



Vernon Area Cable Advisory Council

VERNON AREA CABLE ADVISORY COUNCIL Minutes of Meeting dated October 20, 2021

Remote Meeting – Due to Covid-19

Attending Members: Paul Batterson, Tolland Representative; Larry Perosino, Tolland; Elaine Buchardt, Andover; Justin Waine, Ellington

Attending Guests: Nick Lavigne, CVC Executive Director; Matt Skane, Manager Government and Regulatory Affairs for Comcast

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1. **Call to Order** - Paul Batterson, Chair, called the remote meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Comcast Report** – Matt Skane – Matt provided an update on Comcast activities since the last meeting:
 - **Comcast RISE Recipients Announced** – 1,100 new Comcast RISE recipients were announced on Sept. 14, its fourth round of awards, bringing the total to nearly 4,700 business owners in 34 states (27 in CT) supported by the program since its launch in late 2020. These businesses will receive consulting, media, or creative production services from Effectv, the advertising sales division of Comcast Cable, or a Tech Makeover from Comcast Business.
 - **Internet Essentials Expansion to Federal Pell Grant Recipients** – On Sept. 21, Comcast announced its expansion of Internet Essentials eligibility to include Federal Pell Grant recipients. In addition, Comcast has pledged to donate \$15 million worth of free Internet service and equipment, including more than 25,000 laptops, to low-income students, seniors, veterans, and adults this back-to-school season.

Larry Perosino asked if there are any parameters under which the grants may be used. Matt Skane said there are, and their purpose is to assist with operations, advertising, marketing, and other essential functions necessary to keep the doors open for small business owners. Paul Batterson asked if they have gotten many applications. Matt Skane said they have and \$5 million was distributed in March with another \$6 million in grants to be distributed in November. This is a good initiative to help small businesses in need.

3. **CVC Report** – Nick Lavigne – Nick reported that the PPP loan was forgiven. Also, after about 60 months, the final conversion to change the CVC from a private foundation to a public one is near completion.

The CVC will be holding their Meet and Greet with Santa Claus virtually again this year. They are also working on a booklet that explains what the CVC does. Larry Perosino asked when it will be ready, but Nick Lavigne said it is early yet and is still being built. Elaine Buchardt noted that the CVC is using a marketing contractor, Kiara James. Nick Lavigne said she will be finishing work on their website. He noted also that employees are all now back to work at the CVC.

Nick Lavigne reported that people can now convert Super 8 and 8mm film. Elaine Buchardt said the new setup is amazing and people really love it.

Larry Perosino asked if the CVC operation remains stable. Nick Lavigne said it is somewhat, although they are continuing to lose cable subscribers. He said this is something they will need to work on in the future. He noted he saw a recent PURA notification that indicated they may be doing some adjustments.

Larry Perosino asked how things were going with the various high schools in their catchment area. Nick said they are not presently working with the high schools. However, it should be noted that students can get in required community service hours with them. Justin Waine said he will make note of this as he has some students who are looking for hours. He asked who at the CVC they should contact. Nick said they should talk to Melanie Merkel.

Paul noted there will be about 150 Afghani families moving to Connecticut and asked if they will be able to get a break on cable services from Comcast. Matt Skane said he wasn't aware of any special program but said they may fit the criteria for the Internet Essentials program. He said it will depend on if they fall within their footprint area. Matt said Comcast has a good working relationship with IRIS which is expected to place people in the New Haven area. He said they are also working with Mayor Bronin in Hartford. He said Comcast is always happy to partner with organizations that are helping with relocating these families.

Matt Skane also briefly discussed Comcast Newsmakers, the company's short-form news platform. He said there are some excellent interviews to be seen on it.

4. **Statewide Cable Advisory Council** – Elaine Buchardt – Elaine said they are still meeting every few months online and at one of the meetings she brought up the Xfinity bill wording concerning support. She said they are apparently not the only advisory group that has some odd wording and these notices are franchise-specific.

Matt Skane said if they have an email they want changed, he can look into it, but the wording in notices do have to include what is required by statute. Elaine Buchardt said the issue is who to call for which purposes. She suggested they set up a gmail address to replace the website they no longer have. Paul Batterson said he will get it set up in the next few days. Matt said he can also assist in that process. *Note: The gmail address has since been set up as: Vernonacac@gmail.com.*

The final wording for the bill notice change will read:

Please do not send bill payments to the Cable Television Advisory Council or Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). Please call Comcast Xfinity Customer Service at 1-800-xfinity (1-800-934-6489) if you have any questions regarding the charges billed to your account. If you have already contacted Comcast and you are not satisfied with Comcast's resolution questions or concerns related to your television service or bill, please contact: the Vernon Area Cable Television Advisory Council, P.O. Box 694, Vernon, CT 06066-0694 or email VACAC@GMAIL.COM or contact the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, which can be reached by calling 1-800-382-4586, emailing Pura.Information@ct.gov, or visiting <https://portal.ct.gov/PURA/Consumer-Services/Filing-a-Complaint>. Please note that PURA does not regulate internet or long-distance phone services. The FCC IDs for your area are as follows: Bolton, CT0149; Vernon, CT0148; Andover, CT0151; Marlborough, CT0152; Hebron, CT0150; Tolland, CT0147; Ellington, CT0146. For issues regarding Community

Access Television, please contact: the Community Voice Channel at 105 Notch Rd Bolton, CT 06043 or call 860-645-1454 or email info@cvcct.org.

5. **Financial Report** – Paul Batterson – Paul said they currently have \$3,703.50 in their bank account. After he pays a postage bill due in November as well as the recording secretary, they should have around \$3,500 left. They also expect the \$2,000 check from Comcast around the first of the year so they can expect their account to be about \$5,500 in the near future. The Council had a preliminary discussion on using much of this balance for scholarships again this year.
6. **Adjournment** – The October 20, 2021 meeting was adjourned at 7:32 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile
Recording Secretary