



Hudson Cable Television Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: September 15, 2011.

Meeting Location: HCTV Studios, Hudson High School.

In attendance: Abby Boysel, Pat Simons, Reed Stith, A.J. Stokes, Brian Suntken, Susan Terkel, and Nick Zaklanovich. Ex Officio: Kerry Paluscsak, Dr. Dan Williams.

Not in attendance: Ex Officio: Barbara VanBlarcum.

Meeting called to order by Chair Nick Zaklanovich at 6:38 P.M. Notes taken by Nick Zaklanovich.

I. Greeting of members and guests

Nick Zaklanovich greeted all of the members in attendance. No guests were present.

II. Approval of Minutes (July 28, 2011 Meeting)

Pat Simons commented that Dr. Dan Williams was inadvertently left off the list of attendees at the July 28, 2011 committee meeting. Sorry, Dr. Dan. The omission will be corrected. Aside from that error, no other changes were suggested to the minutes from the previous committee meeting. The minutes were approved by acclamation.

III. Station Manager's Report: Kerry Paluscsak

Kerry reported that work is progressing on the new studio control room build. The new desk tabletops and all of the equipment that had been in the mobile racks are, for the most part, in place. Some interconnect wiring remains to be completed. The new layout is a vast improvement over the crowded, former configuration. Good Job!

Kerry said that the effects of Ohio Senate Bill 117 have been and will be devastating to other PEG stations in Ohio, but HCTV will not be impacted by the bill's language, due to a grandfathering option that was included in the final legislation. Stations such as Hudson's, with three PEG channels, will be allowed to keep those channels, as long as they were in place prior to January 1, 2007. Fortunately, this option applies to HCTV's situation. In addition, the franchise payments from Time Warner that make up the majority of the HCTV operating expenses will continue to be received as a result of the grandfather language of SB 117.

III. Station Manager's Report: Kerry Paluscsak, continued

Kerry mentioned that the studio switcher unit is a good device, but support for the unit ended when the switcher's manufacturer was sold to another company. There is not a major concern about the switcher at this time, but as it ages, he may have a problem supporting the unit.

Kerry said that his most pressing need right now would be the four studio cameras that are thirteen years old and starting to show signs of wear. Replacement of the cameras is definitely on the horizon. Kerry is currently searching for the best deal on replacement cameras.

Pat asked when the budget presentation to Council would take place and Kerry said that he thought that it would be sometime in the first week on November. He said that there are two meetings on the five-year plan and two additional meetings on the 2012 budget, which should take place in the first part of December. The budget meetings are separate meetings from the Council Workshops and regular Council meetings.

Dr. Williams said that he would like to see Kerry and Nick both appear to present the budget plan to Council. Kerry said that all committee members are welcome to attend, and that it is a good experience to witness how Council keeps our City financially sound.

Dr. Williams gave a brief overview of the City's financial health and reported that all is well right now, but some difficult times lie ahead. One of the major impacts on the future City budget will be the elimination of the estate tax, which is scheduled to expire in 2014. The City will receive \$1.8 million from the estate tax in 2011. Also, the shared government funds that Ohio provides to run the state's communities will be cut in half over the next two years. Hudson will receive \$800 thousand from the state from that fund in 2011.

Susan Terkel asked about the possibility of using the old studio cameras for other functions, such as Public Access. Kerry replied that the studio cameras do not have the ability to record, and would therefore be unusable, except in a studio configuration, where they would be connected to other equipment.

Susan asked about the possibility of applying for a grant for at least part of the cost of new cameras. She suggested that the Murdough Foundation may be a viable source for a grant. Kerry countered that it was his belief that the Murdough group is so deeply involved with the creation of Hudson Memorial Stadium, that their plate may not allow for considerations for any other interests, such as HCTV.

Pat said that she is concerned about funding for HCTV continuing uninterrupted, particularly with the difficulties that appear to be occurring in getting the federal C.A.P. (Community Access Preservation) Act passed through the U.S. Congress. Kerry responded that as long as Time-Warner remains a good consumer product in Hudson, he does not foresee a problem with funds continuing to be paid to the City.

Pat asked about any other forms of funding, other than the Time-Warner franchise payments. Kerry said that there are some on-going grants from local organizations and sales of DVD that provide some additional funding, but the amount is small.

