



GREATER WEST BLOOMFIELD CABLE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

KEEGO HARBOR • ORCHARD LAKE • SYLVAN LAKE • WEST BLOOMFIELD

MINUTES

March 7, 2024 (SPECIAL MEETING)
(unapproved)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Jennifer Taylor Boykins, at 6:30PM at Green Media Center.

2. Roll Call

Members Present

Representing Keego Harbor

Ronnie Dahl

Joel Ross

Representing Orchard Lake:

Jackie Beach

Anne Dziuba

Representing Sylvan Lake:

Pat Riney

Phil Ross

Representing West Bloomfield:

Jennifer Boykins

Stuart Dorf

Harvey Gersin

Mark Kowalsky

Suzanne Levine

Deborah Macon (arrived at 6:34PM)

Others in Attendance

Dave Scott (General Manager, Civic Center TV/Lakes FM), David Albery (Executive Director, GWBCCC)

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mrs. Beach, support from Mr. Dorf:

“That the Greater West Bloomfield Cable Communications Commission approve the agenda as provided for the March 7, 2024 special meeting.”

Voting YES: Beach, Boykins, Dahl, Dorf, Dziuba, Gersin, Kowalsky, Levine, Riney,
Joel Ross, Phil Ross

Voting NO:

The motion was approved.

The Chairperson welcomed Commissioner Ronnie Dahl, recently appointed by the Keego Harbor City Council, and Ms. Dahl stated that she was glad to be back on the Commission. She noted changes in technology since she was a member several years ago and stated the need to utilize available resources to benefit the community.

4. Public Comment

No member of the public asked to address the Commission.

Mrs. Macon arrived at 6:34PM.

5. New Business

Commission Mission and Vision, 2024 and Beyond

The Chairperson stated that as 2024 begins, change is imminent and, in some cases, already here. The purpose of this meeting is to hear from commissioners regarding their vision for 2024, including one change they would like the Commission to make. She stated that commissioners have communicated to her their concerns in the areas of sustainability, relevance, roles and responsibilities, and programming, as well as others. She especially highlighted the contributions of those who have joined the Commission recently. She asked that each commissioner address the body for five minutes to express a vision and mission for the Commission, including one change each would like to see, and she added that at the end of the meeting, the Commission will have heard from each member and come together to identify and prioritize changes that need to be made.

Joel Ross stated that he has spent his two months as a commissioner learning and observing and that he would like to see major changes that meet the needs of today's consumer. He stated that there should be focus on the openness and transparency regarding the Commission's programming services agreement with Michigan Digital, specifically the history of compensation and the supplemental revenue section of the agreement. He stated that the primary cost component of the agreement is personnel and that the agreement does not specify staffing levels. He added that based on the compensation level, the contractor should have six to eight full-time employees assigned to serve the Commission.

Mr. Kowalsky thanked all commissioners for their attendance and welcomed the opportunity to have this discussion outside the context of a regular Commission or committee meeting. He stated that commissioners are representatives of their communities, whose wishes they should be carrying out while providing information regarding the possibilities, as was done during the budget process late last year. He stated that while he has no criticism of current Commission efforts, there are always opportunities to improve and expand while operating in an efficient manner. He added that the Commission has in the past issued Requests for Proposals for programming services and found that the same level of service was not available at a lower cost.

Mrs. Beach stated that she would like to yield part of her time to Joel Ross to complete his statement.

Joel Ross provided information regarding the contracted cost of various staffing levels and added that in addition to the daily Splash Live, the Commission could be providing podcasts and short and long-form documentaries. He stated that the original agreement with the contractor listed programming responsibilities, which were later eliminated. He noted the nature of an independent contractor agreement and stated that the Commission has no knowledge regarding the contractor's margins. He stated that the Commission and the communities are the client, that the contractor works on behalf of the client, that the Commission has a fiscal responsibility to the communities, and that the agreement is vague and one-sided. He expressed his hope that the Commission will issue a Request for Proposals for programming services and review and rewrite the agreement to create a stronger document. In 2014, the Commission changed contractors to improve programming services, but much has changed since then, and the Commission needs to make changes quickly, not rest on past accomplishments, and move forward through consensus to serve the communities.

Mrs. Beach stated that although she yielded time to Joel Ross, he was not necessarily speaking for her. She added that she has no doubt the Mr. Scott works many more hours than what was stated. She stated that the contract is a competitive agreement and that she has come to appreciate Civic Center TV programming and the Commission's efforts but found little awareness of those efforts among her neighbors.

Mr. Riney stated that he concurs with Mr. Kowalsky's comments.

Phil Ross stated that he has been a member of the Commission for about five years, that he has seen many changes in that time, and that he would like the Commission to focus on emergency communication, to be the focal point of community attention if something happens. He also addressed generating revenue by developing content that the public will pay for.

Ms. Dahl stated that nothing has changed since she left the Commission four years ago, that generating revenue is crucial. She added that the public is looking for a place to create content, learn video editing, and produce podcasts, and that the Commission should engage the community by offering services that are needed. She also advocated transparency regarding the Commission's use of financial resources.

