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**VERNON AREA CABLE ADVISORY COUNCIL  
Minutes of Meeting dated March 26, 2014**

**Community Voice Channel Conference Room  
105 Notch Road  
Bolton, Connecticut**

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VERNON TOWN CLERK  
14 APR -2 AM 10:39

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

Attending Guests: John Bairos, Comcast; Nick Lavigne CVC Executive Director

1. Call to Order, review of last meeting: Paul Batterson called the meeting to order at 7:18 p.m. in the Community Voice Channel Conference Room. Justin Waine made a motion, seconded by Elaine Buchardt to accept the minutes of the January 29, 2014 meeting. Motion was unanimously approved.
2. Comcast Report – John Bairos – John Bairos reported a few lineup changes. The “Military Channel” has been renamed “American Heroes.” Also, they have added the “Sportsman’s Channel” to the lineup.

John reported that former CVC president Deb Hilton was recently sentenced in court. He said CVC Board President Marie Burbank reported that CVC is continuing to negotiate their insurance claims for Ms. Hilton’s theft and is also continuing to pursue a civil lawsuit against her.

3. Proposed Merger of Comcast with Time Warner – Paul Batterson distributed copies of an editorial written by Ann McFeatters regarding the merger. He expressed his disappointment over the proposed merger, saying Comcast’s getting larger should be a concern, and that the larger these companies grow, the less competition there is. He said he finds that prices for cable programming have skyrocketed over the last several years and that Comcast will have greater control over our news content. In general he feels that television is becoming an arm of big business, and that this is a disturbing trend.

Members discussed the pros and cons of such acquisitions at length. Elaine Buchardt said while she sees a lot more commercials during programming, she also does enjoy the cable shows more so than network shows. Nick Lavigne said he finds that one advantage of bundling is that it enables the little shows that don’t have a big viewer base the opportunity to thrive and reach their audience. Paul Batterson said he feels the quality of programming has suffered with the expansion of cable. The group discussed risings costs for cable programming and that it is becoming something that

divides the haves and have-nots. Justin Waine noted, however, that the cost of everything is rising, not just cable.

4. CVC Report – Nick Lavigne – Nick reported that the computer he ordered arrived in early March from Apple and it will have Adobe Creative Cloud software.

He said they also decided to go with the Castus broadcasting system and they are awaiting a date for when they can start installing. The Castus system will give them the ability to ingest and schedule video so they can send it out to Comcast. Nick had a few technical questions for John Bairos about how they can coordinate with Comcast and he will send those questions in writing to him.

Nick said they are working with Tolland High School helping them out in putting together a Broadcasting and Journalism class.

Justin Waine said they have a similar program at Ellington High School and next year he and an English teacher will be teaching a course called, Journalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Students who take the course will earn both a Technical credit and an English credit. Justin said one of the requirements will be for students to put in 120 hours outside class time doing such things as filming and editing. He said, however, that they are finding students are turned off by the 120 hour requirement, as most students have a number of other outside activities on their plates. He expects the program to run, but is unsure how popular it will be. Nick asked if CVC will be able to get the shows from that course. Justin said he would expect so, and they are aiming for a quarterly show.

Nick Lavigne said Tolland High School is trying to tie in a public speaking credit with MCC as a carrot to taking the course. However, one challenge is that it has to meet MCC guidelines. Justin Waine noted that a problem for Ellington High is that the students want to play sports in college so they want to take courses that are NCAA approved and the NCAA can deny course credits. They recently denied credit for a course being offered at Ellington High as the outline was not specific enough for them.

Nick Lavigne added to John Bairos' update on the case with Deb Hilton, noting she received an eight-year sentence.

Justin asked Nick if there is any possibility of getting programs on guide data for CVC. Nick said he has been to a number of conferences where this has come up, but no one is yet willing to provide that. He said the programming guide can be found in the Journal Inquirer and internet or you can get one from the CVC, but so far, you cannot just press your remote when watching the Community Voice Channel to get that data. John Bairos noted that you can go to the CVC's community bulletin board, but you have to wait for when a show is not airing to see the bulletin board.

