

# Cable TV Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

1. A meeting of the Cable TV Advisory Committee ("Committee") of the Town of Hingham ("Town") was duly called to order by Chairman David Jones on Wednesday January 13, 2021 at 7:09 PM. The meeting was held via a Zoom audio-visual conference call.

Chairman David Jones commenced the meeting by discussing the Open Meeting Law and noted the changes allowing these types of meetings to be held remotely pursuant to an order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020. Chairman Jones reminded participants that this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with this Open Meeting Law.

2. Members in attendance were Chairman David Jones, Vice Chairman John Rice, Recording Secretary Michael Leary, and Christopher Baron. Harbor Media Executive Director Michelle Balconi was also present. Superintendent Paul Austin of the Hingham Public Schools joined the meeting briefly and requested Mr. Jones and Ms. Balconi to update the Committee regarding Hingham Schools related matters. Jeffrey Cutler and Harbor Media Director of Operations Adam Sayre were not present.

During the meeting, former Hingham School Committee Member and present Board Member of the Hingham Sports Partnership, Ray Estes, joined the meeting.

Cable TV Advisory Committee members present constituted a quorum. This quorum remained present throughout the meeting. There were no other individuals present.

3. The first order of business was a review of minutes from the November 18, 2020 meeting. Chairman Jones requested comments from Committee members. There were no comments noted. Mr. Jones commended Recording Secretary Leary for his efforts in the preparation of Committee minutes. All members present were in agreement with Mr. Jones observations. Mr. Leary thanked the Committee for their compliments.

***A motion was made by Vice Chairman Rice to approve the November 18, 2020 minutes. Recording Secretary Leary seconded the motion. All voting members present approved the motion.***

4. The second order of business was a review of ongoing and completed Committee requests from Harbor Media. Chairman Jones introduced the first open request relating to Harbor Media budget to actual reports for the year 2020. Mr. Jones updated the Committee that he received the analysis and now considers the request closed.

Chairman Jones next asked Recording Secretary Leary to discuss the status of the request for allocation methodologies from Harbor Media (i.e.: Allocations on common costs between the Town of Hingham and the Town of Norwell). This initiative was

requested to ensure that the Town of Hingham was not financing operations for another town serviced by Harbor Media.

Mr. Leary reminded the Committee that a high-level document from Harbor Media's President Laura Burns was received on November 13, 2020. He further updated the Committee that he recently met with Ms. Burns on December 4, 2020 to discuss the analysis and request additional information. During the meeting, Harbor Media declined to provide further details surrounding the allocations. Ms. Burns recommended that this request be addressed later in the year during the upcoming contract renewal process. Based upon Mr. Leary's update, Mr. Jones agreed that this item will be addressed in the future.

5. Chairman Jones introduced the next order of business surrounding the interim results of the ten-question cable programming survey of Town of Hingham residents. Mr. Jones stated that 84 responses have been received to date. The responses came from various sources including the Town of Hingham website, Facebook, and Harbor Media/Town of Hingham email distribution lists. Mr. Jones proceeded by reviewing the responses with the Committee. A high-level summary of certain survey responses follows below:

- 37% of respondents stated that they did not watch programming. Based upon this result, the Committee discussed the need to promote the channels. Executive Director Balconi agreed for the need for advertising, but recommended that this campaign be launched once all HD channels were completely implemented. Vice Chairman Rice suggested that future outreach could be through commercials on local channels on Verizon/Xfinity, and print/online materials in the Hingham Anchor and Hingham Journal. Based upon the discussion, Vice Chairman Rice volunteered to reach out to Mike Galla from Xfinity to facilitate the addition of the remaining HD channel.
- The survey denoted that out of the three channels (Education, Government and Public), the Government channel was the most watched. The Committee agreed that the results were not surprising, since Board of Selectman meetings held on the Government channel have always been popular. Mr. Baron inquired whether all three channels were still needed. A discussion ensued and the Committee agreed that channel lineup and priorities will be addressed at a later date.
- 43% of survey responses did not know that Harbor Media had a studio. Based upon the responses, Chairman Jones recommended that an assessment for this type of facility should be performed on a periodic basis. Executive Director Balconi informed the Committee, even in the time of Covid-19, the studio is still being utilized. For example, she noted that a program assisting residents to determine what is trash versus recycling materials was filmed recently.
- Approximately 54% of individuals stated that HD channels were considered "important" or "very important".
- Programs watched frequently were Town, Board of Selectman and School Committee broadcasts.

- Respondents recommended the following programming content: sports, original programming, bulletin board, and information about the Town, its facilities and personal. Chairman Jones stated that the responses were in line with previous observations made by Vice Chairman Rice. In relationship to the sports programming, Executive Director Balconi informed the Committee that Harbor Media has started a relationship with a pay per view live streaming company to provide Hingham hockey games. Once the game is broadcast, this company provides a file for public access.

A discussion ensued surrounding the remaining survey results. The Committee agreed that additional responses should be sought out through various means including the extension of the survey on the Town of Hingham website. On a related note, Vice Chairman Rice complimented Harbor Media on improved picture quality (via the new digital format) and overall programming content. Executive Director Balconi thanked Mr. Rice for his observations.

