

South Hadley Cable TV Advisory Committee Minutes for June 30, 2017 Meeting

Attendance

Members Present:

Eric Zahm, Chair
Denise Presley
Stephen Fox
Dale Johnston

Administrative

Meeting was called to order at 4:05 PM

A motion to accept the minutes of the previous meeting with necessary corrections was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Ms. Presley. Passed unanimously.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Fox and seconded by Mr. Johnston. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:20 PM

Please note that a copy of a letter that was written, but not sent to the SH Superintendent of Schools has been included at the end of these Minutes. The letter was meant to be a stand-alone attachment, but was concatenated on the end of this letter due to constraints on posting in the Agenda section of the Town Website. SF

Unfinished Business

No unfinished business.

New Business

Due to a consensus of committee members that the Cable TV Advisory Committee as currently constituted and defined in Town By-Laws* has limited impact on both the recurring contract negotiations with the Cable Provider and on the interim operation of the Cable TV Access Studio, there is little utility in participation at the current time. Therefore, the Committee members are respectfully opting to let their terms expire on June 30, 2017 without renewal.

Since there is currently a significant amount of money held in escrow for the operation of the CATV Access Studio and ongoing fees on subscribers to support that account the committee feels that there should be some By-Law provision for formalizing communication with the Selectboard that would enable the committee to influence the activities, location and mission of the studio. The Committee also feels that the By-Laws should be amended to explicitly provide for direct participation of committee members on the Negotiating Committee for the Cable TV contract, since the members of the Committee are the most likely to be informed on the process, needs of the community and current trends in Cable TV.

South Hadley Cable TV Advisory Committee Minutes for June 30, 2017 Meeting

* § 7-8. Cable Television Advisory Committee.

A. Duties. The Cable Television Advisory Committee shall serve as a liaison between the Town's cable provider(s) and the Selectboard; review proposed and existing cable contracts; advocate with the Town's cable provider(s) on behalf of the Town and its citizens; network with municipal peer groups; and anticipate future cable needs.

B. Membership and term. The Cable Television Advisory Committee shall consist of not fewer than five members and not more than nine members, each of whom shall be appointed for a term of one year.

New Business (continued)

The Committee has attached a proposed letter to the South Hadley Superintendent of Schools that was composed but not sent (due to the Committee inactivating) as the letter may benefit any future Committee in helping the Selectboard and the Cable TV contract Negotiating Committee in preparing for the 2019 contract negotiations. The focus of these questions was to help the Committee determine requirement for changes in the location, mission and configuration of the Cable TV Access Studio by determining current Public Access, Educational and Governmental (PEG) needs and utilization of the current Studio and its assets. Gathering this information was intended to anticipate and meet future cable needs while controlling costs to South Hadley Cable TV subscribers, who pay for these assets in their Comcast bills.

A suggestion to members of a future committee would be to set up periodic meetings with or reports to the Select Board to give them a better handle on the committees concerns and limitations with the current Town By-Law in place. This communication might give the committee more input into not only the contract negotiations, but the activities of the Studio in the interim years.

Next Meeting Scheduled

As there will be no members currently active on the Cable TV Advisory Committee after June 30, 2017, there will be no further meetings until the Committee is reconstituted by the Selectboard, per Town By-Law.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Stephen Fox, acting as Recording Secretary for the meeting.

South Hadley Cable TV Advisory Committee Minutes for June 30, 2017 Meeting

Letter mentioned in Minutes above.

Town of South Hadley Cable TV Advisory Committee
Stephen Fox, Recording Secretary
c/o Town Administrator Office
South Hadley Town Hall
South Hadley, MA 01075

Dr. Nicholas D. Young, Superintendent
South Hadley Public Schools
116 Main Street
South Hadley, MA 01075
(413) 538-5060

Dear Dr. Young:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Town's Cable TV Advisory Committee. We are currently preparing to advise the Town Selectboard on the upcoming (2019) negotiations for the Cable TV Provider contract that is currently held by Comcast. In our review, we are considering the Cable TV Access Studio that is currently housed in South Hadley High School and staffed by 2 Town employees. This studio is provided for and equipped/funded in the contract with the Cable TV provider to provide access to Town residents to create and distribute content locally for Public Access, Education and Government (PEG) purposes.

The Cable TV Access Studio is currently located in the High School. This means public access is limited for the most part to school days and hours as there is no separate entrance/exit for the studio. This could be a hindrance to the mission the "Public Access Studio" is supposed to fulfill as many residents are not able to use the facility after hours or on weekends. The Committee currently has no information that the current location is resulting in lower or higher utilization of the Studio. There would be more justification for having the studio in the school building if it is used frequently in the Education leg of the PEG role of the studio. Also, the Committee is trying to determine if smartphones and similar technologies have made a case for reduction/reconfiguration/elimination of the Cable TV Access Studio as a means of lowering Cable TV rates for subscribers in South Hadley.

To help us determine if the Committee should recommend to the Selectboard changes in studio composition, hours or location, the Committee would appreciate some feedback from the School Administration by answering the following questions;

South Hadley Cable TV Advisory Committee Minutes for June 30, 2017 Meeting

1 Does the student body or staff at the High School utilize the studio on a regular or ongoing basis currently? The Committee has noticed that there are several Honors Courses; for example, Honors Journalism, Public Speaking and Visual Media; that seem to indicate that there is/could be a role for the TV Studio to play, but we have no indication from the CA Studio Manager, Mr. Robert Smith, that this is indeed the case.

2 Is there a plan or possibility that in the foreseeable future, the school might incorporate the studio more actively in its curriculum? For example, a TV Production Class or Video Editing subsection to a current offering could draw upon the equipment and support of the Studio and Staff. Also, inclusion in the curricula for the above-mentioned Honors classes or other classes would indicate a need for the studio and its current location.

3 Could the studio be used to support public speaking training, teacher presentation skills training, arts or theater support or some non-TV studio aspect of high school education?

4 Does the High School also have an Audio-Visual department to support teacher's needs for presentations?

(a) Has this role been assumed by the IT department, if there is one?

(b) Would it be more beneficial to the School System if it had control over the personnel in the CATV Studio?

5 Would the space freed up be of some benefit to the High School if the CCTV Access studio was moved to another Town building?

6 Would there be some detrimental factors if the Studio was moved to another Town building?

The Cable TV Advisory Committee thanks you in advance for your response to these questions and look forward to working with you and your Administration on any matters in which we may be of assistance to you.