Nick reported that administratively all is going well. He also asked John Bairos if there was a possibility that CVC could have an HD channel to broadcast to through Comcast. John Bairos said right now it is cost-prohibitive.

5. Treasurer's Report – Paul Batterson distributed the Treasurer's Report showing the latest activity.
6. Spending VACAC funds – Proposals – Paul Batterson noted that they now have over \$8,500 in funds and they need to make some concrete plans for using that money. He proposed offering a \$1,500 scholarship to one student in each of the five high schools in their serving area, for a total of \$7,500. He suggested the scholarship should go to a student who is committed to media study. Paul asked Justin if he would be willing to talk to the principal at Ellington High School and he would be willing to talk to the principals at the other four high schools.

Paul said he would like to give out checks this school year, so if they go this route, they need to move quickly. Elaine Bucharadt suggested they go with a smaller scholarship per school, for example \$1000, or \$500 or \$750 so they could do this multiple years. She also suggested reserving some small funds, perhaps \$50 or \$100 each, for rewarding adults and students who volunteer their time in the communities they serve to tape public meetings. Paul said he felt it is the purview of local governments to pay for or acknowledge community volunteers who tape public meetings. His concern about giving smaller scholarships is that the money doesn't go very far for the students. He said he would prefer to give most of it out this year and then repeat the process once every three years or so.

Justin Waine questioned if they have enough time to get this accomplished this year and suggested it might be better to put it in motion now to give out scholarships next year. He noted that the Technology Department at his school picked their recipient for the Rockville Bank Scholarship two months ago. He also asked who should be determining the criteria for who receives the scholarships. Should it be the VACAC or the schools? Paul felt they should leave it to the jurisdiction of the schools. Nick Lavigne asked if there are any governmental requirements (taxes, etc.) regarding giving out scholarships. Paul said there are not. The scholarships are gifts, and the VACAC is free to do what they wish with their funds. There was some additional discussion about criteria. Paul Batterson felt need should be a factor, as college is a big expense.

Members asked John Bairos about the annual Comcast scholarships and how they go about awarding them. John said Comcast considers leadership, community involvement, and academic achievement for the awards and they use a third party to review and make recommendations for who should receive the scholarships.

There was also discussion about who should be approached at the individual schools—the principals, the technology teachers, or the guidance counselors. Paul Batterson felt they should first approach the principals of the schools to be sure they were informed and had their blessing. The group also discussed whether the recipients of the scholarships should be students who are planning to further their education in a media-related field, which may be more difficult to ascertain, or whether they should award the scholarships to students who have contributed to media in school but who are not necessarily going to pursue a career in that field.

After further discussion, VACAC members agreed that they would award the scholarships to students who have contributed to the media department during their high school careers and/or who plan to further their education in this field. They also agreed that Justin and Paul would approach the principals of the five high schools to get recommended candidates. They agreed that they should have these names by May 1 so that if the schools have an awards recognition night in May or early June that the checks could be given to the students at that time. Additionally, if a school chooses not to participate, then they forfeit that opportunity this year.

Paul Batterson made a motion, seconded by Elaine Buchardt to authorize Paul Batterson to approach four principals and for Justin Waine to approach one principal to discuss the scholarship offering and for allocation of \$7,500 of their funds (\$1,500 to each of the five schools in the areas the VACAC serves) for the scholarships. The motion was unanimously approved.

7. Other Matters – The VACAC agreed that they would need to set up a special meeting separate from their next regular meeting to firm up the scholarship discussion. The meeting was set for Thursday, May 8, at 7:00 p.m. in the CVC Conference Room. It will not be necessary for Nick Lavigne or John Bairos to attend this meeting.

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, June 11 at 7:00 p.m. in the CVC Conference Room.

Elaine Buchardt made a motion, seconded by Justin Waine, to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile  
Recording Secretary