

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

July 21, 1998

6:30 PM

Chairman Pariseau called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Pariseau, Rivard, Girard

Absent: Aldermen Thibault, O'Neil

Chairman Pariseau advised that pursuant to Section 626 of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984, the purpose of the public hearing is to identify future cable related community needs and interests and also to review MediaOne's performance under the current Cable Television Renewal Franchise; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; that comments shall be limited to three minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Chairman Pariseau requested that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments.

Elizabeth Wyatt, 232 Spruce Street, Manchester, NH stated I would like to talk about the variety of programming that is on the cable. Right now, there are seven news programs, news channels, there are six sports related channels, there are four home shopping channels and that seems a little bit like overkill as far as categories. The programming that I like, particularly, are Discovery, the Learning Channel and Home & Garden. I also would like to mention the Inspirational Network and the Eternal Word Network. I feel that there is room for both. Out of a weeks time you have 168 hours of possible programming. Right now, the Inspirational Network only has 31 hours. I would like to see that expanded and have its own channel and there are many people that would also like to see that happen. Thank you.

Don Pomeroy, 255 Greeley Street, Manchester, NH stated the first thing I would like to say is I think that MediaOne is doing an excellent job, albeit at exorbitant prices. I think that my comments would go to exactly who is paying for or is going to have to pay for their recent expansion. I think most of us, I think most of their subscribers, probably like myself, subscribe to basic and Tier 1 service and that is adequate for most of our uses. We were receiving adequate service of this type over the existing hard wire network. It was their choice to go to fiber. It was their choice to go to Broadband which ultimately will allow them to provide high speed Internet service, provide local dial tone for telephone service and things like this. That is fine and dandy, but lets let the people who are going to use these expanded services pay for the full cost of upgrading the system to handle these expanded services. It is like if you drive a 1993 car from home to work everyday, there is no real reason if somebody forces you into a brand new one, to pay for it and I think that that is my concern. I think we see the possibility of dramatic rate increases once they start passing the cost of this overbuild on to the consumer.

Chairman Pariseau noted that Jeanne Blazon, Rita Lacroix, Gertrude Dupont, Carmelle Boisvert and Cecilia Lacasse don't want to speak but want to express their support for having EWTN as a stand-alone channel 24 hours a day.

Paul Downey, 856 Elm Street, Manchester, NH stated what bothers me most about the cable is my reception is pretty poor. That is one of things. I don't know why it is, but it seems to be that it is fuzzy all the time and also the sound seems to vary from station to station considerably. I would like to see the cable expanded to include the educational channels. I know that is possible to go to Oklahoma State University on the television and I think that there are something like 17 colleges in the country that offer college credits and with the cost of education being so exorbitant today, I think it would be beneficial to the people of Manchester to offer something like this. I also, being a baseball fan, I very much miss the loss of the Mets games and the Cubs games which used to be on. The other thing was the last time this was brought up, Mr. Cashin commented on what do we need 156 stations for I think is what he said. The capability of putting in a system that would hold 156 stations and I think it would be beneficial to expand the cable network so that you can receive 200 or 300 stations so that it would be possible for a subscriber to choose which stations he wanted to subscribe to. Thank you.

Bill Moquin, 103 Eastgate Way, Manchester, NH stated I am back again. I checked in with some other cable companies in Nashua and Derry, NH. They do television EWTN 24 hours a day. MediaOne Cable Company should do the same and put the EWTN Network on a basic Tier 1 channel so that low income viewers could pay the \$5.84 per month. Since the campaign has started to have MediaOne resume 24 hours of EWTN broadcasting, we have almost 2,000 signatures and

