

Cable TV Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

1. A meeting of the Cable TV Advisory Committee ("Committee") of the Town of Hingham was duly called to order by Chairman David Jones on Wednesday March 25, 2020 at 7:01 PM. The meeting was held telephonically.
2. Members in attendance were Chairman David Jones, Vice Chairman John Rice, Recording Secretary pro tem Michael Leary, Superintendent of the Hingham Public Schools Paul Austin, Jeffrey Cutler and Christopher Baron. Representatives from Harbor Media were also present including: President Laura Burns, Executive Director Michelle Balconi and Treasurer Betty Foley. CAC 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 February 19, 2020 meeting. A brief discussion occurred regarding the minutes with no comments.

A motion was made to approve the February 2019 minutes and appoint Michael Leary as Recording Secretary pro tem by Chairman David Jones and seconded by Vice Chairman John Rice. All voting members present approved the motion.

4. Chairman Jones and the members of the Committee welcomed Harbor Media representatives. President Burns introduced the newly promoted Executive Director Michelle Balconi. Ms. Burns noted that Ms. Balconi was formerly Norwell's Community Manager and asked her to give the Committee some background. Ms. Balconi stated that she has worked in marketing and communications for 25 years. She has enjoyed her time at Harbor Media and is looking forward to the challenge of the Executive Director.

Ms. Balconi then gave a brief overview of current operations at Harbor Media. She noted that all employees are working remotely due to the Coronavirus outbreak for the last week and that Harbor Media has been concentrating on daily updates regarding the matter on the cable channels. Vice Chairman Rice inquired about the recent departure of an employee - Michael Parsons. Ms. Balconi stated that Harbor Media has a number of individuals able to cover the open position and no issues are expected. Mr. Rice next asked for an update on current technical issues with Comcast. Ms. Balconi noted that they are aware of the issue and have been tracking the down time related to Comcast. Chairman Jones appointed Jeff Cutler to liaison between Comcast and Harbor Media to assist in resolving the problem.

Mr. Rice then requested Ms. Burns to update the new Executive Director regarding various requests from the Committee. Ms. Burns agreed to update Ms. Balconi on these matters. The Committee then congratulated Ms. Balconi on her promotion to Executive Director and agreed that all Committee members looked forward to working with her in the future.

5. Chairman Jones requested an overview from Executive Director Balconi regarding the HD upgrade for Verizon. Ms. Balconi informed the Committee that channel 2131 was assigned and currently public channel content was being aired. Vice Chairman Rice asked for an update regarding the creation of a “best of channel” that encompasses the Public, Government and Education content. Ms. Burns stated that due to the recent change in the Executive Director position that the roll out is being reassessed including the marketing of the new channel. The Committee then discussed progress surrounding Comcast HD channel. Mr. Rice agreed to reach out to Comcast to discuss the potential for early implementation.
6. The next order of business was an update regarding the Hingham Public Schools. Superintendent Paul Austin gave a general update including current issues surrounding the Coronavirus. Before schools were shut down due to the virus, Mr. Austin elaborated that he visited the high school’s media classes and facilities. Mr. Austin was impressed with the overall engagement of the students and connections with Harbor Media. Mr. Austin also informed the Committee that Harbor Media has requested that he participate in a program called “Coffee with the Superintendent”. He is looking forward to the opportunity.

Vice Chairman Rice inquired to Mr. Austin regarding the teacher position partially funded by the Committee. Mr. Rice stated that the Committee was interested in the position being more active in the creation of programming for the Education channel. In particular, Mr. Rice suggested that the morning show at the high school would be an excellent item to broadcast on the cable system. Unfortunately, the show has utilized copyrighted materials that would not be legally allowed to be broadcast. Mr. Rice suggested that the morning show be modified to eliminate the copyright issues. Mr. Austin will investigate the matter and agreed that content should be able to be adjusted. Ms. Balconi stated that the Town of Norwell broadcasts a similar type of program produced by students. These programs are very successful because parents are more likely to watch the show on cable TV. At the request of Chairman Jones, Mr. Rice agreed to be a liaison for the schools for the Committee.

Due to other commitments, Mr. Austin left the meeting after completing his update at 7:40 PM.

7. Chairman Jones next requested an update from Mr. Leary the review of accounting systems performed at Harbor Media on March 11th. Mr. Leary and Vice Chairman Rice attended the meeting with Harbor Media representatives President Laura Burns, Executive Director Farzad Wafapoor, and Treasurer Betty Foley. Mr. Leary presented an overview of the meeting including major accounting systems, Creative Services line of business and observations regarding financial assets held by Harbor Media.

Discussion ensued regarding several areas of interest. At the request of the Committee, Mr. Leary summarized certain findings and suggestions related to accounts payable controls and enhanced use of the accounting platform QuickBooks. Further, Mr. Leary discussed suggested controls that Harbor Media will be implementing due to the departure of Mr. Wafapoor.

A lengthy discussion surrounding allocations of costs relating to the Creative Services line of business was addressed. Both Chairman Jones and Vice Chairman Rice agreed that although the line of business is insignificant, it requires substantial

involvement from the Executive Director (i.e.: the time committed by high level management for Creative Services could be used to improve cable programming content). The Committee was in agreement with their conclusions. Mr. Rice suggested to Ms. Burns and Ms. Balconi that the line of business should focus on local projects in order to be considered as a core business function.

Finally, Mr. Leary discussed the current large cash balance held by Harbor Media. Mr. Leary stated that Ms. Burns and the Board of Directors are planning to reduce the balance to a one-year reserve (rather than the current two years). Ms. Burns also added that the Board of Directors will be considering various options on how to utilize the excess funds in the future.

8. The Committee's next discussion item related to the planned review of Harbor Media. Chairman Jones requested an update from Vice Chairman Rice. Mr. Rice suggested that due to the departure of the Executive Director and issues associated with the Coronavirus that a delay in implementation is warranted. The Committee agreed with this assessment noting that the contract between the Town of Hingham and Harbor Media is scheduled for renewal on August 2021.
9. Chairman Jones requested any additional matters for discussion. No additional discussion items were noted. Mr. Jones proposed that the next meeting of the Committee be held on Wednesday April 22, 2020 at 7 PM. All members were in agreement with the proposed date. Chairman Jones stated that he will send the room request to the Town of Hingham and will distribute an agenda in advance. In addition, the meeting will be held as a video conference call utilizing the internet application Zoom. Mr. Jones requested a representative from Harbor Media be present. President Burns stated that Executive Director Michelle Balconi will be their liaison going forward.
10. There being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn the meeting was proposed.

A motion was made to adjourn by Christopher Baron and seconded by Jeff Cutler. All voting members present were in agreement with the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Approved by the Cable TV Advisory Committee on April 23, 2020