



Hudson Community Television Advisory Committee

Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: November 17, 2016

Meeting Location: HCTV Studios, Hudson High School.

In attendance: Michael Coburn, Don Drenski, Jeff Russell, Thor Wasbotten and Nick Zaklanovich.
Ex Officio: Dan Gerbracht and Barbara VanBlarcum, Dr. Dan Williams – Council Liaison.

Not in attendance: John Funyak, A.J. Stokes.

Committee Chair Nick Zaklanovich called the meeting to order at 6:35 P.M. Nick also took notes.

I. Greeting of members and guests

Nick greeted all in attendance. Guests included Mr. Frank Comeriato, Hudson Assistant City Manager for Operations, Mr. Kevin Powell, Hudson Assistant Public Works Manger – Utilities and Mr. Frank Youngwerth, a former committee member.

II. Discussion with Mr. Frank Comeriato & Mr. Kevin Powell

Mr. Powell reported that Station Manager Kerry Paluscsak had an opportunity to retire from the City and exercised that opportunity. As a result, both Station Engineer Dan Gerbracht and Public Access Coordinator Barbara Breedon VanBlarcum will become full time employees of the City and will split up the tasks of the station manager.

Mr. Comeriato said that from what he has seen so far, that the shared management arrangement has been working well and he commended Dan, Barb & Mr. Powell for their good work in addressing the transition. He wanted to let the committee know that the station is and will continue to run well and that a retirement such as Kerry's is an opportunity to make positive changes in the organization going forward.

Dr. Williams added that one of the changes that he sees from the retirement is that the committee will now be much more involved with the operation and said that the membership on the committee will be more enjoyable with an increase in committee involvement.

Mr. Comeriato said that Council president Hal DeSaussure would like to meet with the committee in the near future to discuss the role of the committee, since he was an integral part of the committee when it was first formed twenty years ago.

II. Discussion with Mr. Frank Comeriato & Mr. Kevin Powell, continued

Barb VanBlarcum was also a part of the original committee founding and the separation of the station from the old Cable 9 consortium. The arrangement in the consortium was that Hudson was contributing a large part of the budget, but was not getting the focus coverage of Hudson that the heavy amount of funding should have afforded. HCTV pulled out of the consortium, following the recommendation of the Advisory Committee and the station has grown and prospered ever since.

Meeting guest and former committee chair Frank Youngwerth added that the committee seems to have lost some of the influence that it had when he was on board and he is hopeful that going forward the committee will have a greater presence again.

Thor Wasbotten asked about Kerry's tenure with the station. Dan Gerbracht answered that Kerry had just reached twenty years of service with the City in May 2016. Thor suggested that we make note of Kerry's long service in the meeting notes and that the committee should congratulate him on his retirement and the accomplishments that he made during his long tenure at the station.

Nick added that he was very sad to see Kerry go, that he had worked closely with him for many years and considered him a great leader and a great friend, and that he would miss working with Kerry on a regular basis.

Nick asked Mr. Comeriato and Mr. Powell about the City's position on continuing the HCTV operation. Mr. Comeriato said that the City is committed to sustain the HCTV operation and that both the City administration and City Council see much value in the station operation and want to see it grow and prosper. At the September meeting, the discussions were about sustainability and succession with the station and that plan is still moving forward and continuously improving. However, the income and spending projections for the next five years and beyond due have some ominous signs in them that will require tough decisions, but those decisions will be good decisions that will keep the station viable.

Mr. Comeriato said that feedback he has from the City manager is that the loans that were granted previously for the purchase of the studio cameras and the equipment for the HD upgrade were good loans that were needed, but the practice of borrowing cannot be a regular practice. However, he feels that with Dan & Barb sharing the management of the station that he sees no problem with them keeping the station viable.

Dr. Williams added that from the Council's perspective, it would make absolutely no sense to closing down the HCTV operation. The problem is to how do we move forward, under the financial restraints that are in place with the franchise fees.

