

April 23, 2018

The April 23rd meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Chairman Soter at 7:00 PM with all members in attendance.

Public Hearing – Cable License Renewal – Comcast & Verizon

Mr. Soter read the hearing notice. Catherine Maloney represented Comcast and representing the Town was Attorney Bill Hewig. He stated the Town is fortunate to have two cable providers which allows for competition and gives residents a choice of company. Both companies have 10 year licenses with the Town with Verizon's license expiring in September, 2018 and Comcast's license expiring in December, 2019. Both licenses expire close enough to allow for negotiations with these companies during the same period.

Atty. Hewig explained this is an ascertainment hearing with the public invited to attend and be heard on the topic of (a) whether the current cable operator is in full compliance with its currently-existing cable license; and (b) what are the Town's future community cable-related needs. These are the two reasons to deny a license.

Michael Garofano, Director of Technology for the School Department, gave a presentation on Cable TV usage in K-12 (attached to minutes). He outlined the equipment needs as follows: Upgrade WIFI Infrastructure, currently 7 years old – cost \$75,000; Upgrade Core and Building Network Switches, currently 7 years old and out of warranty – cost \$312,500; and SnapStream IPTV (Internet TV) – cost \$25,000. The total for all items is \$412,500.

Also making a presentation was Bellingham Middle School Principal, Jeff Croteau (attached to minutes).

Also speaking in favor of the Cable TV upgrades in K-12 were teachers Barbara Callahan, Jennifer Wilson, Jeanne Xantus, Ashton Kazlo, Victoria Cleaver, Brian Dedentro, Sarah Houle, Katie Mason, Lucas Giguere, Principal of BHS and David Graf, Assistant Principal of BMS.

With regard to future community cable-related needs, Mr. Spencer asked what the Town can ask for. Atty. Hewig stated the Town receives 4% of the gross annual subscribers, which is a line item listed on the cable bill as a franchise fee and received \$200,000 for capital needs. The money from the 4% of subscribers goes to Access Bellingham to operate the cable studio. Atty. Hewig stated these items were negotiated 10 years ago to put the amounts in perspective. He did note, however, that the gross annual subscribers' percentage has a cap of 5%.

Mr. Martinis asked for the number of cable subscribers in Town and how many have a package including internet. He also asked how many businesses in Town have internet.

Ms. Maloney stated she does not have that information this evening, but will forward it to the Town.

Mr. Connor asked how the \$200,000 was distributed for the current contract and was informed it was a one-time payment. Mr. Connor asked if a percentage of the amount to be negotiated can be distributed over a period of time. Atty. Hewig answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Connor asked if the cable license for Comcast should only be renewed for nine years so both provider licenses expire at the same time. Atty. Hewig stated that the expiration dates for the two providers is close enough to negotiate at the same time and is fine to leave as is.

Mr. Soter asked if it is possible to break the partnership with Mendon. Atty. Hewig answered in the affirmative noting it is entirely the Selectmen's call.

Mr. Fleming, Access Bellingham Director, stated if Bellingham does break away from Mendon, the town will lose half of the revenue and volunteers from Mendon.

Mr. Fleming outlined the upgrades he is requesting. Building upgrades: remodeling of kitchens and bathrooms, new heating and air-conditioning units, septic repair, driveway and walkway repairs, paint & rugs and fence removal. Equipment upgrade items: new Nexus playback control; new streaming units; new channel modulators; cable club cameras, Town Hall camera equipment upgrades, new sign for Route 140, HD PEG channels or newest applicable HD and program guide for PEG channels. Building upgrades will cost approximately \$60,000 and equipment upgrades approximately \$40,000.

Mr. Soter expressed his desire to see the Cable Studio moved to the High School.

Mr. Fleming feels the Town is lucky to have the Cable Access building.

Mr. Martinis suggested placing a satellite studio at the High School.

Both Mr. Martinis and Mr. Soter expressed their displeasure in Verizon not showing up for this hearing stating it was disrespectful and a disgrace.

On a Spencer/Connor motion, the Board unanimously voted to close the public hearing.

On a Martinis/Spencer motion, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Grant of Easement for 146 Maple Street as presented.

On a Spencer/Connor motion, the Board voted to approve the March 19th minutes as submitted with Mr. Martinis and Mrs. McNulty abstaining.

On a Connor/Spencer motion, the Board voted to approve the April 6th minutes as submitted with Mr. Martinis abstaining.

On a McNulty/Spencer motion, the Board unanimously voted to approve the following abatements: residential water, \$12,714.01; residential sewer, \$2754.29; residential trash, \$1474.67 and municipal water in the amount of \$71.50.

Mr. Kupfer gave an update on the Citgo Station and stated the project is still moving forward and they are working toward getting the permit to remove the old tank.

On a Spencer/Martinis motion, the Board unanimously voted to award Contract 2018-PLIS to the low bidder Dagle Electrical Construction Corp. of Wilmington, MA in the amount of \$193,753.00.

On a Spencer/Martinis motion, the Board unanimously voted to award Contract 2018-DMP to the low bidder Massachusetts Broken Stone Company of Berlin, MA in the amount of \$392,474.00.

On a Spencer/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline A. Bokoski
Administrative Assistant