

**COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS
(PUBLIC HEARING)**

June 29, 1998

6:30 PM

Chairman Pariseau called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Pariseau, Thibault, O'Neil

Absent: Aldermen Rivard, Girard

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 them comments.

Craig Olson, SSG, 98 Townhouse Road, Manchester, NH stated I am representing the 114th Public Affairs Detachment located here at the National Guard Armory in Manchester. It is a privilege to be here this evening. I will read off of this prepared letter that I made before arriving this evening. With this letter I take great pride in representing the New Hampshire Army National Guard. I take equal pride in being a productive member of the Manchester Community Television program. I volunteer my spare time to help the public access station when and where I can. I am a professional broadcast journalist and as a member of the 114th PAD, I am pleased to report that our organization, along with MCTV 16 have combined to make a positive impact on our community. My colleagues and I in uniform, together with Dr. Grace Sullivan who heads MCTV 16 and her dedicated professional staff have successfully launched an informative video program called, "En Guard Video Magazine". The "En Guard Video Magazine" tells the New Hampshire National Guard story. We inform and educate the public.

Our broadcast covers a wide range from the routine to the unexpected. From annual training exercises, both stateside and overseas, to the recent ice storm and devastating floods affecting our citizens, we citizen-soldiers, in effect, are providing information with a unique historical perspective. The feedback that I have received since the initial airing of "En Guard Video Magazine" in December of 1997 has been very positive. Moreover, our younger soldiers can take full advantage in learning or improving useful broadcast skills. The skills mastered will help them to realize their dreams and live productive lives. MCTV 16 gives us all the ability to make a positive difference today and into the future. In closing, I take great pride in representing the New Hampshire National Guard and the 114th Public Affairs Detachment. I also take equal pride in being a productive member of the Manchester Community Television program. Together with your continued support, we can build a better community relations program well into the next century. Thank you.

Lloyd Basinow, 503 Amherst Street, Manchester, NH stated when Sam Phillips sold out to Continental Cable, there was a clause in the contract that the contract could be renegotiated by the City but the Aldermen never took advantage of that clause in the contract and things went right along the same as they had been. When Continental sold out to MediaOne, there was a clause that still held that the Aldermen could renegotiate the contract but nothing was done. I bring this to your attention because the time has come for a new franchise contract to come to pass and the cable TV industry is in a tremendous flux. There are cheaper and much better technology at our door step. One of the new players is AT&T. You may have seen or heard in the news media or our own local newspaper on the stock page, "Cable Shares Rise on \$48 Billion AT&T TIC Buy". Not only is AT&T now into the ballgame, but very shortly I am sure we are going to see some other big players come in. We cannot afford to get bogged down with one expensive, overpriced and antiquated TV delivery system. I, therefore, recommend only a short-term of one year franchise license to be issued from year to year and I also suggest that a request be made for a contract with AT&T to determine the possibility of interesting them in bidding for a franchise to deliver TV and other related services within our City. There is one other thing that I want to also call to your attention. I am sure you all probably have cable television and you have a monthly bill that comes and there is \$1.18 franchise fee, 80 cents of it is for the City of Manchester alone and I point out to you that these franchise fees are operating expenses that should not be added on our bills. They are part of MediaOne's operating expense and that is where it should remain. So on top of their basic rates, we are paying fees amounting to \$1.18 that shouldn't even be there. Each and every month. On behalf of the cable users of this City, we demand that we be credited for this extra charge that we have been paying. It shouldn't be there. Thank you.

Ryan Talbot, 904 Dix Street, Manchester, NH stated I am a student at the Manchester School of Technology and I am enrolled in video production. This program has given myself and several other students a life to look forward to and another option of career to pursue in the future. Video production has made a lot of difference in my life through its great staff, students and equipment. A recent video project which myself and my friend Jerami Bellofatto have completed has been sent to a film festival in New York. Without the personal training and equipment that was available to us, the project wouldn't have been half as good as it was. Because of this equipment, we are able to do things we didn't think possible and actually amazed ourselves. I believe that if we received more equipment that the program would be that much better. Another thing that I want to mention before I go is that the learning experience that I have received through this program is excellent and that the motivation that Dr. Sullivan and Mr. Strub have given to their students is tremendous. That is all I have to say. Thanks.

