

CABLE TELEVISION ADVISORY BOARD

12/08/2023

A meeting of the Cable Television Advisory Board was held December 08, 2023 at 8:30 am in the Aldermanic Chamber.

Members of Committee present: Andrew Cernota, Chairman
Tim Cummings, Administrative Services Director
Steve Buxton, Fire Chief
Jennifer McCormack, Library Director
Nick Miseirvitch, IT CIO
Alderman Ernest Jette
Cole Morgan
Rony Camille, Media Program Director, Town of Tyngsboro

Also present: Jeff Poehnert, PEG Program Manager
Pete Johnson, Education Channel Access Administrator

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Andrew Cernota, present. So acceptance of minutes from the previous meetings. Is there a motion?

Steve Buxton, Fire Chief:

Motion to accept.

Tim Cummings, Administrative Services Director:

Mr. Chair, if I may, could I just remind the committee to say their name before and they speak because of transcription purposes?

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Good point.

Steve Buxton, Fire Chief:

Motion to accept.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

There's a motion to accept. Any discussion? Seeing none. All those in favor?

All:

Aye.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

All those opposed? All right. The motion passes. Communications that we have all received?

Jeff Poehnert:

They were electronically. because I didn't print them.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

They should be included in the in the packet. Since our last meeting, we've received various advisories from Comcast about changes to their channels. Their programming. So again, those have all been received and transmitted out to the committee. Is there a motion to accept and place on file?

Jennifer McCormack, Library Director:

Jen McCormack? I move to accept and place on file.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Any discussion? Seeing none. All those in favor?

All:

Aye.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

All those opposed? Alright. Motion passes. Financial statements, Mr. Poehnert.

Jeff Poehnert:

Our operating account 2505. The balance is \$287,974. The expenses for August, 2023, including salaries and facility operations, totaled \$37,150. We had forty seven hundred and twenty one cable casts over the last three months. 133 of these were live events, and this broke down to Public 9642, Education, 9949, and Government 1642. And we had forty five hundred and eighty eight playbacks. And that broke down to Public ninety-six twenty-six, a hundred and thirty-seven Education 916 and Government 16,135. We continue to test various cameras to replace equipment in the studio as we reported the last time. There are different brands have different features, so we've been testing them all. And we continue to, do this, we haven't come up with a decision yet for, to get the most bang out of our money.

And the thing is, while the cameras that we've got are, are working properly at this point at least we have the luxury of time for that.

Comcast has been installing equipment for the addition of our new high definition channel later this year. The new channel which would be Channel 1072, will be in addition to our existing standard definition channels in our lineup as per the Franchise Agreement. While this is an excellent move forward, to present some important technical challenges to us in order to accommodate the new fourth channel, it would require us to take one and there are two of our record channels and reconfigure that to be an output channel. While this can be done, we regularly use both record channels simultaneously on an almost weekly basis. And that would be when we have Board of Alderman and Planning, I mean Zoning on the same night, or Planning at another committee meeting on the same night on Thursdays. We would require both channels. And even this can be remedied by using our two streaming channels, which in turn record, but they get into the system in a little different fashion.

But our streaming channels are used for out of network coverage and coverage within the network, requiring a port via internet. An example of that would be the DPW conference room. We use streaming for that once a month. They're not meant to be permanently ported to a particular location. We'll, however, use this configuration for the next few months. So this has caused us to take a closer look and review of the whole system which pretty much collides with its end of life in the near future at seven years old. And, you know, 24/7 it's on it is time for an upgrade in in any scenario. We are also in great need of more storage space, and our bulletin board is technically outdated with a new replacement available. We have been extremely happy with Tel View's service systems performance, and would be able to continue to use elements of the present system, which is under a service contract with time through next through next spring.

Tel view offers many options for us to achieve our present and future technological goals. The cost will be somewhere around the \$60,000 mark but would bring us to a higher level of technical operations. There is one outlier in this whole broadcast system outlay, and that is the expected requirement. And it's coming of the Federal Government to mandate closed caption broadcasts under the American With Disabilities Act. It is, coming and it's expensive and could easily add an additional 15,000 to 20,000 in equipment above the cost of the system. And although Tel View has their own captioning solution to this, Pete and Dan learned while at the ACM the Alliance for Community Media Northeast Conference in Burlington, Vermont, that there are numerous players in the closed caption market. We will endeavor to see what other options could be available to the city.

