



# Vernon Area Cable Advisory Council

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## VERNON AREA CABLE ADVISORY COUNCIL Minutes of Meeting dated January 23, 2019

Community Voice Channel Conference Room  
105 Notch Road  
Bolton, Connecticut

Attending Members: Paul Batterson, Tolland Representative; Justin Waine, Ellington; Larry Perosino, Tolland; Elaine Buchardt, Andover.

Attending Guests: Nick Lavigne, CVC Executive Director, Matt Skane, Manager Government & Regulatory Affairs for Comcast

1. **Call to Order. Review of Last Meeting.** Paul Batterson called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m. in the Community Voice Channel Meeting Room. Elaine Buchardt made a motion, seconded by Larry Perosino to approve the minutes of the October 3, 2018 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.
2. **Comcast Report – Matt Skane –** Matt provided a written report on recent Comcast activities. He reported that Comcast opened nearly 140,000 Xfinity WiFi hotspots in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont to help residents and emergency personnel stay connected following Winter Storm Harper. These hotspots were available to anyone who needed them including non-Xfinity customers for free and remained open until Tuesday, January 22, 2019.

Matt shared that Comcast celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy with a one-of-a-kind interactive digital mosaic (VisionsOfKing.com) made up of pictures and videos of people sharing their vision of King's dream. In addition, in February, Xfinity TV will celebrate Black History Month with a special curated destination within Black Film & TV that focuses on a new generation of influencers and icons shaping the culture and issues facing the African-American community, as well as culturally specific TV and movie collections.

Matt Skane's report included a programming contract webpage:  
<https://www.xfinity.com/support/articles/xfinity-programming-contract-renewals-channel-list>

Matt Skane presented Paul Batterson, Chair with Comcast's annual support check to the VACAC for \$2,000.

Larry Perosino asked where would be the best place to get information on Xfinity mobile's wireless platform. Matt Skane provided VACAC members with handouts with Xfinity apps that includes a brief summary of each. He said one could go through the Xfinity website, which lists what promotions they are currently running. People can also visit the Xfinity store on New Britain Avenue in West Hartford.

Larry Perosino also inquired about internet extender xFi pods and what they are. Matt said they provide a means to build a mesh network in your home by using the xFi App on your phone to install the xFi pods to improve wi-fi coverage. They can be found online or in an Xfinity store. He said there is a simple set-up and there is an app to help you do the set-up. They come in packages of three for \$119 plus tax and six for \$199 plus tax. He said these pods communicate with each other and are very helpful in homes in

Connecticut with old infrastructure. He has them himself and has found them very helpful. Additionally, there is no monthly cost associated with them.

Matt Skane reviewed programming updates for 2019. A set of Indian TV channels are no longer available since earlier this month, and there have been changes to the Hindi package. Also, effective January 30, 2019, "Z Living HD" will no longer be in operation.

Justin Waine asked if Comcast is trying to streamline its packaging. Matt said looking at the big picture, Comcast is trying to do so. From a more micro view, there are some items that are strict to the region.

3. **CVC Report – Nick** - Nick Lavigne said the CVC will again be holding a "Meet the Easter Bunny" event on Saturday, April 13, where children can meet and greet the Easter Bunny and get a free hi-resolution J-peg photo with him.

On May 4, 2019 the CVC will be holding its second Gala, which they are calling "Cinco de Derby," basically a combination Cinco de Mayo/Kentucky Derby celebration. This will run from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. and will include a silent auction, raffle baskets, a 50/50 raffle, and wine pull. There will be food and, though not a tasting event, it will include Labyrinth brewery, a cider provider, and a margarita station. An illusionist and a D.J. will be providing entertainment. There will be a photo booth for pictures. Early bird tickets are \$60 per person through March 4. Tickets sold after March 4 will be \$70 per person. Tickets can be purchased through EventBrite, or to save on the processing fee, a check can be sent directly to the Community Voice Channel.

Nick Lavigne said small issues have been worked out with the new equipment and everything is now running smoothly. He has no prospects yet for HD television. He said Comcast is not open at this time to giving the CVC HDTV but they are hoping to circumvent that problem at some point. He said physical channels for HD exist, but transmitting HD to Comcast is a problem as the equipment to and from facilities needs to be changed. Nick said he priced out the equipment and a fiber system would run about \$15,000 while a fiber IP system would run about \$18,000.

Matt Skane said Comcast (like other cable providers in Connecticut) is not required to provide HD PEG channels. He also said that there are costs associated with adding HD PEG channels that are prohibitive and the business is not taking that route. He said one option is that customers can use their X1 platform to speak into their remote to ask to see HD programming on You-tube channels.

Elaine Buchardt said there is a much larger issue going on between cable companies and public access television which has left things in a flux. Nick Lavigne said in Connecticut, public access television is paid for through cable subscriber fees and as more subscribers leave for other options, that funding is becoming depleted. He said in 2008 the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) instituted a system using subscriber fees and inflation in an effort to stabilize income for public access television, and while it was intended to protect public access, the system turned out to be flawed. Additionally, there is a fund called PEGPITIA which is supposed to be available to public access television for grant monies, but each year the State ends up sweeping that money into the general fund. Elaine Buchardt said a member of the CVC Board is trying to get on the PURA Advisory Board to hopefully have more of a say in matters.

The VACAC discussed supporting the CVC Gala. Paul Batterson made a motion, seconded by Elaine Buchardt to purchase eight tickets for the Gala for a total of \$480.

4. **VACAC Financial Report – Paul** – Paul Batterson distributed an up-to-date report. With the check received this evening from Comcast, their account will have \$6,592.10. Paul passed around a bill he received for their website domain, which was over \$200 and he had not paid. The fee should normally be only about \$10 to \$20 for a year. It was from another company, determined to be a scam, and will not be paid.
5. **Scholarships – Paul** - There was consensus to provide \$1,000 scholarships for a high school student pursuing a career in media or related area for each of the five schools in their catchment area---Bolton, Ellington, RHAM, Rockville and Tolland High Schools. With a total scholarship payout of \$5,000 and the \$480 for the Gala tickets, this will leave the VACAC with about \$1,000 left in their account.

There was also consensus to hold an event at the CVC to present the scholarships, so as to promote the CVC, expose scholarship winners to the facility, and make it a more memorable experience. Nick Lavigne said he has a strong candidate for the RHAM scholarship. Justin Waine said he would select an Ellington High School recipient, and Larry Perosino said he would contact Tolland High School. Letters will be sent to Justin's counterparts at Bolton and Rockville High Schools to select their recipients. There was consensus to hold the presentation event in May or June.

6. **Schedule Next Meeting** – The VACAC scheduled their next meeting for 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 10 at the Community Voice Channel.

Respectfully submitted

Annie Gentile  
Recording Secretary