Jerami Bellofatto, 122 Tilden Drive, Manchester, NH stated I am a student at the Manchester School of Technology and I am representing the video production educational access portion of MCTV. The opportunities that this facility has given me is enough to get me into college. The programs I have done would not have been possible without the equipment that was offered at MCTV. I have learned so much more by using the hands-on method and putting my project on TV makes it as real as it can get. The program has taught me more than just about video. It has taught me discipline. The program has helped fellow students in my class get into colleges such as Emerson, Lyndon State and Northeastern and hopefully I will be getting into the college of my choice. A former student, Scott Page, was enrolled in the class. He has gone on to saving the lives of fellow citizens of Manchester. This program has helped me so much more than any other education has in my educational career and I think with a little assistance this program would be the best educational program in Manchester. Thank you.

Randy Marara, Jr., 85 McCarthy Street, Manchester, NH stated first of all I would like to compliment MediaOne on the service that I have received personally and the variety of programs they have to offer. I think they could offer a little bit more than what they do though. My main concern here this evening though is elderly discount which is for retired people. MediaOne offers none. These people are on fixed incomes with very small margins allowed for extras. One example is nursing home cable TV. The example I will use is Villa Crest. My mother is currently a resident of Villa Crest. There are 60 to 75 TV's. Many are two sets to a room, semi-private rooms. Each person is billed for a separate TV, basic charge of \$26.91. If I have two TV's in my home with cable coming to my house, my bill is \$26.91. If I have three TV's, my bill is \$26.91. Again, the cable company is

not considering elderly and their limited income. Many of these people are on Medicare and Medicaid and are only allowed \$45 per month for spare money. \$45 minus their personal care, hairdressers and things of that nature and then \$26.91 when in fact they are probably running just one cable to the TV, one cable to the nursing home and then splitting off of that cable. That is all I have to say.

Linda Garrish, 7 Irwin Drive, Manchester, NH stated I am here primarily to talk about public access television, the public part of PEG access, public, education and government and to advocate for that and for its expanded service in this community, but a piece of that, I am not here to talk about rates per se but I do want to reinforce what the gentleman previous said in that there needs to continue to be more affordable and continued affordable rates for low income and fixed income folks. I feel that strongly, especially because of public access. Public access television in this day and age when we talk about building community and connecting people in the community and increasing participation of folks in the community is, I think, a very, very important media vehicle. It moves the media closer to ordinary citizens. Public access does a lot of things. In Manchester here with MediaOne we have one public access community television station and that provides all three, public, education and government access. The public access portion can well utilize one, if not more, channels in and of itself because public access informs, it educates, it activates, it advocates, it connects, it promotes, it connects, it confronts, it increases community participation, it responds, it promotes dialogue in the community, it builds community and it strengthens community life. It is volunteer and it is affordable. Affordable for those who use it and produce for it through that system. It is a catalyst for change. It is a vehicle for dialogue, discussion and debate which hopes to formulate public judgment which ultimately increases people's opportunity to connect to you, our government leaders and to influence policy-making and change and growth in the community. Public access, I have been a public access producer for nearly three years. I have produced nearly a weekly show and well over 100 of those shows in the nearly three years. I have also produced other documentaries or specials that address issues of quality of life and other things important in the community, whether they be political or community life or organization. One of the things in the listening project on jobs that I recently participated in that the people told us again and again is a sense of disconnection to government, to community services and to other people in the community. Well public access television, as I said by bringing ordinary people closer to each other by producing shows, coming on and sharing information and talking and connecting with other people, it improves community life. It does connect people. It helps connect people to you. I think that I am very grateful for the opportunity to have been a public access producer at \$40 a year and to receive the opportunity of wonderful staff to help learn and grow in using the equipment and producing on public access television, Channel 16.