III. Station Manager's Report: Kerry Paluscsak, continued

Reed Stith asked when the Time-Warner payments are made. Kerry said that the payments from Time-Warner are paid quarterly to the City, after which the City then earmarks those payments to HCTV. The fees from Time-Warner are based solely on a percentage of the cable television revenue, and not from any of the other communications service provided by the company.

Kerry said that he had been in contact with State Representative Kristina Roegner, who in turn had sent a letter to U.S. Congressman Steve LaTourette concerning the federal C.A.P. Act, but Kerry felt that there is no interest at providing support for PEG at the state level. All of our efforts should, therefore, be focused on the federal legislation. Kerry distributed printed copies to the committee members of his e-mail communications with the City legal counsel concerning the potential impact of the January, 2012 SB117 deadline date.

The discussion turned to the 2012 station budget. Kerry said that both City Finance Director Jeff Knoblauch and Assistant City Manager Scott Schroyer had already met concerning the budget. Dr. Williams added that the final budget proposal is the responsibility of Mr. Knoblauch to present to Council, following intensive preliminary discussions with Kerry. The committee's involvement would be to help and make suggestions to Kerry in regards to the proposed budget, before it is presented to Council.

Kerry then reviewed what is listed in the preliminary budget spreadsheet. There could still be a minor change in the personnel cost line, if two of the current HCTV seasonal employees are reclassified as regular part-time employees.

There are two capital projects included in the 2012 budget. The first is for the installation of wiring between the HCTV studio and the proposed Memorial Stadium that will allow for easy coverage of any event that may take place at the stadium. An additional editing computer is also included as a capital investment in the 2012 budget.

In regards to income, the budget reflects a continued healthy payment from the cable company as a result of the healthy cable business that Time-Warner is doing in Hudson. The carry-over balance or "rainy day fund" for the station is also in good shape going into the coming year. While the budget does look sound right now, the gap between expenses and revenue is narrowing, and that could result in having to make some tough choices in the next few years in regards to the projects that are undertaken by the station.

Kerry and Dr. Williams said that the HCTV budget presentation before Council is usually one of the first issues discussed at the budget meeting, and the review usually takes about fifteen minutes to complete. Dr. Williams and Kerry both indicated that it would be a good thing to have our committee members in attendance at the budget presentation for the station. Kerry said that he would e-mail the committee members the information on the schedule for the budget presentation when he knows of a firm date and time.

Kerry showed the committee members the resurrected programming hours spreadsheet for 2010. The spreadsheet had to be reconstructed following a "crash" with the initial analysis. Compared to 2009, 2010 had a slight reduction in programming hours. The drop in hours was primarily caused by a reduction in the amount of overnight programming that is cable cast.

III. Station Manager's Report: Kerry Paluscsak, continued

Kerry said that there are funds in the budget for 2012 that are dedicated to the purchase of equipment that will allow the Channel 15 programming to stream via the Internet, 24 hours per day. He also said that the Hudson Schools are joining with HCTV in obtaining equipment that will allow anything on the Local Government Channel 16 to also be streamed 24 hours per day, with the school board meetings to be available live via the Internet. These two investments will make HCTV programming available to citizens beyond those that subscribe to Time-Warner. It is anticipated that the streaming efforts will increase the exposure of HCTV inside and outside of the community, and actually, world-wide via Internet access.

Reed asked about the correlation between the live streaming of our programming and YouTube. Kerry responded that the quality of signal provided by the streaming of HCTV programming will be vastly superior to the inferior video and audio that YouTube displays. Kerry added that YouTube video files are limited to a maximum 1.4 GB file size. For comparison, each Hudson football game that is presented on HCTV is usually in the 5 GB range for file size, much too large to be available via a YouTube post.

Kerry was proud to note that HCTV has presented 112,832 hours of programming since the inception of the station – a very impressive feat.

IV. Public Access Coordinator's Report

Kerry delivered a summary of the Public Access Coordinator's report.

Public Access is currently very busy with the candidates for City office preparing for the November election. Dr. Williams has already recorded a public access program and more candidates are anticipated to produce their own programs as the election comes closer.

The PTA is planning to produce a program featuring all four candidates for the two school board openings, all of the council candidates and the two candidates for the office of Mayor. HCTV will not be recording the October 13 League of Women Voters candidate forum, due to a previous issue with full disclosure of the contents of the forum, under the public realm requirements of the HCTV operation.