And over the next three months, we will be doing our due diligence for searching the costs of adding closed captioning to our overall system revitalization. We'll present an updated not to exceed request at the March, 2024 meeting. Editing CPUs or, or PCs that we use. Another technology end of life story, but far less wordy. We have three editing CPUs with the new software that exceeds the abilities of the hardware. IT has done their due diligence as usual designing new ones and have agreed to build these systems. We ask your approval in the not to exceed amount of \$4,600 to be withdrawn from the capital improvement account, 81100. Note, the present three will be repurposed replacing the even older units in our lobby for the public editing. The Public Works AV, the TPW AV project has been completed and we have now covered the last two Board of Public Works meetings in the conference room.

We are still awaiting key code to provide a, a mixed minus audio connection with the pre-existing AV monitor on site for integrated zoom meeting capability and included onsite operator training for the videographers. We have not yet installed the new Yamaha audio system in the chamber. The two reasons for this are one, we were able to temporarily solve the operational problems we are having with the present system. And two other projects have taken precedence over this. We'll be performing the swap over the next couple of months and provide an update at our next meeting. Dan has worked on a

temporary solution for the remote event communications between the Studio Operator and Director and the Remote Replay Operator using the free version of a website used by radio stations. We are still investigating ways to also get communications directly to and from our onsite announcers and studio via our city and school networks. And this is a word about the franchise fee split. As our franchise fee revenue continues to shrink with our cord cutting on our services to viewers on Cable Start. Smart TVs and the internet continue to grow. It will become imperative that we seek to secure the 2% revenue split between the general fund and the pay access channel fund. Come budget season. The current split of the franchise fees is 4% total and this is split down to 1.3% to peg and 2.7% to the general fund of the city. And Pete.

Pete Johnson:

As far as the Education Channels concerned I have quite a list there. I won't bore you all by going over all of it, but needless to say, we did a lot of work over the fall sports season. Say we came close to doubling our live output as far as games from the high schools and, and other events were concerned. We also continued to record Public Health Matters in the studio. And that's with the new host Bobby Bagley. We did some Eye on Education programs. We also started a new show called The Big Picture that's being hosted by Michelle Holland. And in addition to football, we also did soccer, volleyball and field hockey during the Battle of the Bridge.

So that brings you all the way through the end of November. The next page, you can go through those at your leisure and see what we did. But with Dan around we ended up doing quite a bit more programming, like I said, that we have in the past. It's added a lot onto my plate because it's just a lot more editing to do. But it was nice being able to do it. So one other sort of note that we had. I may have mentioned in the past that we had a program that was getting a large number of views on YouTube over the years. It was a middle school basketball final from 2017. But we've been watching that number continue to grow. And as of November 20th that hit 1 million views on YouTube.

So, it's sort of interesting, has four over 4,004 and a half thousand views just in the last 28 days. So it still continues to have legs for whatever reason, the kids tend to want to watch it on YouTube from all over the country. And we get comments oh, my school has a team like that and sort of interesting to go through the mid times. So I just wanted to bring that up that we finally hit that 1 million mark. That's about half of our overall views. Obviously most of the programming doesn't get anywhere near that, but you know most sports will get in the hundreds of views, sometimes thousands meetings which are on a separate YouTube channel for the Board of Education. Will typically get, you know, 50 to 500 depending on what the topic of the meeting was. So, people are watching outside of the cable arena. And we will be able to get some information from our Tel View server as far as what it is doing for video on demand. That's something that they just added to their service. So hopefully we'll get that in our next meeting.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Thank you. Mr. Bartis and Mr. Russell your reports.

Bob Bartis, BRB TV:

Good morning. Bob Bartis for BRB TV. During the timeframe of September 1st to November 30, 2023, Channel Six and BRB TV. Live ran approximately 2,800 shows. 416 were first run, meaning the first time that they aired during that quarter 33 were live events. And those live events including for this quarter, most particularly, were the Alderman debate, the Alderman at Large Forum, the School Board Forum, and the Mayoral Debates. We also had live events for Health and Hospice Community Conversations, which was a three-part series. The National Coral Society Concerts occurred. The 40th annual Senior Center Variety show, the National Fire Department Promotion Ceremony, Veterans Day Parade, and the

28th Annual Holiday Stroll all were live streamed to Comcast, Channel Six to BRB TV. And they're also carried as well on the WSMN. Live website. We continued to promote the channels by posting all of our shows that are weekly recorded that are in the numbers that I just talked about on Apple TV and on Roku TV.