However, there is not enough equipment, there is not enough hours. When I do a show in the studio, I have to go out and get the guests and I have to go out and get the crew and I have to depend on some expertise from the staff and continue to grow myself. That is time out of my life, volunteer time, but it is important. I do it because I do want to connect and share. When I do something out in the community, I loan equipment from the studio. Equipment that is aging. It is low end equipment. It is aging. The poorer the quality of the television, the less connection people make. When I come back to the studio when I want to air what I have taped out in the community, I have to edit it. That editing takes hours. One hour, and I am not a professional, one hour of a show on public access television takes hours and hours and hours. I produced a special on Catholic Medical Center. It took me weeks to edit that one hour special. I produced a one hour special on a ride along with community policing. That one hour took me a couple of weeks of nearly everyday spending time to edit that so it would come out to a finished product that would tell a good story to the people of Manchester and that equipment is aging. We are getting some more equipment. We need more. We need more time. Public access producers need time as volunteers to come in outside of their work schedules, not just the five hours that we are allotted because government access and educational access also needs to use it. There is such an opportunity for expanded growth, not only of public access, but educational opportunities. We are a City with some many institutions of higher learning. There is an opportunity to have cooperative partnerships on public access television so we can promote lifelong learning and a more educated and a more participatory citizen. So bottom line is public access is democracy. This is an opportunity for you to have more informed constituents, more participant constituents so I urge you to consider the opportunity for expansion of public access television. Thank you.

Buddy Stewart, 119 Joliette Street, Manchester, NH stated I am a public access producer here in Manchester. I produce quite a different show than my predecessor. I produce a show on pro wrestling which I don't expect most of you to watch, however, wrestling is a very entertaining field these days and as she said a lot of times it is very difficult to schedule time. Presently, public access is only open two nights a week until 8 p.m. and if you work until 5 p.m. it is quite difficult to get in there so public access is in desperate need of opening more hours which means more of a staff and also I agree that a lot of the equipment is getting very old and they definitely need help in that field. That is all I have to say. Thanks.

Nick Hart, State Representative from Ward 1, Manchester, NH stated Mr. Chairman, your committee can do locally something that we could not do in the Legislature. It can help control the cost of campaign financing by building into its new contract with whomever you choose, reasonable and free time for candidates for local, county and state offices. It is impossible to keep up with the cost of TV ads. Your committee would be serving two purposes, stopping the runaway cost of TV ads for candidates and informing the public about the candidacy of people who run their government. I believe that the TV media owes at least this small effort to better inform the voters. Thank you very much.

Bernadette Benard, 110 Brook Street, Manchester, NH stated I was a teacher for over 40 years and I care very much about intelligent programs and programs that are thought provoking and that nourish the soul. I am here mostly as a spokesperson for the elderly and for people who are retired like me. We had quite a few good programs. I personally like Channel 2, 11, PBS, and A&E and wherever there is music that is to my preparation or habit. MTV and other things are good for youngsters I suppose and I think that really there is a proliferation of all of that and we had EWTN 24 hours a day and then in December I believe things were changed and another TV show was included so EWTN was cut off at 9 p.m. on weekdays and early Saturdays and almost all day on Sunday. So I am speaking for over 60% of the people who are Catholic and there are lots of people who are not Catholic who also watch these programs that are prepared by ministers and many others. They are not bigoted programs. They are thought provoking and people in the nursing homes, lots of older people, my brother-in-law is 85 you know he is so annoyed that now there is so little that he can watch because he goes to bed kind of early and one of these programs that were cut off, the good ones, I mean prepared by college professors and lots of others but they are not high and mighty. They are good for everyone. They are really thought provoking. When are they repeated? Mind you, 3 or 4 a.m. in the morning or during the afternoon when there are lots of people who are at work so they just miss out completely on the better stuff on EWTN. I mean I like Mother Angelica but I get tired of her in a sense because she reminds me of some older nuns that tired me. You know she is sometimes very nice, but I get tired of her and I can turn her off but the others I want. I mean I have stayed up until 3 or 4 in the morning a couple of times but I can't do that all the time. I mean it is unreasonable. So the other one, I forget, it begins with an I. Inspirational. Well you know if you compare the two, one is fire and brimstone and lots of things. I mean, it is okay for some but couldn't it be placed on another channel and leave EWTN complete the way it was. I mean the rates have gone up and lots of people are paying for that in particular. So I think we have been given a bum deal.

