

CABLE LICENSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

During 2006, the committee has been mostly dormant with only the need of a few meetings during the year. This is because the Town of Stow is currently in its 4th year of a 10-year license with Comcast with no significant problems in their cable service taking place during the year. The primary complaints received by the Cable Committee from Stow residents had to do with service price and content, neither of which is under any local control.

In July, the committee contacted Verizon about the potential to provide video cable service to the residents of Stow, similar to that being provided to larger towns in Massachusetts, so that Stow residents could have an option other than Comcast or satellite for obtaining video service. Verizon's initial response was very positive and the committee met with their regional director on Aug 1 to discuss potential service and the steps needed to arrange for granting a license for Verizon to provide video cable service. This was followed by notifying the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy (DTE) of our solicitation, then by issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for any video cable company to provide this service. Only Verizon was expected to respond to this RFP, but we were notified on the last day of the RFP that Verizon had decided to delay cable franchise discussions with Stow (and most other towns in Massachusetts). It is the committee's understanding that Verizon is negotiating with the DTE to have the DTE issue the necessary approval to provide video service to towns within Massachusetts rather than licensing directly with the towns, similar to how Verizon is licensed to provide telephone service. While this negotiation is going on, Verizon has stopped negotiating with the towns directly. The Committee is hopeful that a license of some sort will allow Verizon to provide the residents of Stow with an alternate video cable service, and although we will continue to monitor this area, we don't expect any potential for this service to occur within the next year or two.

In the mean time, license payments from Comcast to the Town, mostly in support of our local video channel 9, have been received at the appropriate times and provide the funds that support the operating costs of the channel and the cost of equipment purchases and repairs. Members of the Committee continue to provide the Stow PEG Advisory Committee (LACAC) with technical assistance when requested

Committee members are working with the Bolton and Lancaster local access channels to resolve technical problems so that Stow subscribers can in the future share the viewing of events that take place at the Nashoba High School and the Nashoba Regional School District school committee meetings, both of which take place in Bolton. When the technical and security problems are resolved, those events will be seen on Bolton's local access cable channel 10, which Stow subscribers can view.

As of the middle of 2006, Stow had 1850 subscribers to the Comcast cable system. We encourage the rest of the residents of Stow to obtain at least a basic cable service so you can share the great local coverage that is being provided by Stow Channel 9 of the Selectmen's meetings, other government meetings, activities going on around the town, and the local bulletin board full of announcements of Stow events. For only \$14.00 per month (Senior discount available), this basic service provides our local channels, all Boston area TV stations, and several cable channels. If you already have broadband Internet service from Comcast, the basic service can be added for **FREE** (the discount for multiple services pays the cost of basic video service). When used with a 'dish' satellite video system, this basic cable service could provide local stations as well as the Stow cable channel for about the same cost as the 'local-station option' with the dish company.

So, unless your house is a long distance from the road, there is no excuse for missing out on the great Stow Channel 9 programming.

Any complaints about cable service should first be made directly to Comcast through their Customer Service line at (888) 633-4266. If satisfactory service is not obtained there, then call John Fouhy, Senior Director of Community Relations for Comcast, at (978) 692-1906. If a resolution to the problem could still not be obtained, then the complaint should be passed on to the Stow Cable Advisory Committee, care of the Selectmen's Office (Stow Town Building, 380 Great Road, Stow, MA 01775) to see if we can help resolve the problem.

Respectfully submitted,

Lewis Halprin, Chairman
Arny Buckman
Robert Mong

George Scraggs
Patricia Crawford