And the numbers for the cam reviews that we have for Main Street Camera, the Performing Arts Center, the Nashua River and the Center for the Arts are about 4,000 views. So, we're impressed with, we're getting around between BRB TV Live. WSMN. Live, Comcast Channel Six. We're promoting the channel in addition to encouraging people to come in to sign up for a show that it's at no cost to them, and that anyone can sign out a camera and go home and take that available if they have something and bring that back. And we'll assist them with editing and putting that up on the channel if they wish. So those are on billboard slides that run almost continuously on WSMN. live and those billboard slides then supplement any timing and gaps in programs going transitions from one show to another.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Any questions for regarding any of the reports? Alderman Jette?

Alderman Jette:

Thank you. So, I have some questions about the financial report. It could be that, I often admit that numbers are not my field. Budgets, although I'm on the budget committee, it's a learning experience for me, but I'm looking at the report and it says it's for fiscal year 2024. And it shows that we started with a balance of 485,000. We had 926,000 in revenue, 801,000 in expenses. That's year to date. Which leaves us with a balance of 287 almost \$288,000. So that, that 801,000 to date, this is just November concerns me, am I missing something? Or is this sustainable? Are we going run out of money before the year is over?

Pete Johnson:

I could try to help explain Pete Johnson. It is a difficult report to read. You're correct. But if you look at the last line of the expense detail for capital improvements that lists additionally we had 569,000 roughly dollars in that line item that was basically our bank balance at the end of the year. So that gets included into as a Capital Improvement. The money that we took, the \$70,000 to do improvements over at Public Works that would come out of that balance. So basically that's our bank account. That the last number doesn't mean too, too much, although we see it going down. That used to be in about the \$500,000 range, the closing fund balance, and it's now dipping down to about \$300,000.

And a lot of that is that we're getting less money through the franchise fees from Comcast. And we've been added some year after year to our outgoing expenses and budget for more programming. It's just our day-to-day, increases in salary. All of that goes into to their, and I believe we're one of the only departments in the City that pays all of our, what they call the full freight. So all of our money for benefits, everything comes out of our budget. And a lot of the departments, it comes out of the City budget for that. But since we're separately funded, it all comes out of our budget.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

I saw a hand over, did you want to

Tim Cummings, Administrative Services Director:

Tim Cummings, I just wanted to clarify, are you suggesting that the Capital Improvements line item of about \$500,000, are you saying that that is monies that's carried forward year over year?

Pete Johnson:

Yes. That was carried forward from the last year. And you know, that has gone down over the years too. Used to be up in the 700,000 figures, and that's continuing to go down year after year two.

Tim Cummings, Administrative Services Director:

So that is, although not maybe technically accurate, is something like a Capital Reserve Fund built in within this account, within this Trust Fund.

Pete Johnson:

That's the way I understand it, yes.

Tim Cummings, Administrative Services Director:

And that's on top of your fund balance that you may have

Pete Johnson:

There's a fund balance at any time, but that's what was left at the end of last fiscal year and was transferred over.

Tim Cummings, Administrative Services Director:

Into this account. And then in the, during the current year that you're in, you'll have fund balance that would be on top of this

Pete Johnson:

Possibly. We've actually been dipping into that just for general operating costs. So, since that's the money we're getting in has come down.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Mr. Poehnert

Jeff Poehnert:

I was just going to say Alderman Jette, if you look at the top line too, of course the wages, the part-time, and then the benefits are. There's a lot of large numbers there that come, you don't go towards just what people was saying. Our benefits you know, our pension, our Medicare, so there, right there accounts for a large chunk of money in our budget that we spent. And then you add that 500 that's there and it comes out, that's where you get the 801. And I wish I was better at numbers too.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Mr. Morgan

Cole Morgan:

Do we know, what's our year over year percentage change?

