

**STAFFORD COUNTY
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
November 12, 2009**

I. Call to Order

Chair Terry Lottes called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. in the County Administration conference room in the Administration Center, located at 1300 Courthouse Road.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present: Terry Lottes, Thomas Kimbrell, Alicia Knight, Danielle Davis, John Johnson, Jr., and Jim Minor. Also in attendance were Gwen Sparks representing Cox and Paul Miller with Verizon. Cathy Riddle and Michele Lansford, Public Information Office, represented the County. Valerie Cottongim attended on behalf of the school system.

III. Presentations by the Public

Ms. Pamela Haynes accompanied Alicia Knight to discuss public access programming.

Chris Chandler with VTS was present to speak about how public access programming could be made available.

IV. Approval of August 2009 Minutes

John Johnson, Jr. moved to approve the minutes; Alicia Knight seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

V. Members' Concerns

Ms. Davis asked Mr. Miller to check on the status of the buildout to River Road. They agreed to exchange e-mails.

Ms. Knight said that Dr. Fetterolf (30 Cookson Drive) in the Rock Hill District continues to experience cable outages (even though the fiber to his home has been replaced); experiences long periods of time on hold before he can talk to a Comcast representative; has waited five days for a technician to visit his home; and has not received an adjusted bill for the outage time. She will forward his e-mails to Ms. Lansford, who said she would contact Marie Schuler at Comcast for a status report.

Ms. Knight said she has been on hold with Comcast for up to 45 minutes, and has received similar complaints from subscribers.

Mr. Lottes asked for an update on the complaint from the Heather Hills Property Owners Association, which has requested through their attorney that Verizon contractors determine

whether they damaged three public lighting fixtures during fiber installation. Ms. Lansford will contact Catherine Lewis for an update, and forward the information to the members.

VI. Agenda Additions

There were no additions to the agenda.

VII. New Business

Public Access Programming

The following discussion ensued:

Mr. Chandler: Provided an overview of his company, and said he works with eight localities to air their PEG programming. He told the members that to accomplish public access programming in Stafford could take a lot of fiber buildout, including a fiber optic facility with playback ability, transmitters and other equipment, and a link among all three cable companies (currently Cox hands programming off the Verizon).

Ms. Knight: Asked if public access could be added to the current output from the Administration Center, and if not, from VTS.

Mr. Chandler: Said no, that the fiber from the building is maxed out, and it will require playback equipment and transmitters in any case. The VTS studio has no direct link to Comcast, and that location will also require the same equipment.

Knight: What is the least costly option? Is it feasible to air three hours of programming, then fill the rest of the time with “canned” information like PowerPoint slides? Said the schools have agreed to provide studio time at one of the high schools for two days a week.

Chandler: It has to be an automated system, and he can provide the cost for that. Said the link among the cable providers will still be a problem. The County cannot use the link from the School Board offices because it is maxed out. He said that Jason Hill with IT could provide more information. He said there is currently no space in the Administration Center for a facility. Said there will also be an ongoing cost to maintain the system.

Ms. Knight: She asked how much the County pays now to air the government channel.

Mr. Chandler: Said there’s no comparison, and that he has to have more details to work up a cost estimate. He said the cable companies also have to tell him how much they are willing to do to assist in the effort.

Mr. Lottes asked about setting up a non-profit to run the facility. Ms. Knight responded that, yes, the non-profit would administer the initiative, but that the County needs more information about the production end first. In response to another question from Mr. Lottes, she said that most localities fund public access with PEG fees through grants.

Ms. Knight, Chris Chandler, Tom Kimbrell, Jason Hill and Pamela Haines will meet after December 8th to work out the details. The commission agreed that the start-up would be modest at first, but be built to handle future growth.

Broadband

Mr. Lottes asked the Verizon and Cox representatives when the County could expect a response to the request to provide details about service coverage areas. Ms. Sparks said their legal team is finalizing a response, and Mr. Miller said the County will receive Verizon's letter soon. There has been no communication from Comcast.

Mr. Lottes said that there is probably no justification now for a publicly funded broadband system, with three cable companies in the County and more satellite dish coverage. Danielle Davis reported that Marlborough Point residents have access to satellite television now.

Mr. Lottes asked Ms. Riddle about the status of stimulus money for broadband; she responded that the County has received no new information.

December 2009 Meeting Date

The next commission is scheduled for January 28, 2009.

VIII. Adjournment

At 8:05 p.m., Ms. Davis moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Kimbrell seconded the motion; it passed unanimously.