Nick said that he felt that the committee now could be more involved in the plans to move the station forward and be more of an asset to the station and the City management. Michael Coburn added that he would like the committee to have a larger roller in the financial portion of station planning. He said that we need to garner more information on the value of the station to the community and if the franchise fees were not there, how much would the citizens be willing to pay to maintain the operation. Michael suggested that the committee might need to look at meeting more often to tackle these difficult subjects and decisions.

Frank Youngwerth said that he thought that a real key is that the committee needs to look at ways to raise funds outside of the franchise fee funding. He said that both Barb & Dan are the new "faces" of HCTV and that he is hopeful that since they are well known in the community that people within the community will be more open to contributing to the funding of the station.

II. Discussion with Mr. Frank Comeriato & Mr. Kevin Powell, continued

Mr. Youngwerth also said that he thinks that the opportunities for soliciting outside funding is at a great time. He also said that we need to go back to the old days when the number of volunteers at the station were plentiful and the recruitment of volunteers needs to be increased. He also said that although we do not measure viewership, through his experience with Good Day in Hudson for all of the years he has hosted the program, all indications are that there is a large viewership out in the community that watch the program, because they comment about it to him when he is out in public.

Thor said that he felt that it really does not matter how many people are watching, the important thing is the relationships that are built between HCTV and the audience. He feels that the future holds that the station is less dependent on 30–60 minute programs, rather a two-minute quick insert is the best way to build relationships. Thor feels that to garner the younger people of the community as viewers, the content has to be shaped to interest them and that would involve serving the community through as many platforms as possible.

III. Approval of Previous Informal Meeting Notes

The draft notes from the September 15, 2016 committee meeting were approved as written and will be posted to the City web site.

IV. Station Management Report - Dan Gerbracht & Barbara VanBlarcum

Dan reported that there are three committee terms that are expiring in January 27, 2017. Dan said that he had talked to A.J. Stokes and he was under the impression that he may have reached the maximum number of terms that can be served on the committee. Nick said that according to the City Charter, the HCTV Advisory Committee has no limit on the number of terms that can be served. With that as the case, A.J. may think about reapplying for membership.

The other two members with terms expiring are Thor & Jeff Russell. Dr. Williams said that Council has not announced the Advisory Committee openings, but will probably do so at the next Council meeting. Dr. Williams said that Council does conduct interviews with all committee applicants. They do so, not so much for Council to meet the candidate, but instead it is a chance for Council to learn about the various City boards & committees and they find that interaction as a valuable tool.

Dan, Barb & Meg Andrus recently took a field trip to Wadsworth Community Television (WCTV) to view their operation. Dan reports that Wadsworth is a very different operation than HCTV. WCTV has three full time employees and two-part time students that produce 150 shows per month. Dan said that they prefer quantity to quality.

Dan said that he learned a lot from the visit to Wadsworth, with many ideas that may be applicable to the HCTV operation. WCTV has a large Public Access volunteer group that regularly produce programming for the community, including many church oriented events and single camera sport shoots of different sporting events.

Dan said that WCTV is funded by franchise fees both from the Time-Warner customers in the service area, but Wadsworth also has their own cable TV service, from which franchise fees also are received. Wadsworth has three channels of programming, and an additional channel for local advertising.

IV. Station Management Report - Dan Gerbracht & Barbara VanBlarcum, continued

Dan said that the studio for WCTV is in with several other city and private operations and that the space used is leased on yearly basis for \$40,000 per year. He also said that WCTV generates a lot of programming with very little equipment. HCTV, by comparison, has much better equipment, but needs to ramp up the amount of produced programming.

Dan said that WCTV staff was happy to receive the visit from the HCTV group and Dan invited the Wadsworth people to a reciprocal visit the HCTV facility when they can. Dan is anxious to keep the newly revived relationship with Wadsworth TV alive and active.

WCTV has five matching Public Access cameras that can be used by the citizens. HCTV has three different types of cameras, which leads to interchange problems. Dan said that he has talked to Kevin Powell from the City about budgeting for 2017 or 2018 for the purchase of matching public access cameras that will make it easier for the Hudson citizens and organizations.