Pete Johnson:

We sent out that information for the last contract period with Comcast. There's two pages there if you have them. That list by year, what we get have gotten quarterly since basically 2015 when we were taking 1% of the franchise fees at that point in time that was before we took on the cost of the Public Access Channel through our budget. Previously, it had been through the Mayor's budget. So, if you look, I have each year saying how much it's gone down. So, if we go back to 2018, we lost about 3.75% in that year, 2019, 6.03%. 2020 about 1% down 2021 looks like 2.61% and 2022, 1.4%. And then on that, that's five years there. So, it's a total of 13.9% that we lost in five years.

If you look at the 2023 payments they started out at 104 hundred, 105 hundred a quarter and then quickly dropped to under \$100,000 and is now, as of the November payment this year at 94,000 thousand dollars. So that's nearly a 10% drop just in the last year, just on a year, year over year basis. So, concerning and what we're getting in and if you look at the total, it's typically been around 400, a little over \$400,000. And if you look at this year, it's going be a lot less than that. Our budget, I'm not sure where the number comes from, but they list Comcast of \$900,000 is being what we would get from Comcast. And certainly, we're not going to get anywhere near that.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Alderman Jette.

Alderman Jette:

If I could follow up. I'm not questioning the expenses or what you spent, I'm just looking when I hear you say, I don't know where that number comes from, that concerns me, somebody ought to know where it comes from.

Pete Johnson:

I'm sure there is somebody down there. This is a form that gets printed out off of the computer and we just ask for the form each month. And that's what it prints out. And we've been told that's the way that it gets explained.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Mr. Miseirvitch

Nick Miseirvitch, IT CIO:

I think I can yeah, shed some light on Alderman Jette's concern. The report, the numbers are true. It's just the labeling, I think is what's throwing you off. So, for example, opening balance, that's what we start at the revenue, that 926,000, that's what's projected to remain coming in until the end of the year. The expenses, the 801,000, that's what we anticipate we have left to spend. And the closing fund balance is really, should be like projected fund balance at the end of the year.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Alderman Jette.

Alderman Jette:

Thank you. So, my concern is that when I look at the budget for revenue of you know, 1,000,117 and you're saying that because of the cable cutting and the anticipated you are doubting that number is going to actually going to realize that amount. And then I look at the expenses, the budget is 1 million 190,000 and

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Going back to Mr. Johnson's point, the Capital Improvement line item, the budgeted expense for the year was 569,000 plus. So far, we've actually spent none of that. There's 69,000 of that, that's encumbered for a planned project that will be completed this year. But typically, we don't spend a half a million dollars on Capital Improvements in a given year. So that money that has been carried over from previous years is there and budgeted for Capital Improvements, but very often as kind of a contingency in case we have to do things like the telecaster. Upgrades. So, it's showing as an expense here, but it's not one that is likely to

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Be consumed in its entirety.

Pete Johnson:

Sometimes the way I look at it is I just remove that Capital Improvements line to look at what our actual budget is, excluding Capital Improvements. So, if you take that \$1.19 million and subtract the \$570,000, that's better approaching what our actual budget would be for the year.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Mr. Morgan,

Cole Morgan:

So, I know something that we've talked about a lot has been the, the split that we get from the Comcast franchise fee. And I'm a proponent that we should get all of that. I think I've talked to a lot of you guys about that. And with the, the cord cutting that's going on and the increased cost for our streaming servers, I think we should, I just kind of want to put a comment on file here. I know this probably can't, can't change quickly, but the, the funds that we're going to need to spend for the streaming will probably increase the revenue we're getting from Comcast decreasing. I'm reading this right, is about 14% down over the last five years, assuming that trend continues. And a lot of the explanation I've heard about why we have 1.3% of that 4% is that we can't burden the taxpayers that have cable for services that are based on internet, which is not cable. So it's not fair that we use the additional funds from Comcast to pay for streaming services that, you know, if they're not a cable provider why are we paying for internet services? And I guess my question just is, I'm, I'm not sure who could answer this by that logic then, why were we giving the rest of it to the general fund that also benefits everyone in the city, not just those cable.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

People that are paying for cable.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

I think you're maybe combining two different issues. As far as the franchise fee not being charged on the internet service, that's a function of the Federal Act.

