

**Office of the Select Board
Office of the Town Manager**



Town of Ayer | Ayer Town Hall | 1 Main Street | Ayer, MA 01432 | 978-772-8220 | www.ayer.ma.us

January 18, 2023

Ayer Cable Advisory Committee
Ayer Town Hall -1 Main Street
Ayer, MA 01432

RECEIVED
JAN 18 2023

TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK

Re: Importance of Public Access Television to the Town of Ayer Municipal Government

Dear Ayer Cable Advisory Committee,

As the Ayer Cable Advisory Committee prepares to enter negotiations with COMCAST for a successor cable license agreement, I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the integral importance of public access television to the Town of Ayer's municipal government operations and to encourage the Committee to ask for a reasonable increase in funding in this next cable license for the purposes of expanding the capacity and capabilities of the Ayer Public Access Corporation (APAC).

Without question, public access television as provided by APAC on the PEG (public, education, and governmental) channels is essential for an informed, participatory, and vibrant Town of Ayer. The televised coverage of the Town's various elected, appointed, and volunteer boards, committees, and commission is essential for the public to be informed about the operations, decisions, and events of their local government. This is a cornerstone of good government and transparent government. It also enables members of the community who may not be able to physically attend a meeting to stay informed and involved. Additionally, by recording public meetings and deliberations this creates a permanent, video record of the meeting proceedings which becomes an invaluable record and resource.

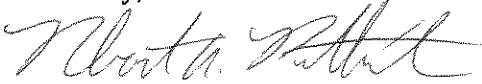
In March of 2020, the importance of public access television became even more apparent as COVID-19 propelled the world into a global pandemic. It was at this moment as cities and towns such as Ayer scrambled to put together the appropriate communication plans to ensure that not only the public were informed but that they could participate remotely and safely. It was at this time that APAC working closely with the Town of Ayer's I.T. and Facilities Department developed a robust remote public participation system of which the capabilities of APAC were essential and made possible by an ongoing investment in public access television.

One of the key lessons of the pandemic has been that we must continue to invest in the capacity and capabilities of public access television and APAC. As we enter this post-pandemic world, rising costs, inflation, and the expanding needs of public access require that we modestly increase our financial support and commitment to public access and APAC for the next ten years. To do that, the contract proposals of the Ayer Cable Advisory Committee to modestly increase funding to a level which equates to approximately a .96 cent increase per subscriber per month is a realistic investment in the future of public access, APAC, and the Town of Ayer.

In conclusion, I support the efforts and proposals of the Ayer Cable Advisory Committee designed to not only maintain the important level of public access television services to the community but to further expand and develop public access programming for the Town of Ayer over the next decade. In doing so, we will also be ensuring a transparent, participatory, educated, and vibrant Town of Ayer.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert A. Pontbriand".

Robert A. Pontbriand
Town Manager

Cc: Ayer Select Board