

A.N.C.C.

Area Nine Cable Council c/o Wilton HS, 395 Danbury Rd, Wilton, CT 06897 www.westportct.net/ancc

TO: ANCC MEMBERS **December 4, 2009**
FROM: Carole Young-Kleinfeld
RE: MINUTES OF MEETING (December 2, 2009, at WHS Library)

ATTENDANCE:

Darien: David Dever, Jim Cameron
Easton:
Greenwich: Paul Curtis
New Canaan: Paul Sedlak
Norwalk: Herb Grant
Redding: Robert Moran
Stamford: Geza Ziegler, Mike Pensiero
Weston: Harvey Bellin, Don Saltzman
Westport: Hal Levy
Wilton: John Repicky, Carole Young-Kleinfeld, Lisa Bogan
Cablevision: Jennifer Young, Mike Chowaniec

Excused: Roger Williams (New Canaan), Phyllis Bolden (Norwalk), Stu Reider (Greenwich), Diana Paladino (Norwalk), Andy Anderson (Easton), Marge Costa (Norwalk), Judith Freedman (Westport).

Public: John Savarese (Wilton)

Hal Levy called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM. Thanked Lisa Bogan, Carole Young-Kleinfeld, and John Repicky for hosting the meeting in Wilton. HL welcomed Mike Chowaniec (Cablevision) to the meeting, as he will be attending for JY while she is temporarily absent on maternity leave.

HL announced John Repicky's retirement and resignation from the ANCC after January 1. The group thanked John for his years of dedicated service to the group, his skilled leadership of the Educational Access subcommittee, his expert handling of the grant program for the council, and for his inspirational influence on students through the years. LB read a tribute to John from her son, a freshman in college. The group will miss John's involvement and wish him all the best in his retirement.

1. The minutes of October 21, 2009 were approved with one abstention.

2. The financial report from the Treasurer was distributed, discussed, and approved.

Checking account balance—operating funds-- is \$8,821.53. Escrow account (grants account) balance is \$24,392.33 with three grants to Darien, Greenwich, and Wilton approved at last meeting but pending submission of invoices.

3. Old business

- Cablevision's petition to the FCC for a waiver of the prohibition on encryption of the basic service tier, including PEG channels, in its NYC franchise areas prompted the ANCC to file comment to the FCC. The ANCC expressed concerns over the precedent this waiver would provide, its adverse impact on community access channels, and costs of additional equipment

for CT cable customers. Cablevision has replied to comments to the FCC and has made several offers of conversion boxes to affected customers in their New York market, including offers to low-income customers, MSG varsity schools, and analog customers. ANCC to watch for an FCC decision.

- Alliance for Community Media--CT Chapter of the ACM-NE Region held its first organizational meeting at the ACM Regional Conference. Five officers were installed and several workshops were offered. JC, DD, CYK, and SR represented the Area Nine Cable Council at the conference. JC moderated a workshop panel discussion. JC and PC reminded the group about FCC cases pending and federal legislation that has been introduced (CT's U.S. Representative John Larson as a co-sponsor) that the PEG community should support. DS reminded the group about the strong lobbying presence of cable companies and telecoms in Hartford and in Washington.

The ACM has an online service to make contacting legislators easy. www.ourchannels.org

- Member appointments: letters of appointment needed from Easton and Stamford.

4. New Business:

Cablevision Rate Hikes: HL presented an analysis of the CV rate hikes, noting the increase of 3.7% system-wide overall, but with specific increases of 5.7% for Family service, a charge of \$14.95/month for new HBO orders, and removal of HBO from iO Silver service (replaced with Showtime). HL's analysis is posted on the ANCC website. JC, DS, HL questioned the rationale for increases when CV reported revenues to be at all-time high. JY noted the costs of acquiring programming and that the justification is explained in detail in customer service calls. The cable TV industry became de-regulated years ago with the entry of competitors into the industry.

5. Carriage of The Connecticut Network (CT-N) on AT&T U-Verse

HL reviewed the recent passage of the state budget and its last minute additions. A section was added to the law that allowed a one-time transfer of \$150,000 from the PEGPETIA fund to AT&T, specifically to allow CT-N to interconnect with AT&T. At the same time, the budget bill repealed the mandate for companies like AT&T, Cablevision, Comcast, and other cable companies to carry CT-N at all—which several members of the Council found perplexing in light of the transfer of funds, and disturbing considering ANCC's past efforts to acquire a dedicated CT-N channel for Area Nine viewers in the past. HL noted that, at the urging of the ANCC, the CT legislature and others, Cablevision voluntarily provided a dedicated channel for its subscribers several years ago, before being required to do so.

6. Grant Applications

The ANCC reviewed 3 grant applications from Westport, New Canaan, and Weston. JR reminded Darien, Greenwich, and Wilton to submit their vouchers for payment ASAP—even if the purchase of equipment is incomplete-- to allow him to complete his report to Cablevision by December 15.

- Westport's grant for \$1867.80 was approved.
- New Canaan's grant for \$1679.54 for equipment was approved with discussion about the need for a clearer definition of equipment.
- Weston's grant request for equipment to enable more remote programming in its G-channel was approved in the amount of \$2116.

7. Presentation from Jim Cameron—Darien Community Channel (G-Access Channel 79)

JC described the variety of programming that he and DD include on Darien's G-channel—every major board and commission is televised, the Darien League of Women Voters' government-related events, town hearings, PSAs, and interviews with town employees. One popular segment was a recent interview with the Chief of Police about the handling of parking tickets in Darien Center.

Since the towns of Area Nine all have basic audio/video equipment, JC urges each town to focus on increasing content on each G-channel. CYK raised the on-going problem of paying videographers for actual recording of town events and observed that payment of personnel—camera operators, attorney fees, and chief executive officer salary—are allowable expenditures for the 3rd party access provider in Area Two, but payment for camera operators in Area Nine is not an allowable expenditure. JY noted that it was a CT DPUC decision not to allow Area Nine access grants to be used for personnel, other than for repair or installation of equipment.

Except for JC and DD themselves, Darien does not use volunteer camera operators. Instead, they have a group of several trained adult camera operators, supervised by JC and DD and paid by the town, to record Channel 79 programs. Darien also has a 5-person advisory group to its Government Access Channel to set direction and priorities for the channel. Although New Canaan provides approximately \$10,000 in the town budget for its G-channel, PS reported that their town also has a 6-person fundraising organization—a 501 (c) (3) organization—to raise funds for additional personnel costs for video recording.

8. Other Business

- HL will prepare the ANCC Annual Report for Cablevision to include in their yearly report to the CT DPUC. He reminds ANCC members to ask their towns to send him their I-Net Report for 1/1/09-12/31/09--form to be found on ANCC website—ASAP after the close of the year.
- GZ raised a question about Channel 612 being “down”.
- DS noted that AT&T, as the other CVFA holder in Area Nine besides Cablevision, is collecting community access subscriber fees, as mandated by state law, but is not disbursing these funds to Area Nine municipalities yet. The CT DPUC mandates that these fees be provided to community access providers (CAPs). DS recommends that the DPUC require AT&T to follow the practice of Cablevision by transferring these to the Area Nine Cable Council for disbursement to the 10 towns in the region.
- Next Meeting: 2/10/10 in Darien

Respectfully Submitted,

Carole Young-Kleinfeld, Secretary, ANCC
December 5, 2009