As far as the, the General Funds being the recipient of the majority of the franchise fee that's a decision from the Board of Alderman. And the FCC ACT basically sets it up so that the franchise fee is a payment to the City for use of its right of ways. And it was put in place with the sort of express policy preference that be used to subsidize PEG operations. But it didn't include a requirement that it be used exclusively for PEG operations. Historically, Nashua, before I was joined this board all of the franchise fee went to the City. And then the City budgeted a small amount for operations since late in the Streeter Administration, the Franchise Fee Agreements have included a carve out where PEG operations get a specific contractual amount of the franchise fee. That's an improvement. And that's paid for the, the studio. It's paid for having staff permanent staff. Now whether the Aldermen are willing to give up their share of the franchise fee that right now goes to the General Fund and contributes to the sort of general tax base of the City. That's really the question that you're addressing and is basically a conversation that we need to have with the Board of Alderman.

Unknown Speaker:

And part of that is understanding that there are other constituencies in the City that are going to be looking for that money. So that's the issue. Not that some is going to internet and some is going to cable. It really is the City has this money that's coming in that they're considering to be basically tax revenue to support their other programs.

Cole Morgan:

And I'll just clarify, maybe I muddled the water to the internet comment. I think in conversations I had before, the explanation was, well, it's not fair to use the funds that are generated by cable with the express intent that we have a larger streaming cost that is only consumed by internet users. And that seemed to be the major roadblock to the increase in the fund. So, I think that this, everyone here is on this board because, or this committee, because we believe that communication between the City and its constituents is extremely important. And Public Access, Education, everything. I think that we could do a lot better job if we had more money. Like that's pretty understood sentiment. So, just put that comment there that as these numbers go down, that that looks scary, knowing how much technology costs, server costs, streaming costs are rising. I mean, inflation has been rising much faster than this number. So, taking that into consideration. I want to make sure that something's being done by this committee to have the conversation with the Alderman now, because we might really need this this money in the next, you know, two to five years.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

I'm sorry.

Rony Camille:

I agree with Mr. Cole. I've been on this committee for about a year now. I've asked questions. I may have muddled some waters with some folks, but just sort the fact finding, I reached out to Cheryl Linder, and I wanted to know the actual amount that we, the city, the municipal corporation was receiving. And I have an email here, cash receipts since 2018, quarterly city gets about 227,000. Now it's down at the last I checked here. Last check was May 23, 202. So, if you are a cable subscriber, that fee, in my opinion,

should go to PEG all PEG, not General Fund or whatever. I'd like to get an explanation from the Board of Aldermen and Financial Services. What happens to the rest of that money? What is it encumbered to? Because I've spent a lot of time looking at the various operations. I spent some time with the A channel, the PEG, you know, the Gov channel. Even the folks at BRB TV and WSMN Channel, they're doing great work, but these numbers here, they can't accomplish this mission if we have, if we're taking, if they're operating on 1%, 1%. And so that, that is a, that is just a detrimental, you know, quality to the people that are, that, that are watching these, you know, this program. So I think we need to have a bigger conversation about that funding.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

I can answer your question. The money that goes into the General Fund is not encumbered to it. It goes into the General Fund and is used for general City operations. It's not ear earmarked. There's no contractual carve out for it. It's part of the City budget and it's used for whatever else the City needs the money for. Mr. Cummings?

Tim Cummings, Administrative Services Director:

Yes. correct. Mr. Chairman again, Tim Cummings for the record you are absolutely correct. What happens is the money accrues as in this case it would be anticipated revenue and it would go to general government services. And then whatever additional monies that we have left at the end of the year, it would go, you know, eventually accrues into surplus. We know that we run positively year over year. And some of this revenue is what, you know, eventually attributes to our cash surplus at the end of the year.

May I make my comment, Mr. Chairman? So, this is a very timely conversation. My recommendation to, to you all would be to maybe put a communication, a letter something expressing your sentiments to the Mayor and the Chief Financial Officer to the city.

Ask for a meeting now. We are going into budget season. So, I would encourage that to occur prior to something like a February timeframe. If you could have that conversation, that communication prior to February that I say that because come a March timeframe, we will be going earnest into an FY 25 fiscal year. And you'd want to have this conversation while in advance with the administration. And I'm happy to be part of those conversations and to help assist with this. And then ultimately you know, it would be an action of the Board of Alderman to make the necessary changes. And I would just think that you could do it through the budget process if you were to start now.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Mr. Morgan.

