



Vernon Area Cable Advisory Council

VERNON AREA CABLE ADVISORY COUNCIL Minutes of Meeting dated April 12, 2023

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

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

1. **Call to Order and Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting** - Paul Batterson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Elaine Buchardt made a motion to approve the October, 2022 meeting minutes as written, seconded by Paul Batterson. All were in favor. Motion carried.
2. **Comcast Report – Matt Skane** – Matt provided an update:

Best Places to Work in Connecticut

Comcast was listed on the Hartford Business Journal’s list of the “Best Places to Work in Connecticut” for an eighth straight year. Additionally, the company was ranked by the publication among the state’s top 10 large employers (200 or more employees). Companies from across the state entered the two-part survey process to determine the Best Places to Work in Connecticut. The first part consisted of evaluating each company’s workplace policies, practices, philosophy, systems, and demographics. The second part consisted of an employee survey to measure the employee experience. The combined scores determined the top companies and the final ranking. Here is a link to a blog post with more information: [Link](#)

April is National Volunteer Month – Team UP

Team UP is our national employee volunteer program, offering Comcast teams across the country opportunities to give back to their local communities 365-days a year. We are always looking for local non-profits to partner with for community service projects. Please feel free to send me recommendations. For more information, please go to: [Link](#)

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

Comcast is proud to participate in the federal government’s Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provides eligible low-income households with a credit of up to \$30 per month (\$75 per month on Tribal lands) toward their Internet and/or mobile service. Thanks to ACP, eligible Comcast customers can get home Internet through Comcast’s Internet Essentials or Internet Essentials Plus at no cost once the federal credit is applied. Internet Essentials customers can also add a line of unlimited 5G cellular data (\$45) through Xfinity Mobile for as little as \$24.95/month after the ACP benefit is applied.

Paul Batterson asked about the free Peacock service and if this will be going by the wayside. Matt Skane said that starting June 26, 2023, Peacock will no longer be included at no extra cost with Xfinity services. At that time, a free sample of Peacock programming will be available. If eligible, you’ll have the option to resubscribe to Peacock Premium through a limited-time offer.

Communications with special details are being sent in advance so customers are aware of the change. They're being notified of this change in advance through bill messages as well. The Council also discussed changing trends in programming, such as the fact that there is more bundling today. Streaming services are now bundling as well. They also discussed the challenges with trying to offer more ala carte programming and how contract negotiations impact that.

3. CVC Report – Nick Lavigne – Nick said they hosted another Meet Santa photo event this past December, an in-person event with about 90 children in attendance. The event went well. He said this year they plan to return to a similar format as they had pre-Covid.

Nick Lavigne said he finished and filed the PEGPETIA grant paperwork. One of the bigger items that was included in the request was a cinema camera. They've put in for this year's grant which usually pays out in June.

Nick discussed the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG) and how they operate. They provide monies to towns in their region to establish a committee that decides how the money will be distributed. He said he did one with Bolton for a lighting kit that can go out of the building and a second one in Ellington for in-studio lighting. He said they received the Bolton equipment already. Nick said he contacted HFPG and they have changed their focus and guidelines to programs that address undoing and highlighting systemic racism and other systemic problems. The HFPG also does smaller community grants.

Elaine Buchardt explained that the HFPG provides monies to 29 towns and each sets up its own community fund that focuses on non-profits. Each town gets \$100,000, which includes \$50,000 for immediate grants and another \$50,000 that goes into an interest-bearing account for future use. Townspeople can also add their own monies to that account. She said the only problem she saw is that every town gets the same amount, whether they are a large city or a small, rural town. Larry Perosino, noted however, that the HFPG does provide funding in cities for many other things beyond that \$100,000. Nick Lavigne discussed the oversight the HFPG does with grant requests in an effort to be good stewards of the money they give out.

Elaine Buchardt discussed the PURA study being done in conjunction with the Office of Consumer Council, cable providers, and public access television like the CVC. She explained that the CVC gets its funding through a small fee added to the bills of cable subscribers, which worked out well for a while, but as technology has changed and more and more people are cutting the cord with their cable providers, those monies are diminishing. The study intends to show legislators how the system works so they can see how public access stations are impacted.

Elaine said no federal funds are available to public access stations and each state has an edict to figure out how to fund public access television on their own. Connecticut's system is somewhat antiquated because so much viewership has moved to the internet. The original idea was to simply add a small fee to all internet bills, but not double-dip and add it to both internet and cable bills. However, there was pushback from some legislators who thought it was an additional tax. This study is intended to help educate legislators.

Nick Lavigne said they are getting about \$50,000 less over the last five years than they used to receive. Elaine Buchardt noted that the grants are good but don't cover all of their costs.

Elaine Buchardt also reported they are getting a Roku and Fire Stick channel so people can watch CVC on them.

4. **Other Business** – Paul Batterson distributed the financial report, noting they now have \$7,064.94 in their account. The Council discussed doing another scholarship distribution to students planning higher education in the audio-visual and other related fields.
5. **Schedule of Next Meeting** – The Council agreed to next meet on Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the CVC meeting room. The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile
Recording Secretary