Barb mentioned that WCTV has a bigger community awareness than HCTV and they even give out awards, called "The Clapper" for excellence in public access programming.

Dan said that the upcoming Hudson High School Holiday concerts would be broadcast live this year on December 6, 12 & 15. The concerts will be live streamed for viewing outside of the immediate Hudson area. The Choir Concert will be a problem, as the Board of Education meeting will be going on at the same time, and both events will be recorded by HCTV simultaneously. Dan said that any of the committee members are invited to join in and helping with the production.

Thor asked if a live broadcast, such as the concerts, could be presented live via Facebook Live. Dan said that previous attempts at airing HCTV on Facebook have not been allowed by the city administration. Mr. Powell said that the decision on Facebook should be revisited and that he would contact Jody Roberts, Communications Director for the City to see if the previous restrictions can be lifted.

Thor thought that exposure for the station on Facebook creates new interest and new opportunities for exposure that leads right into the younger generations interests. Frank Youngwerth said that he thought that live streaming was a great thing to grow and expand on.

Dr. Williams added that as new ideas come up during the committee discussions, we should always keep in mind that things change and there may be new opportunities that were not available previously, may now be viable and actionable.

Thor is in favor of the idea of using HCTV for much more in the way of City media communications and would like to see a day when the station is used for all forms of communications that are now distributed via e-mail or telephone. Thor feels that Facebook availability for the station would be a major and that would help greatly in "extending the brand".

Michael asked about training on the camera operation, if he can be available for the upcoming Holiday concerts. Dan said that one-on-one training would be given to all committee members who wish to help.

Mr. Powell asked if the concerts would be available for DVD sale. Dan replied that the holiday concerts are one of the most popular programs that generate DVD sales, many of which are from out of state relatives of the performers.

IV. Station Management Report - Dan Gerbracht & Barbara VanBlarcum, continued

Dan said that looking forward to basketball season, the budget allows for coverage of a reduced number of girls & boys games this season. Dan said that Boy's Coach Jeff Brink and Girls' Coach Dennis Lawler have been contacted to ask what games they think are important to cover. Coach Brink has responded on what games he thinks are important. Coach Lawler has not yet responded with preferred games.

Mr. Powell mentioned that part of the reason for the reduction in basketball coverage this season is that the station will hopefully be expanding to cover other sports, such as Soccer and / or baseball.

Frank Youngwerth asked if there was information on what it costs to produce a sports program. He felt that with that information in hand, it would be possible to solicit underwriters from the community to help with sports production costs. Dan said that he had already heard from some people in the community that were disappointed that basketball coverage on HCTV would be cut back.

Mr. Comeriato said that he has the cost figures for sports broadcast coverage. He said that if the community would like to see more in the way of sports programming, then underwriting from the citizens and the business community would make it possible to increase sports coverage.

Frank Youngwerth mentioned that he had just recently interviewed Mr. Ed Sogan of the Hudson City Schools Foundation for the Good Day program and Mr. Sogan may be someone that may be able to work with the City on sports underwriting.

Dan added that an effort would be made to grow the volunteer stable for the station, in order to reduce the costs of sports coverage. Right now, all but two regular members of the sports production crew are paid employees, whereas Wadsworth has all volunteer crews. Barb added that the Wadsworth sports coverage is definitely not as in depth as the HCTV sports coverage, as they usually only have a single person in their control room doing all of the production work.

Dan said that one of the initiatives in the near future is to clean up the storage area, clean up the studio walls and perhaps freshen up the studio sets that have been in place, unchanged for many years. Mr. Comeriato mentioned that some of the redundant equipment from the station would be offered for sale on the Govdeals web site.

Mr. Comeriato updated the committee on the discussions from the September committee meeting. He said that all of the ideas that came forward at this meeting were well aligned with the directive that he had from City Manager Jane Howington about the direction of the station.