Cole Morgan:

And just so this doesn't feel like it's coming out of, out of nowhere, I just wanted to talk briefly about the Mayoral Debate that we know that there were some challenges with one of the debates. I think that's what really did it for me, is I was looking, I watched that, I felt for you. I know it wasn't your fault. At the BRBTV. I looked up some of the other City debates, and I was saddened by the quality that we're able to produce here. And I feel like it's only because of time and time people and resources as far as equipment goes. I feel like Nashua is the second biggest city, New Hampshire, we should be doing a lot better job. And again, I don't think that's your fault. I think it's the resources that were at hand,

Rony Camille:

Mr. Chair, I'd like to place a motion to, we need to start a communication with, with the Board of Aldermen and Financial Services in the Mayor's office to get a kind of conversation, to get the ball rolling, to see as we enter budget season to resolve this. I think Nashua is the only community that I know of that does this. And I know New Hampshire and Massachusetts and other states operate differently, but I've never seen a Contract Agreement, Franchise Fee Agreement to go half into General Fund, and 1% to go to PEG. If you're a Comcast subscriber, a cable subscriber, that line item should go back into local, operating local for the purposes of programming. And it's not there for these folks that are working for,

They're trying their best. And I think we need to be able to support that as a resident. Again, for the record, Rony Camille, we need to be able to do that. So that's the motion I'm putting on the table.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Alright. There's a motion. So, we'll have to discussion. Alderman Jette

Alderman Jette:

Thank you. So, I think this is a good thing. I mean, there are two, at least two ways of looking at this. One is the franchise fee, as you pointed out is basically to the City's payment by Comcast, for the use of the public, right of way, the wires that are going, along the sides of the streets. So, one way of looking at that is that, a franchise fee. It has nothing to do with the product that is being generated. And that's income to the City that should go into the General Fund, the expense of running the three government channels or could be just looked at as an expense of the City.

It's a public service that the City provides, like the roads and the sewer and well, not the sewer, because that's a dedicated fund, but the other City expenses we don't have revenue that is specifically dedicated to that thing. The other way, and probably the easier way of looking at it is to say, okay, this franchise fee, is related, you know to these TV channels that we're operating. And so, the franchise fee ought to be used to pay for that. And probably the easiest thing to do would be to ask to amend the motion to ask that the City split the, the franchise fee, 2%, 2%, that seems like an easier way of improving the money.

But as, as the franchise fees go down that pool is going to get less and less so that 2% is going to keep going down. I think probably the better way of doing it right now, but I think in the future we ought to be looking at making the argument that this is a City service, this is a public service, and the City, whatever it costs reasonably the City ought to submit a budget. And the City, the Mayor remember the budget process starts with the Mayor. It doesn't start with the Alderman. It's the Mayor's budget that the Alderman then look at and either approve or amend or whatever. So you got to start with the Mayor as Director Cummings has pointed out that's the way to go.

And I think probably I've said a lot, but I guess my point is I would like to move to amend the motion to make it a direct ask to the Mayor that the franchise fee be split 2%, 2% for the upcoming fiscal year. And I think that's a concrete thing that the Mayor can deal with. And then hopefully he'll approve it and it'll get into the it'll be part of his budget. And I don't see the Alderman I think it's an easier sell if people agree, but, so I would make a motion to amend.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

There's a motion to amend. I need discussion of the motion to amend.

Cole Morgan:

Just a quick comment, Mr. Morgan. initially, I didn't want to agree because I think maybe finding a number that we want to have guaranteed at a minimum would be the best thing for our long-term survival, because as this is decreasing 15% over five years, like much higher some years it looks like it was 6% in one year alone. So, 10% this year from last year to this year right now. So it's increasing an alarming rate. So while this is a great fix for the next two years you know, very quickly we could be back at our number within, I think it's 10% this year within very few years we could be back at this number. So we're kind of kicking the can down the road, right? But the numbers make sense in our favor for now. So if you think, I just wanted to pose the question. If you think this is something that we could get done now I agree, but the question would be what would it take to get a more long-term solution on the books? And this probably isn't the timer forum for that discussion, but I don't know if that changes your motion.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

I think if I could just interrupt or interject the idea of a long-term solution, when we're talking about a City budget, my understanding is that nothing that would be done in this budget would be binding on future budgets. Future Mayors, future Board of Alderman's can change anything that's imposed by the City. That was the benefit to having the carve-outs in the franchise agreement. And that has provided us more stability as far as keeping us somewhat separate from the ordinary budget process which we were under in the previous regime where it was basically that the, well, at the time it was only the government channel was seen as a City service, which going back to the discussion about the cord cutting people, that is a much more fair thing for the people that are subject to cord cutting.