Jody Roberts, Communications Manager for the City of Hudson, has distributed a press release to the media to notify all of the candidates for City offices of the availability of HCTV.

V. CAP ACT Update

Kerry reported that the Alliance for Community Media and American Community Television are national organizations that are still very active in getting the CAP Act (Community Access Preservation Act) passed by Congress. The act has been re-assigned a different identification number (H.R. 3745 vs. the old H.R. 1746) and the issue is officially tabled at this time.

V. CAP ACT Update, continued

Kerry repeated that his biggest concern for the future is the continued life of the studio cameras. They are necessary to allow HCTV to continue to produce multi-camera, professional productions. Replacing the cameras is now a more difficult task, because of the loss of the equipment grant funds that used to flow from Time-Warner. Without those funds coming in, Council would have to fund big ticket items, such as the studio camera replacements. With all of the needs of the City as a whole in mind, getting Council to fund future HCTV equipment replacements may be a hard sell.

VI. Free-Flowing Discussion - All

Brian Suntken said that it is wise to plan ahead and brought up the list that former chair Kathie Franks created listing grant application targets. Brian suggested that we should start working at contacting the organizations on that list. Susan said that she thought that we should not try for small grants, but instead, should apply for larger grants that will address the need to replace the studio cameras.

Pat said that she has discovered that people are familiar with the local newspaper, but are not aware of the availability of HCTV in the community. Susan said that StoryCorp, a national history documentation effort, is growing exponentially and has received millions of dollars in grant money. Susan suggested that if we take a mission that some of the potential grant foundations have a vested interest in, and target that interest, we could ask for much larger funds than what has been requested in the past. Susan also expressed the feeling that members of the committee should personally meet with potential grant organizations to explain the need for funding from those organizations.

Pat and Reed both added that all of Susan's comments pointed towards the need of a strategic plan going forward for the committee. Susan added that we need to get the younger citizens involved, both high school students and the younger adults, to bring fresh ideas and new perspectives to the effort.

Brian added that the loss of the broadcast journalism class from the high school curriculum was a sad situation that stopped a very progressive and worthwhile program.

Reed again asked about the mission and the direction of the committee going forward. He said that once that mission is defined, and we have a clear direction for the future, we can focus our efforts towards the mission goal.

Pat asked about the recent change in the committee legislation passed by Council, and was somewhat surprised to learn that the only thing that changed in the legislation was the number of members needed for a voting quorum at the meetings. She said that the remainder of the committee legislation is a pretty broad statement.

Pat also asked about the number of households that have access to HCTV. Kerry responded that Time-Warner does not report that information to him, and the last count that he had of about 6,000 subscriber households was data from about four years ago. Kerry mentioned that the last percentage estimate that he had for penetration into Hudson was that 62% of Hudson households have access to Time-Warner cable, and therefore, HCTV.

VI. Free-Flowing Discussion – All, continued

Kerry stated that the legislation creating the Cable Advisory Committee was written 15 years ago giving the committee the responsibility of overseeing the cable franchise and for being the intermediary between the community and the cable franchise holder. Now that the franchise issue has been eliminated via other legislation and the franchisee has no communication with the staff our committee, perhaps the legislation in regards to the committee function needs to be revised. He recommended that the committee's aim should be specific to the community's needs as they exist today and the projected needs five years down the road.

Kerry mentioned that the how-two programs that used to be produced were popular, the oral histories are definitely enjoyed and generate many citizen comments, and sports are the most popular programming on the station. Any type of music concert and history program is also usually popular. For the future, Kerry thinks that we need to "re-invent" the station and suggested the creation of a sub-committee to come up with an updated mission statement, created by the citizen body, that will reflect where the committee should be focused now and into the near future.

Pat asked if we should do a survey to "take a temperature" from the community in regards to HCTV. Susan was not in favor of a survey, but Reed thought that it may be an important step. Susan again mentioned the Rotary film festival and wondered why the participants did not automatically come to HCTV with their production so that it could be cablecast to the community. Brian added that it takes a lot of work to get programs on the station. He felt that we have to discuss the future, by working off of Kerry's knowledge and experience, but also felt that no one can predict the five years ahead of us, since things are now changing so fast. Susan would like to get the businesses of Hudson and the younger people of the City more involved.

