Medford Community Access TV Committee Report

Allison Goldsberry, Secretary, Father Chip Hines, Chair, Fred Laskey

Our mission as it was given to the Committee was to give the Mayor a recommendation as to how the City of Medford could go forward with Cable Access. The Committee was not charged with how to implement that recommendation and we were not assured that the recommendation would be implemented as presented. Nobody on the Committee has a problem with that.

After visiting several Access Stations, viewing many websites, holding three public meetings, soliciting comments online, and talking with numerous interested citizens, the Cable Committee has come up with a set of recommendations for Mayor Michael McGlynn. This recommendation is in no way the only way you could go; it is the collective opinion of the Committee with input from the public. We encourage the Mayor will act in a timely fashion.

Research and Station Visits

The Committee visited and/or spoke with the following places:

Everett, Reading, Woburn, Malden, Melrose and the Chevalier Theater

We are making our recommendations based upon what we saw and what was learned during the course of our research.

First we look at governance.

It seems there are only a few ways that Cable Access channels are run. The first is with a Board of Directors of a 501(c)3 and a paid staff. The second and rare way is for it to be run, as in Everett, as a city department. There are plusses and minuses to both ways. The City Department keeps everything in house, it has no board of directors and no members but a staff that produces much of the content. ECTV also is the communications department for the Mayor of Everett and they receive all the PEG money to run the department. It is a decent set up but it requires a budget and a willingness to use the entire PEG money to fund that budget.

With a board of directors and a 501(c)3 with a paid staff you still need money, but the non-profit would also have the ability to raise money and to have members. This version of governance would appear to be the norm as well. It offers the Access Channel the chance to be independent and also seems to have a lot of flexibility.

We would recommend the non-profit 501(c)3 form of governance. We like Woburn's board model, so we are recommending a similar model in which the board of directors be comprised of an appointment by the Mayor, an appointment

from the City Council, an appointment from the School Committee, and one or two elected position from the membership as well as an appointment by the board itself. The initial appointees of the Mayor, the City Council and the School Committee would vote in the additional members to start. The board would number between 5 and 7. The terms of the Board members should be staggered and elections held for officers at least every 3 years. No one should be a Board member for life, so term limits should be in place for the Board members as well as the officers.

We also suggest the new board, when seeking appointments, develop criteria for these appointments, such as, must represent the community, abide by the code of conduct, and support the station mission. This board appointment process is not about banning or excluding people, but picking the right people. Community outreach is an incredibly important aspect of public access and the new board should strive to make these connections and make the station a welcoming place for all.

The board should have 4 officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary) that must be elected annually by the Board. The Board would have by-laws, a strict code of conduct, regular meetings with meeting minutes, and would comply with all of the regulations governing non-profits in MA. If the Code or by-laws were violated, the consequences should be thoughtful but punitive. Safety of members and staff must be paramount. Along with the code of conduct and by-laws, the non-profit should also have a mission statement that clearly and concisely lays out the mission of the non-profit. Membership will be key to the success of the non-profit and so different levels of membership should be offered. All meetings of the Board of Directors should be publicly posted and minutes of all meetings should be published within a reasonable time frame. No meeting of the Board of Directors should be held without a quorum being present. All votes of the Board must require an affirmative approval of a majority of the Board.

The non-profit will need staff and we recommend an executive director, operations manager and an outreach coordinator to start. Staff and officers are non-political. Members can produce political shows. All shows must also follow all the laws that are now enacted in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Producers of shows must sign an agreement that indemnifies the station against libel claims. The station cannot allow the use of copyrighted music and other materials. Board members cannot be compensated for board duties and/or other activities done in connection with their board appointment. Board members and regular members cannot use the station for personal gain. The Board should present an annual report to the ratepayers and city government.

Funding

The Committee feels that for the success of any operation funding is very important. As we are all aware funding makes all the difference. It has become apparent from our site visits and from our conversations with staffs and members that without

adequate funding the Access Channel will not be as successful and as fruitful as it could be. From what we have seen and read it would appear that $500,000 is a floor that needs to be met. The new contract negotiated with the cable providers should try and reflect that. Fundraising would need to be done as well as the institution of membership fees.

We are recommending that the PEG stations be operated together, like they are in the vast majority of communities, to combine resources, staff, and funding to maximize their operations. We feel a combined model would strengthen access in Medford.

We also feel very strongly that the Board should submit to an independent audit annually and that board members appointed by the Mayor, City Council and School Committee should appear before their respective bodies once or twice a year to provide information of the activities of the station and to present the audit information.

Space and Equipment

Space is very important and any space should be large enough to accommodate a studio, editing equipment, storage, a control room, a playback system, and administrative tasks. We recommend that the Mayor reach out to other local stations when the time comes to make equipment purchasing decisions. Woburn offered itself to be a resource in this area. Things to consider include computers, editing software, studio cameras, tripods, audio equipment, a new playback system, lighting, portable cameras, and control room equipment.

Location

The station location is very important. We as a committee feel that the best location will be one that is conveniently and centrally located with its own entrance and exit and should be handicapped accessible. Wherever it is, the Mayor must consider rent or lease costs (if on private property), and how that affects the rest of the budget, which is needed for staff and equipment.

Respectfully submitted by:

Rev. George C. Hines Chair	Mr. Frederick Laskey	Ms. Allison Goldsberry Secretary