I remember because having it come out of the City budget, because it is, they are members part of the City and they would be contributing to the General Fund. But sorry for the digression there. Basically, a long-term solution is not something that you would find in the budget process or even for the City to recognize that this is in fact a City service because there will be always fluctuation there, and it will be based on the budgeted expense. So, the fact that we have been able through surpluses in the past to have built up a reserve fund to pay for Capital Improvements beyond what Comcast included as capital disbursements as part of the franchise agreements will be something that won't be available to us if we're looking at it purely as a budget item.

Cole Morgan:

That makes sense. Thank you.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Any other discussion of the motion to amend?

Pete Johnson:

I don't know if Ron's original amendment, did you say all of the, the franchise fees? I thought you just said start a discussion.

Rony Camille:

I think we need to have Mr. Chair for you. We need to have a conversation with the mayor and figure out...

Pete Johnson:

So, you weren't suggesting any specific amount

Rony Camille:

I'm not suggesting any specific amount right now. I mean, in the perfect world, all of it should go to PEG.

Pete Johnson:

I think in general, there are so many people that just don't understand the process and what a franchise fee is, and who's actually paying for this. So, having that discussion with the Mayor and the Board of Alderman eventually, and I would tend to think that most of them have no clue how this is paid for other than they think it's part of the City budget.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Mr. Poehnert?

Jeff Poehnert:

Well, I would think that 2%, 2% is a good way to go. But you open the conversation with the Mayor that this is something that's going to be kind of ongoing. We have to watch this. As the revenue, whatever the revenue is down the road.

Cole Morgan:

Cole Morgan. I think that the key that I think you said Mr. Jette was that Alderman Jette is if we have a chance to sidestep this standard budget process by using another process, which is the adjustment of the rate anytime that we can avoid more process with a simpler process, I think is probably the way to go until that doesn't serve us. So, if we can almost double our fee, or our revenue, that's a huge win with the understanding that we're probably going to have to have this conversation again in two years. But again, if that's a simpler process, I think that we do that until we get to the full amount. And when that no longer funds us in whatever, four to 10 years, it'll be a different problem anyways.

I do think, and one more comment, sorry, Rony, thank you. Chat. GPTI asked it what the normal fee split is across the country. And it did say that it's about an even split to 75%, 25, 75% to PEG. So it's quite common that it's split in the city to the General Fund but it generally is at least half. So, I would put us in line.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Alderman Jette.

Alderman Jette:

So, you keep saying two years, but the budget is just a one year, so the budget that we're looking at is for Fiscal Year 25. So Correct. So this would, I think this, we're just talking about the, for the next year. So, after we get, you know, the thing that I'm concerned with is that, as Director Cummings has pointed

out, the budget is starting and we got get in there right away. And the idea of having a discussion I think is a good idea, but that's going to take a, a while. And we want to get into this upcoming budget and that's just for one year. And so as soon as this budget is over, we can start talking about the next one and talk about a more long term solution. But for right now, I'm just suggesting that going 2% is probably attainable. I don't know if Director Cummings, he has more of an insight into what the budget is. And he's at the ground. He really, when you're talking about the Mayor's budget, you're really talking about Mr. Cummings.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

I see Mr. Miseirvitch

Nick Miseirvitch, IT CIO:

Nick Miseirvitch, I agree with Alderman Jette amendment that we go in and request a 2%, 2% split. That will hopefully be easier for the Mayor to accept. And since it's just the one budget year, it helps us in the next coming year. But we do have to have these discussions sooner rather than later.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Anyone else? Mr. Mr. Cummings you've been mentioned a few times.