6. Chairman Jones requested an update on Harbor Media programming and School update from Executive Director Balconi. Ms. Balconi informed that Committee that since September, Harbor Media has been producing one to two pieces of new content each week. She elaborated that in the past 80% of content was considered long form programming. However, they have switched now to more short form. Ms. Balconi noted some examples of this type of programs including: (1) Hingham High School female rowing team world record (2) Choir holiday concert (3) Student Council Covid-19 experience and (4) Boy Scouts.

Ms. Balconi also informed the Committee on additional programming efforts including the reading of the Bill of Rights on inauguration day. In response to the above discussion, Vice Chairman Rice suggested additional programming ideas such as the Save the Parish issue confronting the community. Ms. Balconi then discussed the methodology of programming at Harbor Media. She elaborated that all employees are considered producers and a list of their recommendations are written down and tracked for potential use. Per Ms. Balconi, approximately 25% of all ideas from employees become actual productions.

[Hingham Sports Partnership Board Member and former School Committee Member, Ray Estes, joined the Committee meeting.]

Next Ms. Balconi updated the Committee on the creation of original content by the media production class at Hingham High School. In the current semester, there are two entry level classes being offered. The spring semester will offer another entry level plus an advanced level class. Vice Chairman Rice expressed concern that the Committee partially funds a teaching position at the High School, but no programming has been produced. A general discussion ensued regarding the need to require the production of programming content in the curriculum.

Mr. Ray Estes next requested Chairman Jones to be recognized by the Committee. Mr. Jones agreed to recognize Mr. Estes and asked him to introduce himself. After the introduction, Mr. Estes informed the Committee that the Hingham Sports Partnership is in the process of implementing live stream production of local sporting events. Mr. Estes stated that he decided to attend the Committee meeting (after

responding to the above discussed cable tv survey) to coordinate their efforts with the Committee and Harbor Media.

Per Mr. Estes, the Hingham Sports Partnership plans to purchase video cameras for installation in the gym, and the field press box. The Hingham Sports Partnership also plans to acquire mobile recording systems. He explained that their goal is to stream live events including both theatre, and sports (including but not limited to lacrosse, softball and football). In addition to live streaming via the internet, the Hingham Sports Partnership would like to play these programs on the public access Education channel. The plan is to include commentators and graphics. Per Mr. Estes, the Hingham High School Athletic Director, and Principal approve of this project.

Executive Director Balconi requested to be involved in this initiative including consulting on equipment, live streaming production and training. Mr. Estes agreed with her proposal. Based upon this discussion, Mr. Jones assigned Committee member Jeff Cutler to assist with this project.

Committee members thanked Mr. Estes for his attendance and the Partnership's outreach. Mr. Estes left the meeting shortly after the conclusion of the topic.

7. The Hingham Public School update was addressed in the programming update agenda item 6.
8. Chairman Jones next requested a finance update from Recording Secretary Leary. Mr. Leary stated that there were no items to currently discuss. However, he did request an update from Executive Director Balconi regarding the annual audit and the issuance of combined Town of Hingham and Norwell financial statements. Ms. Balconi stated that the audit is still in process and a six-month extension with the Internal Revenue Service has been requested. Ms. Balconi informed the Committee that, per the auditors, there are no issues related to this delay.
9. The next agenda item introduced by Chairman Jones related to the Town of Hingham infrastructure update. Executive Director Balconi informed the Committee that the equipment at Town Hall is in process of being installed. Per Ms. Balconi, the remainder of the installation will be completed next week. In a related matter, Vice Chairman Rice updated the Committee on the review of Harbor Media operations. Mr. Rice elaborated that a consultant has been identified, but he is currently awaiting approval from Town Administrator, Tom Mayo. Per Mr. Rice, there is currently a question as to whether this engagement needs to be bid out to multiple vendors. Further discussion ensued including debate as to whether Harbor Media is required to conform with the municipal multiple bid requirements.
10. Chairman Jones requested any additional matters for discussion. Recording Secretary Leary reminded the Committee that he is still awaiting a reply from Town Administrator Tom Mayo regarding comments surrounding certain cable tv related trial balance accounts maintained by the Town of Hingham. Chairman Jones agreed for the need for follow up. Vice Chairman Rice presented an additional matter for discussion. Per Mr. Rice, the Committee's representative from the Board of Selectmen, Mary Powers, will not be running for re-election. Mr. Rice inquired whether the Committee could get another Selectman assigned before her departure.

This suggestion was prompted by anticipated needs of the Committee during the contract renewal with Harbor Media.

After the above discussions, there were no other topics suggested for review. Mr. Jones suggested that the next meeting date be changed from Wednesday to Tuesday night due to a recurring meeting conflict with Hingham Public School Superintendent Paul Austin's schedule. Chairman Jones then proposed that the next meeting of the Committee be held on Tuesday February 9, 2021 at 7 PM. All members were in agreement with the proposed date. Mr. Jones stated that he will send the room/virtual room request via Zoom to the Town of Hingham and will distribute an agenda in advance.

12. There being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn the meeting was proposed.

***A motion was made to adjourn by Recording Secretary Leary and seconded by Christopher Baron. All voting members present were in agreement with the motion.***

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 PM.

Submitted for review to the Cable TV Advisory Committee on January 17, 2021 by Recording Secretary Michael Leary.

Approved by the Cable TV Advisory Committee on February 9, 2021