On Monday, November 21 at 12:00 Noon, station and City officials and officials of the Hudson City Schools are meeting with Christina Woolley, who is the curriculum coordinator for the school system concerning Thor's idea for producing a student discussion program for broadcast on HCTV. Superintendent of Schools Phil Herman thought that Ms. Woolley should be the main contact in coordinating the establishment of the discussion program idea. Several school officials attended Thor's last discussion program at Kent State University and they were impressed with what they saw at that event and thought that a similar event could be created at HHS.

Mr. Comeriato added that the City administration's discussions with Superintendent Herman were very positive in regards to broadening the partnership between HCTV and the schools. The partnership with the schools needs to be nurtured and expanded by the committee's focused efforts.

V. Time-Warner / Spectrum Update

Mr. Powell reported that he & Mr. Comeriato had met with Mr. Mark Seidel and Mr. Chris Thomas of Time-Warner Cable, now called Spectrum. The results of that discussion were that the HCTV channel signal distortion problem would be resolved in the first quarter of 2017. Following some discussion, Spectrum has agreed to allow the City to sign an agreement to upgrade the modulation equipment for all three HCTV channels, with a cancellation option if funding does not materialize.

With the anticipated generous grant approval from the Burton D. Morgan Foundation, the City feels that all three channels can be upgraded. The previous committee discussions revolved around going to two channels for the future, but funding looks to be in place to keep and upgrade all three HCTV channels. Mr. Powell said that even if the Morgan grant does not come through, the City should be able to come up with the funds needed to upgrade all three channels.

Mr. Powell mentioned that the Spectrum upgrade project that is currently in place could not be reduced to two channels, without having to go through a new engineering approval process. That was a strong incentive to upgrade all three channels at the same time.

Mr. Comeriato added that he was less than happy with the customer service that was provided by the Spectrum officials during the most recent discussions and he believes that even the Spectrum officials realized how badly they were reacting to the signal distortion problem and finally agreed to work with the City to resolve it.

Thor said that he was happy to hear that the problem will be resolved for all three channels and that HCTV will continue to have three channels of service to the community, which is what we had preferred to do at the beginning of the discussions.

Frank Youngwerth added that in his previous work with the Burton D. Morgan Foundation, they have always been receptive to working with HCTV and he would be surprised if they did not approve the grant application that has been submitted.

Thor said that following his upcoming meeting with school officials and hopefully getting them more involved with HCTV, and if the station is able to provide programming via Facebook Live, he sees a bright future of cooperation with the schools. He also suggested that an opportunity exists to apply for Knight Cities Grant that provides five million dollars per year to Knight served communities, such as the greater Akron area.

Mr. Comeriato said that the grant submitted to the Morgan Foundation included entrepreneurial expansion opportunities, on which the Morgan Foundation is primarily focused. The grant, if approved would cover the cost of the upgrade of the modulation equipment, as well as provide funds for other equipment upgrades to serve the community.

Mr. Comeriato wanted to add some recent news about the Velocity Broadband internet service initiative. Council has decided not to pursue expanding the system to residential customers at this time, but may do so in the future. The business build out for Velocity service will be complete in 2017 for businesses. If and when Velocity service is expanded to residential customers, that move will affect HCTV and the currently provided cable-based service.

V. Time-Warner / Spectrum Update, continued

Michael mentioned that he often hears Kabhir Bhatia reporting on WKSU radio, and noted that Kabhir got his start in the communications field at HCTV. Barb added that Kabhir had volunteered to interview some of the award winners at the recent Academic Hall of Fame Inductions for the High school. Nick said that he marveled at the ability that Kabhir has to quickly come up with subjects for an interview, with very short notice. Nick said that his ability to improvise is a natural talent that Kabhir has and comes by easily. Thor said that Kabhir might be someone that could work with the school system partnership that is trying to be expanded.