much more to be mailed to MediaOne Cable Company. I want to thank Bill Cashin again for helping us get EWTN in Manchester, NH when we first got it in 1992 I think it was. A priest, two other people and myself were on the committee to raise the \$3,000 for equipment to United Cable to televise EWTN in 1992. The people on that committee did not get involved with the set-up of how the EWTN Network would be televised with the owner of United Cable. The agreement was set-up with two religious networks on one religious channel and was set-up on the phone with EWTN marketing person and myself and the owner of United Cable. Last week I had mentioned that the priest and so forth was in that meeting and they weren't. I have been to so many meetings throughout the years, I checked my notes and they weren't in that meeting, I mean that discussion. Channel 3, 9 and 22 are MediaOne. They are broadcasting the same stations. So if they could move Inspirational on one of these channels that would help you know and you have some other religious networks that are on different channels. If they could move them because they are not on a long period of time okay as far as maybe an hour or two that they broadcast their religious program. If they could put EWTN on one because of the amount of people watching in this location. We should have another 2,000 or 3,000 people with signatures and with postcards and petitions. They are going to have some more cards made up a think the way they were talking. We put out 5,000 postcards so far and I think maybe someone told me last week that they had received 1,000 cards so far with signatures on it.

Chairman Pariseau asked so they go directly to MediaOne.

Mr. Moquin answered what is happening is we have got people with the cards that are right to MediaOne, those 5,000 cards. We have people sending notes with their bill to Massachusetts and then we have letters from different organizations like the Knights and the El Hombre that I am involved with and other Catholic organizations being sent to Massachusetts. There are a lot of people involved here and that is why when they said that there was no interest and there was a low interest of people, that wasn't so. We are already proving...you know you are talking 2,000 almost already and I bet you they end up with 5,000 easy because they are talking about printing some more cards and I am trying to get more people to pass the word to put a little note in their bill to send to Massachusetts that they are in support of this 24 hours a day and I wish the Union Leader would put that in to really show how many people are going to get involved here. Thank you.

Alderman Girard asked you said that Nashua and Derry have EWTN 24 hours a day.

Mr. Moquin answered yes, I checked into that.

Alderman Girard asked are they serviced by MediaOne or do they have other...

Mr. Moquin answered no it is a different company. I think Time Warner is Nashua and the other company is, I am trying to think here, Heron Cable Company.

Alderman Girard asked and does EWTN, I don't know how those communities have their rate systems tiered, but do those companies tier their rate systems similarly to MediaOne.

Mr. Moquin answered I don't know about that but you people should look into that.

Alderman Girard stated I just wanted to make sure that I was clear that you were saying or were not saying that those other communities had EWTN at 24 hours a day at their basic level. You did not say that?

Mr. Moquin replied no. I wanted to find out if they were televising that network 24 hours a day when MediaOne took it away from us. You know we had it with Continental. If these people can do it in these two cable companies, why can't MediaOne with all the channels and how big they are?

Alderman Girard stated I agree with you. Thank you for clarifying my question.

Chairman Pariseau asked the City Clerk to send a letter to MediaOne asking in general the number of responses they have got from City residents relative to this issue of EWTN. I think this should become part of the package for contract renewal.

Alderman Hirschmann stated good evening and welcome to Ward 12. Please forgive me for my back being to you. I would like to say that what is predominantly happening in America right now in the corporate world is bundling of services and bundling of services is having cable coverage, Internet service, dial tone service, the smartest thing you can do in corporate marketing America right now is bundle as many products to the consumer for the lowest price and it makes sense. MediaOne is doing this and I think that they are going to do a very good job. I am not complaining about the job they are doing. What I think that is happening is they are running around the City running a fiber optic network under the guise that they are improving our cable service when full well everyone in this town knows they are going to compete with Bell Atlantic and they are going to compete with all the Internet providers and they are going to make a ton of money

and what should not happen, this reconstruction of however many millions of dollars it is costing, should not be passed off to the cable rate payers. We, as a City, put an RFP out for cable service. They are the company. They are getting their cable service. They didn't ask for Internet service and they didn't ask for telephone service yet. When that comes, a lot of people will utilize that, but those services should not be billed off to cable users now. The shareholders of MediaOne are going to make millions and millions of dollars on those future services and it shouldn't be confused and meshed with cable. They are three distinct services and I don't know in our contract that we ever asked for telephone service or Internet service. The stockholders of MediaOne in Denver or wherever they are located, should absorb that cost and keep the cable rates in the \$19 dollar range or whatever range is affordable to the end users. It should not be skyrocketing and when we renegotiate, I ask you to keep firm and go with low rates because they are going to make millions of dollars on their extended services. That is it. Thank you.

