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Gettysburg Borough Council: Human Relations Board * Comcast Agreement

July 31, 2020 by Charles Stangor



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The Gettysburg Borough Council is close to signing a new 10-year agreement with its cable television and internet service provider, Comcast Cable Communications, LLC, which sells cable TV and internet services under the brand name Xfinity.

Gable said the old agreement had expired in February and that the borough was working with other municipalities on the negotiations for the new one.

Gable said in the new agreement the borough would

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receive a cable franchise fee of 5% of Comcast's gross revenue. This fee is paid by users and will appear as a separate line item on their bills.

Gable said the borough has negotiated new regulations about maintaining service and billing to make it easier for consumers, as well as agreements on reporting and complaints.

Under the new agreement, customers will receive credit for any service disruptions greater than six hours.

Comcast agreed to provide a Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) access channel to be used for educational and governmental activities and will continue provide service to governmental buildings.

Comcast will also provide a one-time \$10,500 grant, equal to .1% of its revenue for previous 12 months. The borough said they would give the money to Community Media of South Central PA, a non-profit 501(c)3 media company that informs, celebrates, and entertains the people of Adams and York County and surrounding counties.

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Gable said the agreement with Comcast did not preclude the borough from signing contracts with other cable TV providers.

Board member John Lawver noted there was no Comcast office in Gettysburg and that residents would have to go to Shippensburg if they needed to exchange a broken cable box. That's a "piss poor situation, particularly for elderly residents," said Lawver.

Lawver also expressed concerns about extra wires being left unattended when Comcast service installations were uninstalled.

Board member Patti Lawson suggested that Comcast trucks, which are regularly in Gettysburg, could provide new cable boxes to consumers.

Board member Matt Moon reminded the borough that the franchise fee is paid for by customers. "The users pay that fee. It's not like they're paying to be here."

"We are dealing with what is essentially a monopoly,"

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Human Relations Committee

The council discussed the composition of the Human Relations Commission that would deal with potential sexual orientation complaints stemming from the new LGBT ordinance.

Although details are still to be worked out, one proposed plan would be to have five members and an alternate, appointed by the borough council, made up of people experienced with the issues.

Borough Solicitor Harold Eastman said he thought the board should not include a member of the council. "You would want the body to not have the appearance it was under the control of the borough government," said Eastman.

Negotiation training would be provided by the state to board members at no cost to the borough.

Lawson said there were plenty of people who had said they would volunteer to be on the committee, and that the borough needs this committee "now more than ever."

Lawyer expressed concern about not having a borough council member on the committee, saying "We're going to appoint a commission that is possibly going to handle very sticky issues. My concern is that we could ultimately be held liable for their decision and we have no input if we have nobody on council there."

Eastman said the ordinance will be "complaint driven" and that any borough committee could potentially be

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subject to litigation.

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Eastman said there would be some costs associated with the committee, but what these costs might be was not immediately apparent.

Other business

In other business the borough appointed a sub-committee to help recruit members and provide continuity to its nine authorities, boards, and commissions.

“The borough has always struggled to find members to sit on its authorities, boards and commissions,” said Gable.

Board members Matt Moon and Judie Butterfield will be part of the new committee.

The borough’s code enforcement department is exploring a new ticketing system in which a warning ticket with a prescribed number of days to comply would be issued and if compliance is not reached in that timeframe a ticket with a small fine would be issued.

The goal of the proposed change is to reduce the time needed for code enforcement officers to do their work, and to shift some of the cost burden for code enforcement to those who violate the codes.

The borough will not collect the mechanical device tax this year. The tax, which is \$50 per machine per year, is based on the number of machines in a business into which people insert coins or tokens for entertainment or amusement.

The borough also provided more details about the residential and commercial revolving loan program. The final details are still being worked out

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