

# A.9.C.C.

Area 9 Cable Council, 17 Crawford Road, Westport, CT 06880

www.a9cc.org

**TO: A9CC MEMBERS** **February 16, 2017**  
**FROM: Hal Levy for Judith Freedman, Secretary**  
**RE: MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 15, 2017 MEETING IN DARIEN**

**ATTENDANCE:**

Darien: Jim Cameron, David Dever, Marc Marin

Easton: Doug Dempsey

Greenwich:

New Canaan: Roman Cebulski

Norwalk:

Redding:

Stamford:

Weston: Don Saltzman, Harvey Bellin

Westport: Hal Levy, Jennifer Cirino

Wilton: Phil Sharlach

Altice:

Ed Committee:

Guests: John Amarillos, Catherine Beckmann, Mike Wheeler (Darien)

Excused: Andy Anderson (Easton); Susan Morris, Stu Reider (Greenwich); Bob Moran (Redding); Stan Witkow, Judi Freedman (Westport); Gary Battaglia (Wilton); Jennifer Young (Altice)

Chairman Hal Levy called the meeting to order at 6:07pm with six towns represented.

1. **Minutes** of December 14, 2016 meeting were approved as written.
2. **Financial Report** from the Treasurer was distributed, discussed and approved.
3. **Updates on old business:**
  - The 2016 A9CC Annual Report was filed with PURA on 1/10/2017 and sent to CEO's & schools superintendents.
  - \$2,000 invoice for council operations & \$100,000 for 2017 access funding was sent to Altice and both have been paid. Altice also made a \$1,500 payment to A9CC to be used for 2017 EAAA trophies
  - 2016 I-Net reports requested by 2/1/17 have not received from the following: E: Easton, New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Stamford, Weston, Wilton; G: Greenwich, Stamford. These have missed the deadline for filing with PURA. Can still submit in order to qualify for grants.
  - Member appointments: No appointments made for E-> Easton/Redding, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford; G-> Stamford, Norwalk.
  - Marchese v Cablevision Set-Top Box Class Action Suit: Customer credits have started being issued for subscribers who filed claim by deadline of 9/23/2016. Altice notified subscribers of settlement by mail and A9CC publicized claim process on its web site.
4. **2016 Access Grant Program:** The funding pool is approximately \$11K in leftover funds + \$100K in 2016 CV funds + \$44K in anticipated 2017 U-Verse funds. The Council approved a motion to make \$154,000 available for E&G access grants with \$77,000 each going to Govt. grants and Educ. grants whereby the Educ. Committee will determine how to award Educ. funds with final approval by the entire Council no later than the Monday before the September meeting. If there is a second round of grants, Education applications will have a deadline of the Monday before the October meeting.

It was further moved and approved to create ten \$7,700 Govt. grants with a maximum of \$2,500 for operations with an application deadline of the Monday before the Annual Meeting. If there is a second round of grants, Government applications will have a deadline of the Monday before the December meeting.

5. **Discussion on future access funding:** There was discussion regarding the issue of the 2-year shortfall in PEG spending by Altice and future access funding. As noted at the December meeting, Altice was to submit a plan to remedy the shortfall. The company has not formally presented a plan however they have indicated verbally that they favor the option of petitioning PURA to reduce the \$5.85 support cost per subscriber because fewer P.A. producers are using the studio and produce their videos at home. The current funding of \$5.85 by Altice is well below the average of \$7.76 in Connecticut. Although a vote was not taken by the Council since no plan has formally been presented, the members favored a remedy which included a combination of increased E&G funding for the town-specific channels as well as utilizing funds to build the infrastructure which would create the ability for Public Access producers to electronically distribute videos to the headend instead of hand carrying tapes. Part of increased E&G funding might be used for relocation of I-Net sites to correspond to current studio locations.
6. **WFSB Network carriage dispute with Altice:** WFSB (channel 3) was pulled from the Optimum channel lineup in January due to inability of the two parties to come to agreement on a rate escalation sought by WFSB. This has left the Litchfield system without any CBS programming. The Norwalk & Bridgeport systems still get CBS programming on channel 2. Altice is providing CBS All Access to its subscribers free for a month. Harvey B expressed the concern that Connecticut-specific news shows have been lost but Jim C pointed out that this programming is carried on Sundays on CT-N, which is still available to all subscribers.

Altice has dropped NECN (New England Cable News Ch 115). This is a result of a normal review where the company drops some networks & adds others from its lineup. e.g. the recent addition of I-24 News on channel 102. Comcast-owned NECN describes its broadcast area as Massachusetts, eastern Connecticut, central Connecticut, Vermont, Maine & New Hampshire.

## 7. **Other Matters**

Doug D inquired if the infrastructure upgrade was completed for Easton E. As there is no active E member from Easton, nobody was able to verify this.

It was pointed out that the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is initiating law suits against access programmers that don't provide closed captioning on their programs. There are questions whether Access Program are required to have closed captioning under ADA. The Alliance for Community Media (ACM) has scheduled Webinars on the topic. A9CC is a "Community Member" of ACM which does not provide for discounts to its Webinars.

Harvey B brought up the issue of inconsistent audio levels on the access channels. There was discussion on using audio level limiters.

Jen C read a letter from the parent of a Weston student extolling the Educational Access Awareness contest run by A9CC.

The next A9CC meeting has been rescheduled from 4/5 to 4/12.

Meeting adjourned at 7:38

Future meetings: 4/12/2017 in New Canaan; 5/31/2017 TBD