Tim Cummings, Administrative Services Director):

I think what I'm hearing from this committee is a good plan. What I'm not sure of is how you put this plan into action. And so, what I would offer is if you'd like if Mr. Chair you want to put some sort of draft communication together, my office would be happy to work with you in getting that official communication finalized for signature. And then we would be happy to coordinate a meeting with the Mayor. Sometime over the next month or so. So, you can have that communication before February. I will say that we have a lot of pressures on us. It's always a tough budget what you're experiencing in terms of inflation and costs in that 10% projected decrease in funding is not dissimilar to any of the other departments that we're seeing in other expenses. So just from an orientation standpoint we have a lot of other service providers like yourself are facing similar type challenges. And so, we're very aware and cognizant of that, and that's why we often say going into budget season it's a tough budget. Thank you.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Alright. So, we need to vote on the motion to amend all those in favor.

All:

Aye.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

All those opposed. All right. Motion to amend has passed and we'll vote on the original motion. All those in favor?

All:

Aye.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

All those opposed? All right. That motion passes.

Pete Johnson:

Do you want to set a committee or something to meet quickly to go over that?

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

I will if people are interested in serving on a committee to draft that communication maybe you could contact me offline. I think you all have my email and we'll proceed with that.

Tim Cummings, Administrative Services Director:

I just have to insert that if you do, do that, I just, want to be cognizant of the right to know law and RSA 91 A. Please don't establish quorum and do communications via email, but set a time to meet and have that conversation.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Moving on to old business. I think we've actually covered all of the items that were listed under old business in the PEG manager's report and new business. There is the request for edit for approval of the purchase of the editing CPUs. Is there a motion with regard to that

Alderman Jette:

Mr. Chair? Motion to approve the editing CPU purchase?

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

All right. There's a motion from Alderman Jette. Any discussion of the motion?

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

If not, all those in favor

All:

Aye

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

All those opposed, alright, the motion passes. Also under new business we had the Tel View broadcast system, which we've already received the update. So, we currently are still without members of the public present, so remarks by members.

Unknown Speaker:

Thank you, Mr. Chair. again, we need to have these conversations about the future of PEG and revenue. I mean, it can be one day where people decide not to do cable just exclusively streaming. We're seeing the trends across the country where cable providers are doing exclusively streaming. I mean the contracts being signed, the last franchise contract might be the last one that we may have. We may not have another opportunity. We're seeing some of our counterparts in other states filing legislation for

streaming. And that's something that we may need to have conversations with our state legislators about. So, but I commend our folks on the ground and all three channels for doing the work that they're doing. But again, the trends are going down and down quarter by quarter. And we need to address it.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Mr. Miseirvitch.

Nick Miseirvitch, IT CIO:

Nick Miseirvitch. I'd like to commend Mr. Johnson and his team on the increased broadcasts for the sporting events. And even though the streaming view age may be not the greatest of numbers, but I'm sure the friends and families of those students appreciate your work. Thank you.

Pete Johnson:

Thank you.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Alderman Jette

Alderman Jette:

Thank you. So, I wanted to thank the BRB people for the debates. And I know you had a problem with the first one, but that, I know it wasn't your fault. You were called in at the last minute and the facility was not set up the way you wanted to, but the others were fine. And a lot of people commented about it. It was with the unfortunate demise. Demise maybe not be the right word, but the fact that the Telegraph is covering the city less and less it seems, although this new reporter Chris Roberson, is doing a lot more than was what was done in the recent past.

It still pales in comparison to what we used to get when the Telegraph provided daily coverage. And it's I don't understand why. I mean, Conway has a daily newspaper. Lebanon has a daily newspaper. Portsmouth. I mean, the fact that Nashua cannot have a daily news coverage with a newspaper is really unfortunate. And so, people trying to find out can what candidates stood for, who they were, what their ideas were, people were really thirsting for that. And covering the debates provided a great service. And I want to thank you and encourage anything you can do along those lines, would be great. And I'm disappointed that the Board of Alderman doesn't generate a million hits but you do have a good audience though.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

Mr. Poehnert

Jeff Poehnert:

No, just one thing, I obviously check the YouTube numbers and people are watching. I mean, people are, are going and viewing the meetings so that's good to see. It's really good to see.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

All right. Any other remarks?

Jeff Poehnert:

Motion to adjourn

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

There's a motion to adjourn. All those in favor?

All:

Aye.

Andrew Cernota, Chairman:

All those opposed? Motion passes.

Happy holidays.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:31 am.

DRAFT