Gerard Villemure, 25 Laurier Street, Manchester, NH stated we are quite concerned too about the cut in hours of EWTN. We approximately watch maybe about the most six channels on the cable and EWTN is number one. I think if you took a survey in this City you would find that EWTN is one of the most listened to networks in the City. I think if it wasn't for the heat there would be more people here tonight because we had a lot of people scheduled to come here but because of the heat a lot felt they couldn't come. We feel that we should be able to have EWTN 24 hours a day.

Theresa Chabot, 106 Putnam Street, Manchester, NH stated I, for one, want EWTN to be on for 24 hours like it was before. If you found a way to take it off at 9 p.m., you can find a way to put it back. I had two knee operations in 1995 and I was up quite a few nights, not from pain but I just couldn't sleep and EWTN was a station I was sure I could get lifted up when I listened to it. It is not just religion, it is people talking, it is testimonies, it is very inspiring. You would be surprised, of course during the night children are sleeping but during the day you would be surprised how many children call of all ages. You know we have taken away our children. Pray in school. What did we replace it with. We replaced it with sex. Now we can't even give them a decent program you know especially for the parents. Maybe the parents will get something there and help their children. I am praying to bring it back because a lot of people have told me, those who have homes can get satellite and a lot is changing and you will be surprised. You will be sorry if you don't put it back. I am telling you.

Cecilia Lacasse, 692 Rimmon Street, Manchester, NH stated I know nothing about computers. I am computer illiterate. I know my kids do, my children do, but I

don't. I know also that I am paying more for cable TV then I was and I am getting less of what I want. I am for EWTN for 24 hours a day for very good reasons. When I flip the channel when it is not on from 9 p.m. until 12 p.m., I am really upset about what they are putting on TV. TV is a wonderful thing and we should have more intelligent and good programming and I, as far as EWTN, as far as MediaOne, I called several times when I was upset when they had cut us off on something that was really interesting and good for us and then I wrote maybe three or four times and I never got an answer. The last time I wrote I asked them why don't you answer my complaints and then finally I got a letter, a real form letter. I want good programming and I think they can do it. Like Theresa just said, if they can take it off they surely can put it back and I am for that. There are many people that have told me to speak up. The postcards, we ran out of postcards. There are a lot of people who would have signed them. There is a lot more than those 5,000 plus the petitions that have gone by. There is a lot more.

Jean Malone, 476 East Dunbarton Road, Manchester, NH stated I had the petition out and I am still collecting but if you listen to the evening show when Mother Angelica is taking the calls from people you will find out not only older people but children and younger people call her and they are not all Catholic. In fact, I think she has half Protestants that are working for her and several ex-ministers that have programs on it. It is very educational. It brings you together and it doesn't divide Protestant from Catholic or anything. The reason I did this was because my husband was ill and that is the one thing that we had. He would call me when it was time for the rosary and I would rush in and we would say the rosary together and different things that he was able to talk to me about and everything. He was sick for four years and we had EWTN. We were down in Pennsylvania and when I moved up here he was sick for like five or six months before he died and it just meant everything to me and I haven't been lonely up here even though the rest of my family is down there. I am living with my son and it was EWTN that just keeps you going and you learn from it. It is not a silly thing and it explains things. It isn't just religion. It is about everybody so I think they ought to listen to it and see what is on EWTN and maybe they might change their mind because the older people need it.

Alderman Girard stated Mrs. Malone, as you know I took one of the petitions that you circulated at Saint Marie and I submitted it to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. I would appreciate it if, as you circulate the petitions further around the City, if you would send me a copy of them.

Cecilia Lacasse, 692 Rimmon Street, Manchester NH stated when I was so upset that I was thinking of getting a dish and I was thinking why couldn't cable TV give us like a package. Pick the programs that we would like and charge

accordingly to that because there are a lot of other things that...why couldn't they do like the dish. I am waiting to see how this turns out before I do get a dish satellite.

As there was no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman Girard, duly seconded by Alderman Rivard, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

There being no further business, on motion of Alderman Girard, duly seconded by Alderman Rivard, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of the Committee