

Cable TV Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 9, 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 February 9, 2021 at 7:03 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 Jeffrey Cutler. Harbor Media Executive Director Michelle Balconi, Director of Operations Adam Sayre and Board of Director President Laura Burns were also present. In addition, former Hingham School Committee Member and present Board Member of the Hingham Sports Partnership, Ray Estes attended the meeting. Christopher Baron and Superintendent Paul Austin of the Hingham Public Schools were not present.

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 January 13, 2021 meeting. Chairman Jones requested comments from Committee members. There were no comments noted.

A motion was made by Jeffrey Cutler to approve the January 13, 2021 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 noted that there were no new open requests and proceeded to the next topic on the agenda.
5. Chairman Jones introduced the next agenda topic for discussion relating to an update regarding the Hingham Sports Partnership's initiative surrounding live Town of Hingham sports broadcasts. Mr. Jones introduced former Hingham School Committee Member and present Board Member of the Hingham Sports Partnership ("HPS"), Ray Estes, to the meeting. Mr. Estes thanked the Committee for the time allotted for him over the past several months.

Mr. Estes next thanked Harbor Media representatives Ms. Balconi and Mr. Sayre for allowing sports content to be aired on the cable channels. Per Mr. Estes, the Hingham Athletic Department has been live streaming various games almost on a daily basis and the HSP is looking forward to continuing discussions with Harbor

Media to expand and improve the amount of sports programming available. Ms. Balconi agreed with Mr. Estes comments. She noted that recently a boys' varsity basketball game was successfully live streamed on one of the cable channels.

Mr. Estes next updated the Committee on the HSP's grant to purchase new camera equipment to enhance the live streaming of games. Per Mr. Estes, the new camera equipment should be received next week. Based upon this milestone, he requested Harbor Media to investigate the Comcast "drop" connections at the high school to ensure optimal viewing opportunities. This is especially important since the next seasons are about to commence including football, dance team, indoor track, etc.

Vice Chairman Rice asked whether Harbor Media is able to post previous live streamed games to YouTube. Ms. Balconi stated that they are not able to at this moment, but agreed to address in the future. Mr. Estes noted that the games are uploaded to YouTube by the Hingham High School Athletic Department (Note: HSP only acts in an advisory role and assists in future initiatives regarding the matter). Mr. Estes next requested from the Committee additional information including (1) Background and support surrounding the status of broadcast capabilities at all of the schools in Hingham and (2) Resources and funding for broadcasts from Harbor Media. Discussion ensued.

In response for the inquiry on additional funding, Mr. Leary discussed the current Comcast and Verizon revenue allocations to Harbor Media and the School system. Per Mr. Leary, 95% of the revenue is sent directly to Harbor Media (per contract) with the remainder utilized to partially fund a teacher position at the high school relating to a video production class. The Committee discussed the potential to utilize students in the production classes to assist in recording games, but noted that in the past that the results were mixed at best. Mr. Jones suggested that HSP consider funding Harbor Media to hire contractors to record and broadcast games. Mr. Estes agreed to discuss with the HSP Board of Directors. Ms. Balconi volunteered that Harbor Media would also be willing to provide training for individuals recording games. A brief discussion commenced on current methods of recording game including the "Huddle" service utilized by Hingham coaches for the college recruiting process, game review with players, etc.

Based upon the above, the Committee agreed to various next steps. Specifically, Mr. Cutler and Mr. Sayre volunteered to perform a review of the Hingham Public Schools' capability to provide live broadcast recordings. Mr. Estes agreed to reach out to current Hingham School Committee members to participate in the initiative. Mr. Estes discussion and presentation ended at 7:38 PM.

6. Chairman Jones introduced the next topic of discussion relating to Harbor Media programming initiatives. Per Mr. Jones, he just received the monthly programming chart from Director of Operations Sayre and will upload to the website in the near future. Mr. Jones next invited Executive Director Balconi to provide an overview of Harbor Media's efforts during the last month regarding the Public, Education, and Government channels. Ms. Balconi informed that Committee that Harbor Media has produced a number of production pieces on the Public channel including the following: (1) Local food trucks (2) Winter farmers market overview and (3) Climate change interviews with a variety of ten Hingham residents.

Next Ms. Balconi provided an update on the Education channel including the Hingham Public School production class at the high school. Per Ms. Balconi, the current introductory production class offered extra credit to students to entice the creation of content for Harbor Media. Unfortunately, this initiative did not produce any submissions. A discussion ensued including the need to require the creation of content in the high school class curriculum. Ms. Balconi stated that she is currently accumulating data regarding Harbor Media's effort to support the high school classes to utilize in the future. Recording Secretary Leary suggested that future funding of the teacher position could be formalized to ensure that programming content is a condition of the support. The Committee agreed to consider the formalization of the funding for the next fiscal year budget of the schools.