Mrs. Dziuba stated that the communication she received regarding this meeting did not include any reference to five-minute presentations from each commissioner, although others clearly did receive that information. The Chairperson stated that the focus of the meeting changed at the last minute and that expectations were included in the title of the agenda item "Commission Mission and Vision, 2024 and Beyond". Mrs. Dziuba stated there was a communication gap, and the Chairperson stated that expectations will be clearly presented for future meetings. Mrs. Dziuba stated that she will provide comments but that they would be different if she had been notified regarding the meeting format.

Mrs. Dziuba presented the vision and mission for the Commission's programming resources, the opportunity to present objective information in an age of distrust of media. She stated that the Commission has never been a status quo organization and that it has researched other community media operations and found that CCT provides more programming and more variety of programming. She highlighted the strategic planning process the Commission undertook from 2017 to 2021, including focus groups and the Cable Community Panel. She commended the efforts of Michigan Digital outside of its contractual responsibilities, including support of

Michigan Week, the construction of a new Civic Center TV web site, and the CCT roving reporter program. She stated that the Commission should gather as much information as possible in order to best serve all residents of the four communities while focusing on sustainability in a time of decreasing cable revenue.

Mr. Gersin stated that the Commission has undergone many changes in the last fifteen years and now faces a big issue, which is survival. He added that substantial funding will be necessary to provide programming and that the Commission's budget is not very large considering what its goals and objectives are and the costs of program production and operating Green Media Center. He listed possible sources of revenue, including grants, sponsorships, becoming a public access center as was the case many years ago, and the allocation of increased cable revenue from the four communities. He noted changes to The Splash Live as Civic Center TV's primary programming vehicle. He stated that he would like to create focus groups to generate programming ideas and general direction and commended the value of new commissioners and fresh ideas.

Mrs. Macon stated that when the Cable Advisory Board became the Cable Communications Commission, she focused on the word "communications" because the organization can be at the center of every conversation in Greater West Bloomfield, but only if members are visible in the community. She echoed Phil Ross's comments regarding emergency preparedness, emphasized the importance of understanding governance and how it works, and stated that the roving reporter program a good example of turning an idea into reality. She stated that the Commission should not be forced into becoming a fund-raising organization, which other boards and commissions are not required to do.

Mr. Levine outlined her past experience with public access at Tribune/United, creating all types of award-winning programming, and emphasized the importance of human-interest stories. She commended Dave Scott for creating the Megacast when the pandemic hit and added that the Commission should re-invent itself by researching what is popular on-line and program accordingly, by finding out what the public wants and then providing it on Civic Center TV. She added that talking-heads programming is generally boring unless the interviewer and the subject are exceptional.

Mr. Dorf stated that the Commission is at an inflection point, with commissioners who have served for years and others who are recent additions creating an open dialogue involving passionate advocacy and defenses. The objective is to serve constituents, to achieve sustainability through the generation of revenue as a non-profit, and to create programming which will generate revenue. He emphasized the value of open dialogue to achieve sustainability. He added that the Commission is obligated to evaluate the services provided by its vendors in order that more people can benefit from the Commission's efforts.

The Chairperson thanked all in attendance for their openness and candor, for the ideas presented, and the importance of coming together without necessarily agreeing on everything.

She emphasized the importance of developing a sense of urgency regarding the next steps to be taken, specifically in area of revenue generation, and the need to collaborate to determine what will be done and who will be in charge. She stated the importance of creating a team where all are heard and valued, which may involve more committee meetings and special Commission meetings such as this one. She stated that she will do a better job of communicating the format of future meetings and noted the need to maintain momentum and the need for the Finance Committee to meet every month until a 501(c)(3) is in place. She stated that she is grateful for the opportunity to have everyone together.

Mrs. Macon stated that this meeting was not engagement. The Chairperson asked if commissioners are willing to meet for more than one hour, and members answered in the affirmative. Mrs. Macon stated that not every meeting needs to run longer than sixty minutes, and added that she loves committee meetings, which are engagement plus.

Mr. Scott addressed the Commission, stating that this meeting has been enormously beneficial. He urged commissioners not to split into factions, not to isolate, but to work together and avoid harmful comments. He stated that commissioners should be proud of what the Commission provides to residents and that Civic Center TV surpasses community media operations across the state and the nation. The staff works endless hours, and the result is more content, more social media presence, and more community involvement. The communities value and appreciate CCT.

Mrs. Dziuba stated that among the ten rules for productive conversations are objectivity and the avoidance of subjective values or labels.

In response to a question from Mrs. Macon, the Chairperson stated that the Commission needs to review the ideas raised at this meeting and decide on priorities for implementation, and Ms. Dahl, Mr. Dorf, Mrs. Dziuba, Mr. Gersin, and Mrs. Macon volunteered to serve as an ad hoc group to undertake that review.

Mrs. Dziuba stated that sustainability was a major theme at this meeting and suggested research into revenue generation strategies.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by the Chairperson at 7:44PM.

The next meeting of the Greater West Bloomfield Cable Communications Commission is **THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2024, at 7:00PM** at **WEST BLOOMFIELD TOWN HALL**, 4550 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield, Michigan.