

Approved

Town of Grantham
Comcast – Public Comment Session
May 10, 2017

The Comcast – Public Comment Session was called to order at 7:00pm on Wednesday, May 10, 2017 by Select Board Chairman Sheridan Brown. The meeting was held in the Grantham Town Building, Lower Level at 300 Route 10 South, Grantham, NH.

Present: Chairman Sheridan Brown; Selectman Warren Kimball; Selectman Constance Jones; Mary Hutchins; C. Peter James; Elizabeth Menard; Anselm Chuh; Jane Chuh; Frances Espie; Grant Espie; Bob Moulton; Chris McIntyre; Comcast Representative Melissa Pierce; and others

COMCAST – PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION

This Comcast - Public Comment Session is being held by the Board of Selectmen for residents to provide input to influence the town's franchise renewal negotiations with Comcast. The Town's franchising authority is limited to Cable Television only and the Town has no authority over internet or phone services.

The following residents commented:

Elizabeth Menard, Route 10 North, Grantham, NH addressed the Board and shared her extreme unhappiness with not being able to get Comcast at her residence.

C. Peter James, 28 Splitrock Road, Grantham, NH, said he is one of the lucky residents on Splitrock Road who does have access to Comcast service. He said he didn't understand why the residents at the end of his road and some other parts of town don't get Comcast. He felt that cable television was going to be obsolete soon and that it was more important to have access to high speed internet.

Grant Espie, 416 Splitrock Road, Grantham, NH stated that the population of Grantham has increased, however, he did not feel that they would ever meet the Comcast requirement of 25 houses per mile to receive Comcast service. He thought that Comcast should look at revising their policy. He asked Comcast Representative Melissa Pierce if one has access to Comcast Cable if they would automatically have access to high speed internet. Pierce said she is not supposed to answer questions.

Chris McIntyre, 700 New Aldrich Road, Grantham, NH said that he is one of the residents on New Aldrich Road who does not have access to Comcast Cable and reiterated the problem of having 25 houses per mile to qualify and asked if Comcast negotiated that in the current Franchise Agreement because they don't want to invest in the infrastructure because in the near future coaxial cable will be replaced with something else. Chairman Brown explained that the current Franchise Agreement was negotiated with Adelphia which was later acquired by Comcast so Comcast did not have anything to do with the negotiations of that density

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requirement. McIntyre asked if the current Franchise Agreement is posted online somewhere and commented that many of the residents here would have liked to have educated themselves prior to this meeting and it would have been helpful with transparency. Chairman Brown replied that considering the age of the Agreement, he doubted it was posted online and added that he didn't know if it would have been particularly helpful because it was something that was negotiated 15 years ago and pointed out that the Board could very well have let it automatically renew for five years which is what would have happened if they didn't make the decision to terminate that Agreement and renegotiate it now so they are acting proactively to try and improve the service area. McIntyre asked if the coverage maps are proprietary. Brown stated that they are and the Board is bound by a non-disclosure agreement to not share that information.

Ed Chuh, 28 Wildwood, Grantham, NH stated he has full Comcast service where he lives but can fully appreciate the problem others have who do not get Comcast. He said he is a retired computer professional and he has always depended on Comcast internet service but what concerned him was if Comcast leaves the area, the broadband service also travels on the same feed so if we were to lose that, it would be a problem and he asked for Comcast to make a consideration for areas such as Grantham.

C. Peter James commented that the time for Comcast to provide cable is when new houses are being built, not 10 years later.

Elizabeth Menard commented that she didn't want Comcast to assume that houses with dishes on them would not want to switch to Comcast.

Bob Moulton, 680 Route 10 North, Grantham, NH said he has Comcast at his business in Lebanon and Dish TV at home and would prefer to have Comcast. He wished Comcast would talk to people who have Dish TV to ask what they would prefer.

Chairman Brown said he had one question and explained that the Town receives a franchise fee as part of its Franchise Agreement. The fee is two percent (2%) of customers' bills. He asked for a show of hands of anyone who would be supportive of an increase in the franchise fee of three to five percent (3-5%) to support broader coverage if that would be a way to get the build out and try to cover the whole town. C. Peter James said he didn't understand and asked for clarification. Chairman Brown explained that the Town would not get the money, that it is a mechanism some towns have used to return a portion of the franchise fee to the cable operator to cover the cost of a build out. James asked what the town does with that money. Chairman Brown replied most of it goes into the general fund and the town has used some of it to repair the cable access channel. A majority of residents did not support that proposal.

Chairman Brown stated that the Selectmen hope to complete the ascertainment process by the end of June and they will hold a public hearing sometime after that on the renewal proposal that Comcast brings to the Board and that will be a more formal proceeding than this one. He thanked everyone for coming and closed the public comment section of the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Selectman Kimball moved to adjourn, seconded by Selectman Jones; **by unanimous vote, the Board adjourned at 6:49pm.**

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The next Selectmen's Meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 17, 2017 at 8:00am in the Grantham Town Building; Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room at 300 Route 10 South, Grantham, NH.

Respectfully submitted,



Ann Jasper
Administrative Assistant