

Town of Ayer

Cable Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes for October 31, 2022, 8:30am on Zoom

Attendance: Scott Kurland (Chair); Jannice Livingston (Vice Chair); Janet Providakes; Julie Murray; Chief Brian Gill

Also in Attendance: Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager; Attorney William Hewig, Town Counsel

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 8:30am by S. Kurland on Zoom.

S. Kurland reads the following remote participation statement:

*Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, in accordance with Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law (OML), public bodies otherwise governed by the OML are temporarily relieved from the requirement that meetings be held in public places, open and physically accessible to the public, so long as measures are taken to ensure public access to the bodies' deliberations "through adequate, alternative means." This meeting will be live on Zoom. The public may participate remotely by joining Zoom (**Meeting ID# 813 1850 5727**) or by calling (**646-931-3860**). For additional information about remote participation, please contact Carly Antonellis, Assistant Town Manager at atm@ayer.ma.us or 978-772-8220 ext. 100 prior to the meeting*

Review and Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes (September 26, 2022 and September 29, 2022):

The Committee reviewed the meeting minutes from September 26, 2022 and September 29, 2022.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Livingston and seconded by J. Providakes to approve the meeting minutes for September 26, 2022 and September 29, 2022. **Motion Passed (5-0)** by roll call vote as follows: S. Kurland, Y; J. Livingston, Y; J. Providakes, Y; J. Murray, Y; Chief Gill, Y

Initial Review and Discussion of the Cable Survey Results:

S. Kurland provided an overview of the results of the Cable Survey. There were 240 responses, and he is still compiling the handwritten responses. It appears that some of the online respondents were not from the Town of Ayer. A majority of the respondents stated

that PEG (Public, Education, Government Programming) is important to them. Old movies, sports, and news were important.

J. Murray stated that there is an important data point on Question 4 and she would like to see the breakdown with cable versus the internet.

S. Kurland stated that on Question 7, the pricing package is very important and many respondents would like a Senior/Veteran/Medical discount. He further stated that Question 9 breaks down the issues and Question 10 shows the main demographic of the respondents was 35-44 years of age. Respondents also indicated that they would like "a la carte" channel programming.

J. Providakes stated that people just want specific channels or services. They get a whole bunch of channels they either do not watch or do not care about.

J. Murray stated that she would like to see a breakdown of all of the data from the survey.

W. Hewig stated that the most significant aspect of the responses is the complaints and problems with Comcast and whether customers were on hold for more than thirty minutes as this is a breach of Comcast's license agreement. We should compile all of the complaints/problems and get Comcast to fix them. The data should be made as raw as possible

S. Kurland stated that he will further compile all of the results in a final format for review and discussion by the Committee at a future meeting.

Discussion and Plan for Next Steps in the Ascertainment Process:

S. Kurland stated that we will need to set up a date for the Ascertainment Hearing and the Committee should consider what questions we anticipate being asked.

J. Providakes stated that people think internet when talking cable. We need to define and distinguish between the two.

Chief Gill stated that we should invite Verizon and invite Breezeway so that we are on record of inviting them even if they do not or will not attend.

W. Hewig stated that he and R. Pontbriand will write the appropriate letter(s) to invite them.

Chief Gill stated that the public needs to understand that Comcast has a monopoly on service in Town. The Ayer Police Department has had horrible service and I know a lot of businesses in Town that have as well. The importance of cable and the connectivity to the internet needs to be stressed.

W. Hewig stated that the public hearing can be seen as a “bully pulpit” to air all these concerns. Comcast will be there, and they do not want bad publicity.

W. Hewig continued that at the public hearing we will want to present what you want. It does not have to be fine-tuned. This is a sales pitch opportunity to persuade Comcast; persuade the public; and persuade the Select Board.

S. Kurland stated that APAC needs another full-time position.

R. Pontbriand suggested that the Committee needs to finalize the survey results; develop a budget and list of wants from Comcast; and develop a presentation before a date for the public hearing is set.

S. Kurland stated that we should have a target date for the end of November or beginning of Decembers.

W. Hewig stated that the public hearing is legally required to be published at least two weeks before the public hearing takes place.

J. Providakes stated that we need to clearly understand and explain what cable gives us; what the benefits of public cable access are; and educate the public.

Scheduling of Next Meeting:


The Committee scheduled its next meeting for Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 8:30am on Zoom.

Motion: A motion was made by J. Providakes and seconded by J. Murray to adjourn the meeting at 9:30am. **Motion passed (5-0)** by roll call vote as follows: S. Kurland, Y; J. Livingston, Y; J. Providakes, Y; J. Murray, Y; Chief Gill, Y.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30am.

Minutes recorded and submitted by R. Pontbriand, Town Manager

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Cable Advisory Committee on November 29, 2022.

Signed:  11/29/2022
Robert A. Pontbriand
Town Manager