Mission. The Cable Commission discussed the likely mission of a public access corporation. After discussion, the following draft mission statement was created:

Mission: To enhance the dissemination of information, ideas, and views of interest to Portsmouth residents, businesses and non-profits through the use of available and evolving technologies.

The intent is not to lock a future public access corporation into this particular expression of a mission statement, but to capture the type of mission the Cable Commission would expect to see from a public access corporation in order to receive the Cable Commission's support to operate the channel available under the new Comcast contract.

3. New Paradigm. Brian Gregg shared an outline of one model for the operation of a public access corporation. That model, dubbed the "new paradigm" seeks to tap more fully into evolving web technologies. This model is the leanest (in terms of dedication of fiscal resources) for beginning to broadcast public access programming.

Under this new model there would be no studio and limited staff support. Producers would be encouraged to utilize their own equipment (or loaned equipment) with minimal training to create programming that is ready to broadcast. Producers would upload their video to a private website and access corporation personnel would principally be responsible for scheduling air time.

Outlines of this lean model:

- ❖ Content is accessible via a cable television channel and the web
- ❖ Producers of programming are very self-directed, training provided through alternative means such as adult education programs
- ❖ Access Corporation would not require an office or studio
- ❖ Limited personnel to retain
- ❖ Lean budget
- ❖ The ability to upload video from many points to a common server
- ❖ Use of sponsors/underwriters to obtain quality video equipment for loan to producers.

Primary concerns about the limitations of this lean model:

- ❖ Quality of video particularly on the big screen
- ❖ Technological limitations given the slow speed of uploading to the web
- ❖ Likely exclusion of the elderly, the poor and the technologically unsophisticated
- ❖ Potentially limits opportunities for small, local non-profits to communicate their message
- ❖ No opportunity to show live programming

4. Trust. The City Manager joined the Cable Commission at noon at which point the Cable Commission raised for consideration the development of a charitable trust to allow for the accumulation of funds to support public access. Thereafter, the Committee discussed potential trust terms and structure as well as recommendations that could go forward to the City Council for consideration of this topic.
5. Continuation of New Paradigm. After the Manager's departure from the meeting the Cable Commission had further discussions with regard to the possible structure of a public access entity, fleshing out some of the pros and cons of the minimalist approach to public access television as represented by the "new paradigm".

There was general consensus that if sufficient funds were generated from the establishment of a trust, underwriting of other fund-raising activities, the preference would be to have a public access entity which would have a traditional studio and staffing so that the disadvantages of the minimalist model would be avoided.

6. Vision. The Commission outlined a vision statement for a public access corporation. That vision statement reads as follows:

The Portsmouth Cable Commission envisions a bright future for public access in the City. A successful public access corporation will:

- ❖ Embrace and incorporate emerging technologies to maximize effectiveness;
- ❖ Strive to include all members of the community, including those of all ages, of varying socio-economic status, and of differing technological abilities;
- ❖ Allow live broadcasts of important and interesting City events;

- ❖ Air a broad range of programming reflecting the needs and interests of individual residents as well as local businesses and non-profit organizations;
- ❖ Include multiple ways of producing and delivering content in order to maximize the ability of users to create and access content; and
- ❖ Serve as a virtual and physical point of connection and interaction for Portsmouth's community.

The intent is not to lock a future public access corporation into this particular vision statement, but to capture the type of goals the Cable Commission would expect to see from a public access corporation in order to receive the Cable Commission's support to operate the channel available under the new Comcast contract.

7. Bylaws/Operating Procedures. The Commission elected to defer discussion on other topics such as by-laws and operating procedures for public access until there is an opportunity for the City Council to weigh in on their support or not of a funding mechanism for public access.
8. Other. The Committee requested an update from FairPoint for the February 12th meeting. The Committee also confirmed that the March meeting will be held on March 19th.