

Meeting Minutes

TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, March 20, 2002 - 6:00 P.M.

City Water Dept. - 300 Bliss Ave. Present: Chairman Rackow, Commissioners Curtis, Patton, Wyhuske; Aldermen/Commissioners Walther, Phillips

Excused: Commissioner Colantonio, Lysne, Pintar

Also Present: Mayor Wescott, Clerk Zdroik, Alderpersons Sevenich, Molski, Moore; Telecommunications Coordinator Quirk, Trustee Klismet (Park Ridge),

Tom Hagen (V of Whiting), Jim Ebenhoe (Charter)

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1. Approval of minutes of February 28, 2002.
  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 telecommunications franchise negotiations.
  6. Adjournment
1. Approval of minutes of February 28, 2002.

Commissioner Patton moved, Commissioner Wyhuske seconded, for approval of the minutes of February 28, 2002.

Ayes, all; nays, none. Motion carried.

2. Stevens Point/Plover Area Telecommunications Commission.

Chairman Rackow reported half of the members of the Regional Commission are collecting franchise fees now. It is the Chairman's hope that when we have a franchise agreement, all ten members of the Regional Commission will collect franchise fees.

3. Report of Charter Communications.

There were two subscribers' concerns were addressed at the meeting. One concern was from an elderly lady who has a hard time paying her cable bill. She said she only watches up to Channel 9 on the broadcast channels and Channel 19 only on the expanded basic. The second concern was from a couple in the Wellington Court area who was repeatedly informed their residence is not in the service area. Both concerns have been addressed by Charter and solutions were offered.

In a letter dated March 6, 2002, addressed to Chairman Rackow, Steven Randell, Director of Operations, Charter Communications, announced the addition of Interactive TV to the Stevens Point line-up starting March 28, 2002. He added this is the first time digital cable subscribers in the City of Stevens Point area will have access to the up-to-the-minute Interactive information through their television. This service is being provided free of charge.

The Commission addressed the telephone testing being offered in the Stevens Point area free of charge. Chairman Rackow said that Charter has ask people who are involved in the test to hang on to their old telephone service. Some Commissioners are concerned the subscribers paid for the fiber optic backbone in the area and surrounding areas that Charter is now using to offer telephone service.

Jim Ebenhoe, Charter Communications, said Charter follows all rules and regulations of the FCC.

Regarding the upgrade cost, Charter was already challenged and Charter prevailed. He added that the FCC does not allow the total cost of the upgrade to be allocated using customer rates and that not a great portion of the bandwidth is allocated to provide telephone service.

Trustee Klismet, Park Ridge, asked if the \$5 million-dollar upgrade was passed on to the cable subscribers.

Mr. Ebenhoe said some cost of the upgrade was passed on to the cable subscribers. Only a portion of it is allowed by FCC. Mr. Ebenhoe added he does not know the actual cost.

Alderman/Commissioner Phillips once again voiced his concern that Charter did not ask permission for the upgrade.

Chairman Rackow stated that Marcus Cable had enough confidence in the market without the upgrade being demanded as part of the franchise agreement. This is a departure from normal practice, the Chairman said.

Mr. Ebenhoe also reported to the Commission that Charter will soon offer HDTV in five markets in the country. He predicts the service will be available in Wisconsin in 2003, perhaps including the Stevens Point area.

Telecommunications Coordinator Quirk asked how HDTV will be delivered?

Mr. Ebenhoe said it will be launched on the premium tier. He further stated Charter does not have the details yet on HDTV package, just the capability of delivering HDTV. Mr. Ebenhoe also said that Charter will use the FCC news release dated March 14, 2002, to stop paying franchise fees on cable modem and Internet access services.

Chairman Rackow suggested doing a news release to this effect.

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

The next Telecommunications Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23, 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 Walther seconded, to adjourn into closed session.

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

Nays: None. Motion carried.

6. Adjournment - 7:45 P.M.

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