

Minutes
Township of Lower Makefield
Cable Advisory Board
September 11, 2008

The meeting of the Cable Advisory Board of the Township of Lower Makefield was held in the LMT municipal building on September 11, 2008. Chairman Zachary Rubin called the meeting to order at 7:30PM.

Present: Zachary Rubin, Chair
Marilyn Bydalek
Deborah Gable

Dave Kelliher
Pete Stainthorpe, Supervisor Liaison

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes from the April 10, 2008 CAB meeting. The motion to approve the minutes, with one change, was made by Dave and seconded by Marilyn, and approved unanimously.

Brian Jeter, Comcast's Senior Director of Governmental and Community Affairs, was in attendance to answer questions from the Committee. Brian mentioned that, as of the latest agreement, there is no requirement that a representative of Comcast be at every meeting. If something comes up that requires his attendance, he will make himself available. The Cable Advisory Board meets every other month but do not require Verizon or Comcast representatives to attend every meeting.

There has been disagreement between Comcast and Lower Makefield Township regarding the underground vaults Comcast wants to replace with above ground pedestals. Brian says that Comcast has communicated their intentions to Terry and the Zoning Hearing Board on several occasions. Brian maintains that the 2006 agreement between Comcast and the Township supersedes all others.

Brian said that, after having service problems in the Township, they knew they needed to change their plan, the main change being the decision to put pedestals above ground in Phase 2. They took the position that they were flipping the facility. They have installed 50 above ground, with 26 more to be installed. They stopped because of controversy over the permit. The next meeting on this matter, with the Zoning Hearing Board, is a special meeting and will be held on October 2. Two issues will need to be addressed – what to do about the 50 pedestals that are already installed and what to do on an ongoing basis. Brian will call the ZHB solicitor, Allen Toadvine.

Dave asked if there is technology to put the vaults underground. Brian said there are no seal-proof vaults and they need space to air out. Vaults can fray or erode because they collect water, causing service problems. It was mentioned that if you drive throughout the Township, there are significant above ground facilities. Dave asked if Comcast had discussions with the residents who have the above ground pedestals, and Brian indicated that, of the 15 who were opposed, all but one or two were ultimately satisfied with the result.

9,000 residents went to triple play, i.e., tv, telephone and internet with Comcast. Zack asked about the possibility of losing phone service for days if there were service problems but Brian assured him that they have internal procedures that allow for phone repair within an 8 hour period.

With regard to preparing for the Broadcast Digital Transition, Zack asked if everyone who has cable ready TV will need a converter box. Brian explained that most people will not have to do anything; only those whose television sets are not connected to cable and receive a picture with the help of "rabbit ears" or a rooftop antenna, will stop receiving signals on February 17, 2009. Those people can purchase a digital converter box, purchase a new digital TV or connect their TV to the service provided by their local cable company or another video service provider.

Brian noted that complaints from residents can be forwarded to him at 215-918-3137 or Janet Steiner at 215-918-3102, even if they are construction complaints. Deborah asked if there are plans to add a human being to the menu of options when someone calls in with a question or complaint, and Brian indicated that Comcast is opening a new call center by the end of the year which should help facilitate such calls.

Zack asked about FCC's dispute with Comcast. Brian said they came out with a cap on monthly bandwidth. It will probably go to litigation.

The next item on the agenda was Verizon's public access channel. Morrisville Presbyterian Church, of which Pete Stainthorpe is a member, asked if they could use it on Monday or Tuesday nights. Zack said we have the ability to launch a Township public access channel with Verizon. A concern raised by Dave and echoed by Marilyn related to the importance of having guidelines in place before launching the channel.

Zack suggested that it would be appropriate for the CAB to take a position on whether LMT should pursue the public access channel with Verizon or Comcast and present that position to the Board of Supervisors. He asked Pete to put it on the agenda, and suggested that the members of the Committee consider their positions and be prepared to discuss, as a Board, during the BOS meeting.

The next meeting will be held on November 13th at 7:30PM in the Township Building, downstairs room. If there is nothing for the agenda on the Comcast pedestals or public access, the meeting will be cancelled.

As there was no new or old business, Dave made the motion to adjourn, Deborah seconded and the meeting adjourned at 8:50PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Bray, Recording Secretary

