

Meeting Minutes

TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, January 3, 2002 - 6:00 P.M.

County-City Building - Conference Room D

1516 Church Street Present: Chairman Rackow, Commissioners Curtis, Patton, Pintar, Wyhuske; Aldermen Walther, Phillips

Excused: Commissioners Colantonio, Lysne

Also Present: Mayor Wescott, Clerk Zdroik, Alderpersons Sevenich, Sowieja, Molski; Telecommunications Coordinator Quirk, Trustee Klismet (Park Ridge), President Kell (V of Whiting), Jessie Hlad (Charter)

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1. Approval of minutes of November 29, 2001.
2. Stevens Point/Plover Area Telecommunications Commission.
3. Report of Charter Communications.
4. Date, time, and location of next meeting.
5. Adjourn into closed session pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes 19.85(1)(e) to discuss franchise negotiations.

1. Approval of minutes of November 29, 2001.

Commissioner Patton moved, Commissioner Wyhuske seconded, for approval of the minutes of November 29, 2001.

Ayes, all; nays, none. Motion carried.

Chairman Rackow informed the Commission that a "Thank You" card was received from Steve Randell, Charter Communications Director of Operations, thanking the Chairman and the Mayor for meeting with him and Tim Vowell on Thursday, December 13, 2001.

2. Stevens Point/Plover Area Telecommunications Commission.

Chairman Rackow reported he has written a letter to Mr. Randell asking for the number of cable subscribers as of January 1, 2002, by municipality. This information will be used for the planning of the proposed Regional Telecommunications Commission in the Stevens Point area. The Chairman further reported he has been requesting this information in the last five years.

3. Report of Charter Communications.

Chairman Rackow referred to a letter from Mayor Wescott to Tim Vowell, Charter Communications Vice President of Government Affairs, regarding the status of the cable television franchise renewal with the City of Stevens Point and surrounding communities.

In his letter, the Mayor asked that Charter forward a written response to the City's five-year franchise proposal on or before Monday, January 7, 2002, in preparation for the negotiation meetings on January 15, 2002 and January 16, 2002, if needed.

A letter dated November 28, 2001, was received from M. Celeste Vossmeier, Charter's Vice President - Government Relations informing the Commission that a Certificate of Amendment was filed with the State of Delaware changing its legal name from Marcus Cable Partners, L.L.C. to Charter Cable Partners, LLC, d/b/a Charter Communications.

Chairman Rackow advised that future resolutions extending the franchise agreement, if needed, must show the new legal name.

Jessie Hlad, Charter's Government/Public Relations Manager reported that:

1. Pipeline Internet service for both Gold and Silver will be increased effective February 1, 2002. This price adjustment does not include the lease of a modem, any local franchise fees or taxes.
2. On January 15, 2002, Charter will be scrambling the signal for their Digital Choice Program Package, channels 100 through 154. An oversight in Charter's system gave customers access to the programming without the customers requesting for it or being billed for it. This information is being given to make the City aware that Charter is remedying this situation.

Ms. Hlad added that she is not very familiar with what is happening in the franchise negotiations between Charter and the City of Stevens Point since she is not involved in it. She is trying her best to answer questions to the best of her knowledge.

Mr. Randell's letter of December 21, 2001, listed price changes on services and equipment that will take effect on February 1, 2002. He feels keeping the City informed of changes made to Charter's services and prices are an important part of Charter's relationship with the City. Like other businesses, Charter continues to be challenged by rising operating expenses, Mr. Randell said.

Commissioner Wyhuske commented that her constituents are asking when closure will be on the franchise renewal process.

In the Mayor's letter to Mr. Vowell, Commissioner Wyhuske would like to know if there will be some kind of assurance at the meetings on January 15 and 16, 2002, that the renewal process will come to an end.

Ms. Hlad said Charter is optimistic.

Telecommunications Coordinator Quirk said it is not hurting anyone by not having the franchise agreement renewed. No new problem has come up and things are not getting worse.

Mayor Wescott stated the City is negotiating under a very complex federal law with volumes of information. He said it took Oshkosh over four years to get a new franchise agreement.

Coordinator Quirk informed the Commission that Eau Claire did it in a hurry and regret their action.

Village of Whiting President Kell said people are probably scared about not having a franchise agreement in place. They are concerned about losing the only cable provider in this area, President Kell added.

A meeting between Chairman Rackow and Ms. Hlad was held on Friday, December 21, 2001. At this meeting, a lot of attention was focused on origination points being connected by fiber optic cable, PEG fiber for video, dark fiber for data, and cable modem for data.

Ms. Hlad, for the Commission's information, told Chairman Rackow that it costs Charter \$23,000 per mile to install fiber optic cable. That amount does not include the devices to make it work. She also handed out a very informative piece of paper from Charter titled "Where Your Cable Bill Goes".

Alderman/Commissioner Phillips moved, Alderman/Commissioner Walther seconded, to accept Chairman Rackow's memo to the members of Telecommunications Commission and Common Council regarding further updates on cable TV and place it on file.

Ayes, all; nays, none. Motion carried.

4. Date, time, and location of next meeting.

The next Telecommunications Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 31, 2002, at 6:00 P.M. in Conference Room D, County-City Building, 1516 Church Street.

5. Adjourn into closed session pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes 19.85(1)(e) to discuss franchise negotiations.

Commissioner Patton moved, Commissioner Pintar seconded, to adjourn into closed session.

Roll Call: Ayes: Chairman Rackow, Commissioners Curtis, Patton, Pintar, Wyhuske; Aldermen Walther, Phillips.

Nays: None. Motion carried.

6. Adjournment - 7:10 P.M.

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