Mel Lessard, 75 Hamblett Street, Manchester, NH stated I would like to say ditto to the last woman that just came up. My favorite channel is INSP but I am here also to talk for community channel. I went to college at 65 years old after retiring, I have been retired for 11 years, at UNH but I never thought I would be going to the Manchester School of Technology three years ago. I was helping someone. You see I belong to the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship International and we are in 167 countries and we hope by the end of 2000 we will be in 200 countries. We are on, well let me tell you how many cables we are on, the show that I produce at community channel 16, we are on 3,900 cable stations and over 500 TV stations. The Good News, but every locality produces their own. Like I produce my own. There is so much bad news going on around the world, somebody has got to come up and give good news. We hear about the one that shot his wife or the wife that shot the husband and all the murders that are going on but we never hear about the couples that were separated and got back together. We never hear the good news of a man that had cancer and was healed by the power of God and today is living a normal life. We never hear these good testimonies of people glorifying God for the wonderful works he does among men. We don't get that, but Good News brings it to everybody. We have testimonies that are unbelievable. I have been all over the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Central America, South America and all over Europe to give my testimony of what God has done for me. I think we need to hear more people like that. This channel here gives you a chance. I never thought it would be me, I was hoping someone else would take the torch and go with it but I found out I was the one elected. The Lord wanted me I don't know, I figure that there are much more people are more eligible than I can do it but it brings good news. Also, the Inspirational Network, I watched it yesterday for I don't know how many hours. From 12 a.m. to 12 p.m. I am impressed with all these ministers. So many different kinds. You see I am not against EWTN, fine, but there are a lot of others. This one here encompasses all the other Christian sectors or congregations and it really brings out the...if people don't like this one they can try another one. Boy they got some preachers on there I heard that are unbelievable and we miss the best ones in the morning. My favorite when I was in, we go to Florida in the winter time, it is CTN, Christian Television Network. They are on 24 hours a day. My daughter lives in Burlington, VT and she has Inspirational 24 hours a day and EWTN 24 hours a day. They each have their own channel and you can hear John Haggey at 9 a.m. every morning and that guy raises my spirits so much. He is not afraid to call the politicians in Washington what they are. He calls an Ace of Spades an Ace of Spades and boy he is fire. He is fire. This man is a real man of God. To give one example, his grandfather had testimonies more than that. He was preaching one day and this man came up about 6 feet in front of the podium and he stops and says what do you want. He says I came here to kill you. He says

you do what you have to do, I have to preach. He kept on preaching and the man at point blank shot six shots and never touched him. All the shots went flying over there. They came over and they measured. It was impossible that the man could have gone astray that much when he was shooting point blank at you but he knew the hand of God was in front of him watching him. He is the kind of man that I would like to hear speaking on TV and I hope that we keep on with channel 16 and get INSP 24 hours a day. Thank you very much and God Bless You.

Richard Rodrigue, 629 Amherst Street, Manchester, NH stated my complaint tonight and I haven't heard anyone else mention this, is that since at least 1995 I have been paying for basic cable, Tier 1 and Tier 2. Last December, I was informed by a friend that anyone paying basic cable also received Tier 1 and Tier 2 at no charge. I contacted MediaOne and was advised that this was so since they had no way of blocking Tier 1 and Tier 2 but they were in the process of instituting a blocking system and in December of last year they informed me that that was planned for the middle of January. They informed me that they would be willing to cut my charges down to simple basic cost which they did. At that time, I asked them if at the time the block was instituted would there be a charge to get the Tier 1 and Tier 2 reconnected. The answer was no. I asked if I would be notified when the block was going to be instituted. The answer was yes. Two weeks ago, I realized that I was not receiving all of the channels on Tier 1 and Tier 2. Because of all of the problems with the heavy rains, I wondered if that might have been the problem so I waited a few days. When it didn't clear up, I called MediaOne. I was informed that in the first part of June a block had been installed, that notices had been sent out and anyone wishing to not be blocked from Tier 1 and Tier 2 to notify them. I never received anything from them. Now they are telling me that it is going to cost me \$21+ to be reconnected to Tier 1 and Tier 2. I don't think this is fair at all. I think this is very underhanded and I wonder how many people realize that all of the customers that have been paying for basic cable have been getting Tier 1 and Tier 2 for nothing since at least 1995. Thank you.

There being no one else present wishing to speak, a motion would be in order to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Thibault, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of the Committee