

## Cable TV Committee Meeting Minutes – March 6, 2026

Present: Richard Rhames, Councilor Pat Boston, Kathryn, Lou Belanger, Jim Emerson, John Collins (Remote), Danica Lamontagne

Guest: Truc Dever, City Manager

Excused: Jill Newman

Meeting called to order 10:05 AM.

### 2.a Committee Introductions

Members introduced themselves and shared their interest in or history with Public Access.

Member explained how to access Channel 3 and 85 via streaming

### 2.b Review Committee Guide

The staff liaison shared the following overview of the Committee Guide:

- All communications sent and received about the Committee are public records and someone can request access to them
  - If you are using your personal email, cc: [archive@biddefordmaine.org](mailto:archive@biddefordmaine.org) when emailing anything related to the committee
  - Assume that anything you say over email about the Committee is not private
- More than two members gathering and discussing Committee business is considered a public meeting and has to be publicly noticed. This includes “replying all” to an email.
- There is an expectation that members should check their emails at least weekly, and more frequently in the days leading up to a scheduled meeting.
- Individual email addresses are not published on the City website. Members of the public can send an email to [cabletvcommittee@biddefordmaine.org](mailto:cabletvcommittee@biddefordmaine.org) and it will be forwarded to the email address that we have on file for you.
- Criteria for virtual participation in meetings per State law:
  - Emergency (weather), illness, physical condition, distance
  - Inform staff liaison and chair in advance if you will be participating remotely

- All meetings are recorded via Teams – keep in mind that all comments made in the meeting are on record and will be captured and stored on our website
- Members of the committee are not authorized to speak on behalf of the committee unless they were designated to do so by an act of the committee that took place at a public meeting. Media inquiries should be forwarded to the staff liaison to address.

### **2.c Election of Chair/Secretary**

Motion by Pat, seconded by Lou, that the Staff Liaison will serve in a secretary role for the Committee. Vote is unanimous.

Motion by Jim, Seconded by Lou, to nominate Richard as chair. Richard accepted the nomination. Vote is unanimous.

### **2.d Review Committee Ordinance**

- Historically become members of Alliance for Community Media, Community Television Association of Maine, and other organizations.
- Members asked about meeting archives (minutes, etc) – staff liaison said they would look for minutes from the last meeting of the committee and share them.
- Richard encouraged people to look at whole ordinance
- John – conversation of whether this is available to people who don't have cable and if not, how to make it so they do have access
- Jim shared fund accounting standpoint about public access
- Danica will reach out to CivicPlus for information about the cost of streaming Public Access through the website

### **2.e Public Access Director Job Description**

The Staff Liaison shared that the Public Access Director will be retiring at the end of March. She shared a job description that was provided by Human Resources, which is dated 2002. She explained that there were two functions of the role that were added to a proposed revised job description: a reference to the Director's role in ensuring that City Committee, Board and Commission meetings are televised, and a reference to assisting City staff with developing video programming. These two functions are a part of the role as it currently exists and align with priorities expressed by the Council.

Richard shared that the last time the City hired a Public Access Director, they did a national search in collaboration with the Alliance for Community Media.

The City Manager asked the Committee to look at next steps as though they are the start of a new program. The group should look at the value and reach of the program and determine how people will engage if we invest in it. The Committee serves in an advisory role to the City Council and can bring forward recommendations, but the Council will ultimately make the determination of funding. Any proposed ordinance changes would be reviewed by the Policy Committee. Without a clear vision and objectives of where we want to go, it will be hard to hire for this position.

John said that the conversations during the meeting were bringing up more questions for him, such as: What extent do we want to reach the community as large? How do young people and families access media? Do we need to change the name of the Committee to reference something other than cable? Do we need Spectrum? Where does equipment come from?

Richard replied that he does not advise parting from Spectrum because of the franchise fees. The City gets a sustaining funding mechanism from Spectrum paid by subscribers to run the channel (5% of their revenues from cable subscriptions in Biddeford). Danica explained how the fees are used for staff salaries and building maintenance.

Pat said that the staffing change is an opportunity for determining how we can serve the middle-age population in a different method.

Richard said that part of a Public Access job should be media education.

Lou would love to see a radio station out of this building. He feels that everything should originate here and spiral out. If programming is developed for cable but is also shared on the city website or on YouTube, he believes his children would tune in.

The City Manager said that we can leave this position vacant temporarily and the Committee can come up with a recommendation of what the position could be and bring that to the City Council. Danica shared an interim plan to keep the channel running while the Director position is vacant. She is waiting for a piece of equipment that is on order to be delivered, and once it is installed, programming can be uploaded to the channel via the new Castus box located in the Council Chambers.

Pat asked whether the high school or UNE do anything with media education and if partnering with existing programs could be a helpful short-term solution to supplementing the channel with content while the position is vacant.

John clarified that he is not saying we throw out the current model but wants to look for opportunities beyond it to be able to meet people where they are

The City Manager clarified that she is not advocating for getting rid of a public access channel. She said that there is a lot of value of having a studio that can push out information from the city and personnel that can assist with that, and that content can be shared in other places in addition to on television.

Jim said that the City needs to look at this topic during the budget process. Due to a change in accounting, past revenues from the franchise agreement were effectively rolled into General Fund.

Danica shared the downward trend of franchise fee amounts. The revenue was originally \$300K just three or four years ago, but is now at about \$240K.

Richard said we should not assume that funds will completely dwindle.

Kathryn said that we can't change what is already done but can have an optimistic outlook moving forward.

Jim shared past decision regarding the franchise agreement renegotiation. While the current franchise agreement is technically expired, it was believed that renegotiating would result in less favorable terms for the City, so we are currently operating under the expired agreement.

Richard would like Tony Vigue to come talk to Committee.

### **3.a Schedule Next Meeting**

Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 4:30 PM at Public Access Building

Motion by Kathryn, seconded by Pat, to adjourn. Meeting Adjourned at 12:25.