



Conor Baldwin
Chief Financial Officer

Austin Ball
Deputy CFO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas A. Golden, Jr., City Manager 
FROM: Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer 
CC: Mirán Fernandez, Chief Information Officer/ Cable Coordinator
DATE: July 19, 2023
SUBJECT: **INFORMATIONAL** - City of Lowell Cable Franchise License Renewal Process

Please be advised that the city, as cable television licensing authority under MGL 166A, s. 1, will hold and conduct a public cable license renewal ascertainment hearing on July 27, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. at: City Hall, Mayor's Reception Room, 375 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA as part of the City's license renewal proceedings pertaining to Comcast of Southern New England, Inc.

Interested persons may also attend and participate remotely through an electronic platform by desktop, laptop, tablet or phone via the following link or number(s):

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://lowellma.zoom.us/j/87838494293?pwd=blITZ0NUa2hNWTJCNUZ5RjJrVC9PUT09>

Meeting ID: 878 3849 4293 | Passcode: 562260

One tap mobile

+1-305-224-1968,,87838494293#,,,,*562260# US

+1-309-205-3325,,87838494293#,,,,*562260# US

The City of Lowell's current Comcast license expires on October 10, 2023. The federal Cable Act, 47 USC 546, requires a public proceeding to ascertain the community's cable-related needs and interests as part of the license renewal process applicable to expiring cable licenses. Public comment is invited and encouraged regarding the City's Comcast license renewal needs going forward and regarding cable operator past performance. For further information and copies of renewal records, members of the public can contact MIS c/o Mirán Fernandez, City Hall. The hearing shall be issued by order of the City Manager, as License Issuing Authority for the City of Lowell.



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City of Lowell Cable Franchise Renewal License Ascertainment Public Hearing

When?

4:00PM - 6:00PM on July 27, 2023 (Thursday)

Where?

City Hall, Mayor's Reception Room (2nd Floor)

Why?

In accordance with the Federal Communications Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable, Comcast of Southern New England (Comcast) currently has a Cable Television Franchise License with the City of Lowell (City), which is set to expire on 10/10/2023 and which both Comcast and the City are interested in renewing. This license governs the services and financial support which Comcast delivers to the City in support of Public, Education, and Government (PEG) cable facilities. During the renewal process, public hearing is conducted in order to allow the community and local stakeholders an opportunity to deliver testimony about the benefits from the local facilities, how the City and public need these benefits to continue, and why it makes sense for Comcast to continue to provide these services and financial support to the City.

In addition to attending, enclosed are several generic document templates which anyone attending or unable to attend may complete and submit as a part of the record to indicate their support, and to share their thoughts regarding cable related needs and interests. Note that even if someone is attending, completing the written document is helpful for the record. Comcast will be in attendance, and it is critical that they hear from the members of the public in our community, including stakeholders about our cable related needs.

Please note that "cable related needs" is a key phrase to be used over and over again. Testimony doesn't need to be legalistic or technical - just hearing from the heart, strong support for needing to continue and grow the local channels, studios, and the I-Net are what matters. Need and growth are often a common focus.

The City welcomes all stakeholders and members of the public to attend these hearings to have their voices heard and go on the record to publicly support the renewal of this license.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____

Mirán Fernandez

City of Lowell

375 Merrimack Street, MIS Room 2

Lowell, MA 01852 Email: mfernandez@lowellma.gov

Dear Mr. Fernandez,

As a resident of Lowell, and Comcast cable subscriber who frequently watches programming on Lowell's Public Education and Government (PEG) access channels (8, 22, 95, and 99), I am writing to share my thoughts with you regarding my cable related needs and interests. Could you please ensure that they are shared at the public hearings and incorporated into the Comcast Cable Franchise ascertainment process?

Now that it is firmly established that we are living in "a digital age", doesn't it make sense that we be making better use of the technology available to us? I was surprised to learn during the earlier ascertainment hearing that while LTC produces shows in HD, it is forced to "dumb it down" to standard definition formats for broadcasts within the City, resulting in a reduced audio/video quality which defeats the purpose of having a digital HD TV! Why doesn't Comcast provide the City with HD channels? I find it odd that I can select products to shop from home via HD, but am forced to watch grainy video of our civic leaders and other local broadcasts. We pay enough for Comcast, and should be allowed to watch PEG programming in HD.

Also, while I appreciate the ability to select from hundreds (thousands?) of television shows "on demand", I fail to understand why I can't do so to access PEG programming? This seems like a "no brainer", particularly since you need the full box (as opposed to the DTA) to access on demand programming, which means Comcast will make even MORE money, while delivering me the choices I want, since it is often difficult to schedule my life around the shows I want to watch.

While we are on the topic, why isn't PEG programming incorporated into the Comcast channel guide? Another no-brainer, no? It would be nice to be able to see what is playing when! If they the guide can show a block that indicates "government programming" or something like that, then it seems that all they need is to accept the programming schedule from LTC in a format that can be included in what they already have.

In closing I want to voice my strong support for continued funding of LTC and Channel 22, and for increased capital funding, which would allow critical investments which are necessary in order to maintain the high level of local content they deliver to me and others in Lowell. For scheduling reasons, many of us can't often attend the civic meetings or local events we would like to, and their local content is invaluable.

Sincerely,

SAMPLE LETTER - CONCERNED CITIZEN

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____

Mirán Fernandez

City of Lowell

375 Merrimack Street, MIS Room 2

Lowell, MA 01852 Email: mfernandez@lowellma.gov

Dear Mr. Fernandez,

As a senior citizen, resident of Lowell, and Comcast cable subscriber who frequently watches programming on Lowell's Public Education and Government (PEG) access channels (8, 22, 95, and 99), I am writing to share my thoughts with you regarding my cable related needs and interests. Could you please ensure that they are shared at the public hearings and incorporated into the Comcast Cable Franchise ascertainment process?

Being a senior citizen on a fixed income, I cannot stress enough the importance of the Senior Citizen discount Comcast provides to me and my friends, as it makes it possible for me to enjoy local cable services at the maximum price I can afford. Without the discount, I would likely be forced to cancel my Comcast access, in order to meet other basic needs. PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW COMCAST TO REDUCE, DO AWAY WITH THIS DISCOUNT, OR FURTHER CHANGE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIVING IT!

Living in an ever increasing technical age, I would very much like to see the PEG programming listed in the digital program guide Comcast offers to me, as it would much more easily allow me to identify when some of my favorite local programming is scheduled and allow me to better plan accordingly. Likewise, the ability to use Comcast's Video on Demand services, would provide me with greater viewing flexibility. Of course, the ability to make full use of my HD TV and watch local PEG programming in HD would be great, as it would allow me to receive a much better

quality of audio/video production. And, isn't it about time for another channel? Given the ever growing variety of new residents, providing a channel dedicated to Khmer, shared with another language, or just for additional programming would add so much to our diverse community.

Furthermore, I strongly support continued funding for LTC and Channel 22, and for increased capital funding, which would allow critical investments which are necessary in order to maintain the high level of local content they deliver to me and others in Lowell. Unlike many other communities, this is the only place where I can get truly local content on my government and members of my community, and I value this content, particularly when I am unable to attend the local civic meetings and activities they cover myself.

Sincerely,

SAMPLE LETTER - SENIOR CITIZEN