Ms. Balconi next reviewed the Government channel programming. She informed the Committee that Harbor Media is now able to utilize "Zoom to Live" capability for Town Committee meetings. She further discussed Selectman Mary Powers efforts on producing a series on Town of Hingham finances. Per Ms. Balconi, this series will have about 20 videos, which will be produced about two segments a week.

Vice Chairman Rice introduced a discussion surrounding community production of content for airing on the cable channels. In response to the discussion, Executive Director Balconi stated various content has been provided by Brigham and Women's Hospital and South Shore Health including videos surrounding Covid19, vaccine, cardiac and women's health. Further, the Hingham Unity Council also has produced two programs. After additional inquiry from Mr. Rice, Ms. Balconi clarified that the majority of the above content still has Harbor Media involvement in the production process. She also stated that Harbor Media's goal is to not create a financial barrier for public access. However, they are allowing paid sponsorship for profit-oriented companies such as Hingham Physical Therapy, and Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Ms. Balconi continued the discussion with additional examples of community produced programming including content from the Hingham Senior Center's workout and exercise shows and recent productions of a local puppet show that focused on racism and stress. Unfortunately, other members have curtailed submissions due to concerns with the coronavirus. Further, Ms. Balconi stated that Harbor Media plans on increasing outreach to the Hingham Public Library for future content. Mr. Rice suggested the use of grants from Harbor Media to various organizations to entice content.

In relationship to the Committee's discussion on programming, Mr. Estes gave an overview of a recent HSP production aired on Zoom surrounding college athletics. This recent Zoom meeting had four college athletes from Hingham share their experiences including the recruitment process, team practices and classes at the colleges/universities that they have attended. Based upon the success of the production, Mr. Estes inquired whether Harbor Media would be interested in broadcasting the program on the cable channels. Ms. Balconi thanked Mr. Estes and agreed that this type of programming will be aired and compared this cooperation to similar efforts by the Hingham League of Women Voters.

7. Due to the absence of Superintendent Austin, the Hingham Public School update was postponed to the next Committee meeting.

8. Chairman Jones next requested a finance update from Recording Secretary Leary. Mr. Leary stated that he is currently awaiting information from the Town of Hingham to perform a quarterly review of income and expenses. In addition, he stated that he is still awaiting feedback regarding some of the suggested classification issues previously communicated on the Town of Hingham trail balances on accounts #2009 and #2020. Mr. Leary next requested 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 completed and expects financial statements to be approved by the Board of Directors and issued in the next couple of days. She elaborated that an additional extension will not be required.

Since the financial statements will be completed soon, Harbor Media will commence the preparation of the materials outlined in the contract with the Town of Hingham and Harbor Media over the next 30 days. This includes improved reporting on inventory utilizing the Isaac bar coding system. The discussion then shifted to the upcoming review of Harbor Media's operations as outlined in the contract with the Town of Hingham. Per Vice Chairman Rice, the Town Administrator, Tom Mayo, decided to choose a different vendor to perform the review. In previous Committee meetings, Mr. Rice had suggested a contractor affiliated with the Nantucket cable system. Mr. Mayo informed Mr. Jones and Mr. Rice that he has chosen a representative from the Town of Newton's cable system "New TV". Further debate ensued including the need for executive sessions for future Harbor Media contract discussions.

Mr. Leary concluded the finance discussion by reminding members that the Committee 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 with the statement by Mr. Leary and volunteered to set up a meeting with Mr. Mayo and Selectman Mary Powers.

9. The next agenda item introduced by Chairman Jones related to the Town of Hingham infrastructure update. Mr. Cutler updated the Committee regarding the data closet project located at the Hingham Town Hall. Per Mr. Cutler and Mr. Sayre informed the Committee that the old equipment should be completely removed this month. There were no other matters discussed regarding this topic.
10. Chairman Jones opened discussions for any other matters to be presented to the Committee. Mr. Cutler and Mr. Jones informed the Committee that they will be attending a meeting this month with Ms. Balconi regarding the creation of a program on Alzheimer's disease. Mr. Cutler will also be meeting with Mr. Sayre in March to learn additional information regarding how to produce this initiative. After this short discussion, there were no other topics brought up for review.

Mr. Jones recommended that the next meeting date be held on Tuesday March 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.

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

A motion was made to adjourn by Jeff Cutler and seconded by Vice Chairman John Rice. All voting members present were in agreement with the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Submitted for review to the Cable TV Advisory Committee on February 12, 2021 by Recording Secretary Michael Leary.

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