



GREATER WEST BLOOMFIELD CABLE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

KEEGO HARBOR • ORCHARD LAKE • SYLVAN LAKE • WEST BLOOMFIELD

MINUTES

May 9, 2024

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Vice-Chairperson, Anne Dziuba, at 7:00PM at West Bloomfield Town Hall.

2. Roll Call

Members Present

Representing Keego Harbor

Ronnie Dahl

Joel Ross

Representing Orchard Lake:

Anne Dziuba

Representing Sylvan Lake:

Pat Riney

Phil Ross

Representing West Bloomfield:

Stuart Dorf

Harvey Gersin

Suzanne Levine

Deborah Macon (arrived at 7:07PM)

Members Absent

Representing West Bloomfield:

Jennifer Boykins

Mark Kowalsky

Others in Attendance

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

The Executive Director stated that Ms. Boykins had communicated her inability to attend the meeting and Mr. Kowalsky and Mrs. Macon indicated that they may be arriving late.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Executive Director stated that the Commission Chairperson, Ms. Boykins, had communicated her request that Item 10-B be deleted from the agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Phil Ross, support from Ms. Levine:

“That the Greater West Bloomfield Cable Communications Commission approve the agenda as revised for the May 9, 2024 meeting.”

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

Voting NO:

The motion was approved.

4. Public Comment

The Chairperson noted that members of the public in attendance and that concerns are always welcome at the “Comment” tab at GWBCABLE.ORG.

5. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mr. Gersin, support from Ms. Levine:

“That the Minutes of the April 4, 2024 meeting, the April 17, 2024 joint meeting, the April 24, 2024 special meeting, the May 6, 2024 joint meeting, and the May 7, 2024 joint meeting be approved as presented.”

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

Voting NO:

The motion was approved.

6. Acceptance of Financial Report

The report was summarized by the Executive Director.

Motion by Mr. Dorf, support from Phil Ross:

“That the Financial Report be accepted.”

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

Voting NO:

The motion was approved.

Mrs. Macon arrived at 7:07PM.

7. Committee Reports

The Vice-Chairperson stated that this portion of the agenda provides an opportunity for committees to report to the Commission.

Report of the Finance Committee

Commissioners were provided a written report which was presented by Mr. Ross, the committee chairperson.

Mrs. Macon stated that the report does not include the criteria for selection of a non-profit organizational model and that the type of organization will be crucial to volunteer engagement. She also suggested, as she had at previous meetings, that the Finance Committee increase the number of meetings scheduled for the year. Mr. Ross stated that the committee meeting schedule will be on the agenda for its next meeting.

Report of the Commission Operations and Strategic Planning Committee

Commissioners were provided a written report which was presented by Mr. Riney, the committee vice-chairperson. Mrs. Macon stated that the Commission was mentioned at the May 8 meeting of the West Bloomfield Township Library Board of Trustees as a potential partner in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Report of the Community Programming Committee

Commissioners were provided a written report which was summarized by Mrs. Dziuba, the committee chairperson.

Strategic Plan Implementation 2024

Commissioners were provided a written update regarding implementation of the Commission's strategic plan.

Motion by Mr. Gersin, support from Joel Ross:

“That the Greater West Bloomfield Cable Communications Commission accept the reports of the Finance, Commission Operations and Strategic Planning, and Community Programming committees, as well as the strategic plan implementation update, and consider committee recommendations under New Business later in this meeting.”

Voting YES: Dahl, Dorf, Dziuba, Gersin, Levine, Macon, Riney, Joel Ross, Phil Ross

Voting NO:

The motion was approved.

8. Executive Director's Report

Civic Center TV/Lakes FM

Commissioners were provided a written report of programming cablecast on Civic Center TV in April.

Mr. Scott addressed the Commission regarding the operation of Civic Center TV and Lakes FM, focusing on programming and staff. In response to a question from Ms. Dahl, Mr. Scott stated that the coverage of the Michigan Week Community Awards Breakfast is included in the contractor's annual programming service agreement. He added that substantial Michigan Digital assets are also donated to the annual community event.

Cable Operators

Commissioners were provided copies of a communication from Comcast.

GWBCCC Directory

Commissioners were provided an updated directory of Commission membership, contractors, and committee assignments.

Cable Industry News

The regional sports network Bally Sports Detroit, as well as 17 other Bally networks around the country, has been removed from the Comcast line-up due to a contractual dispute. Bally's owner, Diamond Sports Group, taking most of the public criticism for the situation, claims that Comcast wants to place the service on a higher-priced tier of channels.