VI. Public Access Update – Barbara VanBlarcum

Barbara said that several programs have been produced recently by production volunteers Nick & Allyn, including the Hudson PTO Halloween Window Painting event, the Markillie Cemetery Tour that Mr. Tom Vince lead for Hudson Heritage Association, and the presentation that Mr. Vince made to the Hudson Daughters of the American Revolution concerning the history of women's education in Hudson.

The Genealogy Club has produced some programming covering their monthly meetings. Hudson resident Gene LaMarca has recorded his band, called The Clocktower Band, performing at the Lake Forest Country Club for a Cancer fundraising event.

The Fall Concerts for the Hudson High School Choir, Band and Orchestra, the Parade of Bands band show at Memorial Stadium as well as the indoor Marching Band Concert were all recorded by Meg Andrus, using a single camera set up.

The recent "Start Talking" program presented by Hudson Community First at Eastwoods Elementary school was also recorded. The Start Talking program was a parent education program about starting early to talk to their kids about the dangers of drug involvement. The annual "Take a second – Make a Difference" award ceremony presented by Hudson Community First was also recorded.

The "Career Panel" discussion that was held in the High School Media Center was recorded and will be seen on HCTV starting the week of November 28. Several of the Veteran interview programs that were recorded at Laurel Lake will be shown on HCTV throughout the month of November and a marathon showing of those interviews was presented on Veterans Day.

Finally, Barb reported that the program archives are being searched for any programs related to the Hudson Parks at the request of the Parks Department.

Dan said that the Hudson EMS, who had worked with HCTV several years ago on recruitment videos, wants to revive that partnership and new EMS recruitment productions will be created shortly, in hopes that the current low level of EMS volunteer recruitment can be improved.

Frank Youngwerth asked if the summer concerts for 2017 were going to be recorded. Dan & Barb said that they would be talking about recording the concerts, but that decision will not be made in the near term and Dan said that many of the concert acts have already been seen on the station and are available in the archives, but he was hoping that new acts could be added to the 2017 concert schedule.

Mr. Comeriato asked for details on the archives. Dan responded that starting from 1996 the archives were built going back into the early 1980s. Mr. Comeriato asked Dan to see if the graduation from 1983 was in the archives because his band from that time performed in that time period.

VI. Public Access Update – Barbara VanBlarcum, continued

Nick said that the Malabar Farm / Tom Vince program that has been in the works since spring is wrapping up shooting next week. The program centers around two boys that went to school at Western Reserve Academy and lived with Louis Bromfield, the well-known author who lived at Malabar Farm. Tom Vince will be recorded at WRA giving some final information on the story, after which, the segments will be assembled into chapters for the final video program. We hope to have the final program ready before the end of the year. Frank Youngwerth mentioned that he is aware of a Humphrey Bogart site on the internet that may be able to supply some information concerning Malabar Farm that we do not already have.

Nick also mentioned that his wife, Allyn has recorded Tom Vince talking about presidential elections in Hudson. Editing on that program is complete and it will be on the HCTV schedule for the week of November 21. It was important that the election presentation be recorded because Mr. Vince says that he only does that presentation every four years.

Long time resident Richard Grell was recorded at the Hudson Heritage association speaking about the history of Darrowville, which is located around the southern border on Hudson & the northern border of Stow. That program should be available for the schedule for the week of November 28.

Looking forward, the plan is to record again at the Hudson Rotary Santa on the Green event. It has been several years since that event was recorded, so a new version would be a good idea.

Frank Youngwerth mentioned that Good Day in Hudson will be rerunning the David Hudson / James Ellsworth historical program that was produced several years ago featuring Tom Vince and Richard Grell playing the two historic characters. The program will be presented in February 2017.

Thor asked if there were any plans for HCTV to cover the send off of the Hudson Football team as they leave for the State Football Championship competition in Akron. Dan said that there were no plans at this time, but he would check with the school's Athletic Secretary to get details and see if any recording opportunities are possible.