Pat asked if there was a formula in regards to the station air schedule. Kerry responded that it is not possible for HCTV to be scheduled in any scientific way, and that even the broadcast network programming is fluid and can change quickly.

Kerry said that he is in favor of taking the pulse of the community in regards to HCTV. Kerry said that an unofficial survey was taken a few years ago at the Pancake Breakfast, which supplied valuable information, but it was restricted to those that attended the breakfast. He reiterated that Time-Warner shares no customer information, so a blind phone call is about the only way that a full-scale survey could be conducted. Kerry also added that the pending upgrade to the City of Hudson web site reportedly will have input and recording capability that could be used for a HCTV viewer/citizen survey. Kerry suggested that if the respondent recording capability is truly available on the new City web site, we could develop the best survey that we can make, place it on the City web site, publicize it as heavily as we can, and then, hopefully, get some good feedback from the citizenry.

Susan asked if we could investigate what other public access stations are doing. Brian said that he would like to see a comparison with a station that serves a community about our size to see what they are doing compared to HCTV. Kerry said that he would be very happy to get the results of a citizen survey to learn what is being watched, who is watching and what are they liking and not liking. Pat added that at her interview with Council, she had mentioned the idea of doing a survey and all of the Council members that were present at her interview seemed to like the idea.

VI. Free-Flowing Discussion – All, continued

Kerry added that the survey has to be done correctly, meaning that the survey questions should be designed so that any citizen is going to take the time to answer them and the survey should only take five to eight minutes to complete. Brian added that after new ideas are generated from a survey, we still have to have people with time available to carry out the new ideas, and finding the time is a difficult task in these busy times.

Kerry mentioned the difference between the current HCTV operation, with just a handful of regular Public Access producers, compared to Cleveland Heights, where he had sixty-eight people in twenty-two East of Cleveland communities producing public access programs. Susan responded that we should set the goal of getting eighteen more producers in Hudson. Kerry said that most of the people in Hudson work in corporate-oriented, professional careers, putting in long days with their jobs, and these people do not want to spend their off-work time putting together television programs. Susan injected her opinion that many of the women in the community may have time to produce programming, because many of them do not leave the home to work.

Susan felt that we need more “fun” on the station and she suggested that shorter, humorous segments would make the station programming more interesting. Brian added that he thinks that there is already a lot of good public access programming available on channel 15, but he does not like to see productions that are not up to high quality. He also felt that the committee should advocate with the school board that the Broadcast Journalism class should be re-instated to the curriculum, in order to foster interest in media by the young people of the community. Kerry said that the most recent revival of the Broadcast Journalism class had good teachers, a good group of energetic and interested students just prior to the program being eliminated. He said that deciding to end the program was a sad decision.

At this point, the meeting had gone for over two hours, so Nick suggested that the current meeting be adjourned at this point. However, since only about one half of the current meeting agenda had been covered, he suggested that an interim meeting be scheduled in October to finish the committee’s agenda items. The group selected Tuesday, October 11, 2011 at 6:30 PM in the HCTV studios as the scheduled date and time for the supplemental committee meeting. Kerry said that the City should be notified of the supplemental meeting schedule and agenda, and Nick said that he would take care of that task.

Susan added that Kathie Franks did much of her grant research by being on the mailing list of the Cleveland Foundation, which is one of the branch libraries of the main foundation library in New York. She suggested that the Cleveland Foundation would be a valuable asset to any new grant effort that the committee may want to pursue.

As a final item, Brian suggested that a subcommittee be created to address the issue of grants. Brian volunteered to join the grant subcommittee that Nick and Pat had already committed to join.

Reed suggested the creation of another subcommittee to target the mission statement issue. He volunteered to serve on the mission statement subcommittee along with Pat and Nick. Kerry added that if the subcommittees are kept to three members, the subcommittee would not have to record notes or report their discussions officially and the conversations between the subcommittee members could be conducted via e-mail.

VII. Next Meeting Date

The supplemental HCTV Advisory Committee meeting date is scheduled for Tuesday, October 11, 2011 at 6:30 PM in the HCTV Studios in Hudson High School.

VIII. Adjournment

With no further business indicated, the meeting was adjourned by acclamation. The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 P.M.