The Affordable Connectivity Program is almost out of money, with participants receiving only partial assistance with their broadband costs in May and no assistance in June. The Speaker of the United States House of Representatives has not scheduled a vote on a bill to continue the program at a cost of 7 billion dollars.

Streaming is now considered a mature business, stable but not showing the rapid growth of previous years, with subscribers adding and dropping services on a regular basis.

Seventy percent of streaming subscribers prefer FAST (free ad-supported television) channels because they are less expensive and, in many cases, free.

Communication

No communication was received.

Commission Assistance to Residents

The Commission has been assisting a resident with a disconnection credit due him, and the situation should be resolved by the end of the month.

The Commission has also been working with Comcast to bury a cable lying across the safety path on 14 Mile Road, and that work is scheduled to be completed on May 10.

As expected, the Commission has been contacted by residents with specific situations due to the warmer weather, and Comcast, whose paper bill includes the Commission's telephone number, has been responsive to those concerns.

Preview

The Executive Director presented his agenda for the time period between this meeting and the next.

In response to a question from Ms. Dahl regarding legislative advocacy, the Executive Director stated that the Commission is active in the Michigan Community Media Association, which is leading advocacy in Lansing against a bill exempting streaming services from franchise fees and in favor of changes in Michigan Public Act 480 which would include franchise fees on streaming services.

Mrs. Macon stated that she had attended a NATOA webinar on April 29 which included information regarding the demise of the Affordable Connectivity Program and FCC initiatives which could fill the gap, including wi-fi on school buses.

The Executive Director stated that Comcast Internet Essentials is still in place to assist low-income subscribers.

Joel Ross suggested that the popularity of FAST services, which are free and accessible, might lead the Commission to reconsider the public access model to respond to the public's appetite for free content. Discussion focused on defining public access and podcasting.

9. Unfinished Business

No items of Unfinished Business were presented.

10. New Business

Recommendation of the Finance Committee – Formation of Tax-Exempt Non-Profit Support Organization

Motion by Mr. Ross:

“That the Greater West Bloomfield Cable Communications Commission declare its intention to form a tax-exempt non-profit organization to raise funds to support the Commission.”

The Vice-Chairperson noted that as a committee recommendation, the motion does not require support.

Mrs. Macon stated that organizations which engage volunteers in community support are much more successful than those which focus on fund-raising.

Motion by Mrs. Macon:

“That the motion be amended by striking ‘raise funds to support the Commission’ and inserting ‘actively engage volunteers to help support the community’.”

The motion was not supported.

Ms. Dahl stated that the Commission’s bylaws already include a volunteer program and that the need for additional revenue is the primary goal at this time.

Phil Ross stated that the motion creates an organization to raise funds to support the Commission, an endeavor which would undoubtedly involve volunteers.

Mrs. Macon stated that she is concerned with the ambiguity of the motion, which does not include criteria, how the organization would serve residents, or the relationship between the non-profit and the Cable Commission. She added that the motion as stated will not spur community support for the initiative.

Joel Ross stated that he does not understand how the model proposed will work and prefers the Orion Neighborhood Television mode, in which the non-profit organization operates the community media center. Phil Ross responded that the model for the proposed non-profit is the Friends of the West Bloomfield Township Public Library.

Mr. Scott stated that concept of a tax-exempt non-profit to support community media is common around the country.

Motion by Mrs. Macon:

“That the motion be amended by striking the last seven words, ‘to raise funds to support the Commission’.”

The motion was not supported.

The Vice-Chairperson called for a vote on the original motion.

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

Voting NO: Macon

The motion was approved.

11. Commissioner Comments

Ms. Levine noted the Health and Wellness Fair at West Bloomfield Town Hall on June 11 and thanked the sponsors of the event.

Mrs. Macon announced the United We Walk of Southeast Michigan 21-Day Equity Challenge and stated that information would be provided to the Commission. She also thanked the Commission for its support of the Greater West Bloomfield Michigan Week Community Awards Breakfast.

The Vice-Chairperson thanked the Executive Director and all commissioners for their attendance at five meetings in April in addition to learning opportunities with Orion Neighborhood Television and the Friends of the Library.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by the Chairperson at 8:12PM.

The next meeting of the Greater West Bloomfield Cable Communications Commission is **THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2024**, at **7:00PM** at **WEST BLOOMFIELD TOWN HALL**, 4550 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield, Michigan.