VII. Community Organization Liaison

Nick reported that no further activity had been made in regards to an e-mail blast to local organizations about their use of HCTV to promote their group's activities. Nick said that he had seen interest from organizations during recording visits to community events, such as the Farmer's Market, when one-on-one contact can be made with organization members. After the first of the year, Nick plans to send out a new e-mail blast to local organizations to try to spur interest in using the station.

VIII. Friends of Hudson Community Television

Nick reported that the 501(c) 3 designation for the Friends of Hudson Community Television is in place with both the State and Federal government. The next step will be to schedule an organizational meeting with those interested to get the group into actual operation.

VIII. Friends of Hudson Community Television, continued

Frank Youngwerth said that he would recommend that the Friends group should concentrate on developing relationships with new charity organizations and should not contact the same groups that are already contributing to the station. He mentioned that he had been in contact with Deb Hoover, the President & CEO of the Burton T. Morgan Foundation before the latest grant request to the foundation and learned about the proper procedure for that grant application. The request was required to come from the City Manager's office for consideration, which was the way it was submitted. Frank said that other organizations in the area could also be asked for similar grant help, when a need arises.

Frank added that the planned reduction in the amount of sports coverage could also be an incentive to ask for funds from local businesses and organizations who may want to underwrite additional sports coverage.

IX. Previous Meeting Follow Up

Nick said that at the last committee meeting he had pledged to contact High School Principal Brian Wilch and School Superintendent Phil Herman about generating more school involvement with HCTV. Having made those contacts, it was how Nick had learned about the upcoming meeting concerning Thor's idea for a student discussion program. Both men did respond to the Nick's contact. Mr. Wilch was tentative in his support for the discussion program, but Mr. Herman's response was very positive and he thanked Nick for clarifying some points concerning the discussion program idea.

Thor added that he understands the concerns about the exposure of the students in a discussion forum and hopes that the look of the program will lay to rest those concerns. Michael asked if the focus of the proposed program would be narrowly defined and will be spelled out during the upcoming meeting. Thor said that the discussion sessions that he has hosted previously at Kent State University were related to regular topics and is made up initially of a panel of instructors that present opening comments. Following that, Thor moderates a discussion session with the students. He said that the students at KSU are now generating ideas for future discussion programs.

With that in mind, the proposed High School discussion could blossom from a small discussion group, leading up, potentially, to a citywide event, focused upon the views of the high school students. Thor noted that School administrators did attend his most recent KSU discussion about the heroin epidemic. He felt that high school age students do have constructive things to say, would be comforted by the free expression of their opinions on a subject, and would enjoy having a forum for their voices.

Michael added that in addition to the discussion program, he would like to see the high school use the HCTV facilities for possibly a daily school news program and other routine programming generated by the students. Thor said that a new media instructor is in place at the high school and that could be an opportunity to get support for using the HCTV venue for other school productions.

Dr. Williams added that he would like to see the Broadcast Journalism class revived, which would be another opportunity for HCTV to collaborate with the high school administration and students. He said that the Hudson City School Foundation could be a possible avenue of help to resurrecting the Broadcast Journalism class.

Nick asked if the previous KSU discussion programs were available for viewing on line. Dan said that he would find the link to the videos and supply that to the committee.

X. Once Around

As a final word, Nick wanted to acknowledge the great work that the broadcast crew had done, under trying circumstances, during the coverage of the last playoff football game. The team stepped up to the plate to produce a quality program and Mr. Powell thought that it was an important step to press on with the productions.

Dr. Williams wanted to know if the committee was amenable to a special meeting in December meeting to meet with Council President Hal DeSaussure about the focus of the committee. The committee generally said that they would be available to meet with Mr. DeSaussure when he would like. Dr. Williams said that he would check with Mr. DeSaussure about scheduling a meeting.

XI. Next Meeting Date

The next scheduled HCTV Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 19, 2017 at 6:30 PM in the HCTV studio at Hudson High School. Nick had previously distributed, via e-mail, the full tentative committee meeting schedule for 2017 to all concerned.

XII. Adjournment

With no further business indicated, the meeting adjourned at 8:57 P.M.