

# **South Hadley Cable TV Advisory Committee Minutes for February 23, 2017 Meeting**

## **Attendance**

Members Present:

Eric Zahm, Chair

Dale Johnston

Denise Presley

Stephen Fox

## **Administrative**

Meeting was called to order at 4:38 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 Ms. Presley. Meeting adjourned at 6:10 PM

## **Old Business**

Mr. Zahm spoke to Mr. Robert Smith, CATV studio manager pursuant to last meeting's request by the Committee for copies of the 2016 Annual Report for the CATV Studio. Copies were provided for all members by Mr. Smith through Mr. Zahm.

Mr. Zahm had committed to requesting the newest version of the By-Law concerning the CTV Advisory Committee and did track down the correct version. He made the Town Administrator and staff aware of the newer version of the language and Mr. Zahm provided copies to all Committee members.

Per last meeting Mr. Zahm contacted Amherst Media, the Cable TV Access Studio for the Town of Amherst. He arranged for a meeting with Mr. Jim Lescault, Studio Manager to discuss how their studio is run, what resources are available and to see what kind of programming they provide to the subscribers in Amherst.

Mr. Zahm reported that Amherst Media is structured as a non-profit organization rather than as a department of the town government, which is the case in South Hadley or as an incorporated entity, as is the Cable TV operation in Longmeadow. Amherst Media charges a fee to those who desire to become members. Once members join they can request training on utilizing the studio and its equipment, also for a fee. Once they have been trained and qualified on the studio operation, they can use the facilities and equipment without charge as often as desired, if scheduling permits.

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Amherst Media provides three channels of programming to Amherst subscribers. They have four full time employees and quite a few volunteers (members) who help produce local content.

### **New Business**

Mr. Zahm opened new business by listing three topics for discussion that we could begin working on at this meeting and address prior to upcoming contract negotiations.

1. What do we want the Cable TV Access studio to accomplish? This would be determining desirable goals and policies to provide any desired public access to the Studio and its resources, support for local interest programming and other possible uses for the Studio and the two channels we currently use for programming.
2. What kind of organization do we need to support these goals? Should we continue with a town government centric model, or should we look at organizing as a non-profit or incorporating as other towns have done?
3. What kind of funding do we need to support the conclusions we reach for items #1 and #2? Should we be looking at a fee for service approach? Should we offer services like transferring video from older formats to DVD, Blu-Ray or other, newer formats as a service to our users?

The committee discussed item one at some length and determined a few facts. At present, there is little usage by the eligible public of the studio for locally generated programming. There does not seem to be a need/desire for local sports coverage, public opinion programming or local historical programming. The students at the High School have little time or incentive to use the studio, perhaps due to the current curriculum environment. Or maybe it's due to the fact that many students can and do produce video on their smartphones and then post it to UTube if they desire a wider audience. Perhaps access is a problem, since the entrance to the Studio is primarily controlled by the School and its hours of operation.

Mr. Fox thought that besides considering what we would like to see for the studio based on the older model of providing a needed service for Public, Educational and Government dissemination of information using the studio, we might consider other means of providing these services. Perhaps moving the current duties of coverage of government meetings and posting a video bulletin board to the IT department and providing funds from the CATV Studio fund for a part time addition to that department would be a way to decrease the cost for the ratepayers we advocate for while still providing the desired communication? Mr. Fox thought it would be a good idea for the committee to ask the current studio manager to attend the next meeting to discuss what his vision of the studio and its needs pertaining to the upcoming agreement with Comcast should be, rather than the committee try to do so on its own. Mr. Smith, the Studio Manager is much more aware of the demand for and constraints on the services the

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CATV Studio than are members of the Committee. Mr. Zahm said he would ask Mr. Smith if he would like to attend the next CATV Committee meeting.

### **Next Meeting Scheduled**

A prospective meeting date around the second week of April, 2017 at 4:30 PM was proposed. Mr. Zahm will poll all members and check for meeting room availability and will determine a date that works for all committee members. A finalized date will be posted with the Agenda on the Town website and official notification boards.

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