

Belmont Cable Access Committee (CAC)
Minutes 7/15/03
7:30 p.m., BCTV Channel 8 Studio

Attendance: John Verrilli, Chair; Mark Ventola; Larry Kutner; Pam Curtis; Mark Apostolon; Judith Sarno

The meeting was called to order by Chairman John Verrilli at 7:35 p.m. John introduced and welcomed new CAC member Pam Curtis and the new access coordinator for Arlington, Bedford, Belmont, Lexington and Watertown, Mark Apostolon. Mark is replacing Cori Morris. John thanked retiring CAC member Sue Timberlake for her years of service as a member of the committee.

Judith Sarno, chair of the "Yes for Waverley" committee was introduced. She and her committee were interested in how they might use Channel 8 to campaign for support of the by-law on the upcoming referendum on August 11. John described the policy regarding 5-minute spots on channel 8 for registered political committees and candidates. Members of the CAC also told her how the "Yes for Waverley" committee might make a 30 minute program in the studio if they were able to find a certified access producer who was willing to take on the project. A discussion of the various ways that they might use channel 8 followed, including advice on how to make the program, what was required in terms of a producer and crew, what the station's role would be and how often such a program would air. Mark Ventola agreed to notify Petcetera, the business opposing the by-law, of its rights to use channel 8 for a 5-minute political spot, assuming that it had registered a political committee.

The minutes of the meeting of June 24 were accepted, with minor revisions, including one typographical error.

Issues from the Community: Mark Ventola reported receiving calls regarding the quality of the broadcast. He said that attempts to adjust the monitor to improve the quality of the bulletin board broadcast had had a negative effect on the quality of the videotape broadcasts. Mark Apostolon commented that Belmont was in the process of being upgraded to fiberoptics, and for some reason, this causes fluctuations in the signal. This problem is being addressed.

Report on Studio Operations: Abby is currently running a summer video camp for middle school students and is also continuing to run the "Kids' Club".

Public Meetings: Mark Ventola reported that the only public meeting scheduled for this month is one between the Planning Board and the O'Neill developers. He did not have a date for the meeting yet.

CAC/CTAC Joint Committee: John discussed the work done by the committee to investigate the possibility of independent ownership of channel 8. Two potential consultants who would advise on how to set this up will make presentations to the committee.

CAC Membership: Two members of the CAC, Sue Timberlake and Bob Blakelock declined reappointment to the committee. John reported on attempts to get new members for the committee. With the addition of Pam Curtis, the CAC now has five members. When asked how large the committee needed to be, John said that there was no definite number. He indicated that he would like to see at least one more member.

Review of Finances and Capital Equipment: BCTV currently has 24,700.00 to spend on new equipment for the studio. This figure represents 10,000.00 for each of the last two years and 4,700.00 from the year before. If purchases are not made by August 8, they might not be made at all this year. Mark Apostolon explained that ComCast does all of its purchasing at one time in order to increase its bargaining position. This means that there is not much time left for the CAC to decide what equipment to purchase. Mark emphasized that the money was the committee's to spend and all decisions about what to purchase must be made by the CAC.

Mark Apostolon began the discussion by talking about the purchase of a portable "studio in a box" which could be used in the studio and on location. This might include a VCR which was a hybrid digital/SVHS, 3 small monitors, digital switcher and small audio mixer. Larry advised against getting new SVHS equipment on the grounds that this is old technology which will not be used much longer, but Mark A. pointed out that BCTV currently broadcasts SVHS tapes, so production equipment needs to include SHVS capacity. Larry talked about the NewTek Video Toaster, describing it as easy to learn, intuitive and having multiple functions. He argued for getting equipment with the needs of the access producers in mind. Access producers are amateurs and have limited time to learn new equipment, so equipment should be user friendly and easy to learn to use. It does not need to have every conceivable feature, but should be exciting enough to encourage access producers to want to use it and to recruit new producers. A discussion of whether to replace the studio cameras and/or some of the camcorders followed. The consensus was that we should purchase five new cameras, which could be used either in the studio or on location. Larry advised in favor of having all cameras the same, in the interest of making it easy for the producers to learn. After some discussion of various equipment options, including brands and models, the committee decided on the following list.

5 cameras for use in either the studio or in the field: Canon model GLT 2

Approximate cost: 12,000.00

Tripods to go with the cameras or parts for alterations of existing tripods

Approximate cost: 200.00 each (for new tripods)

VCR for control room: Panasonic mini DV-SVHS

Approximate cost: 600.00 - 800.00

Video Toaster 2 (to be upgrades to 3, when available) with accessories

Approximate cost: 6500.00

Monitors for control room (at least 2), 10"

Approximate cost: unknown

Audio mixer for control room: Mackie

Approximate cost: 300.00

Small field switcher

Approximate cost: 2500.00

Field deck

Approximate cost: 112.00

Field Audio mixer

Approximate cost: 300.00

Other items:

Camera cases

Camera batteries

Microphone adapters for cameras

Mark A. took the list and was going to communicate with Mark V. and John about approximate prices. He stated that he would not know actual prices, since that might depend on how many of a particular item was ordered by ComCast. They would communicate in the next day or two, since final decisions would have to be made before August 8.

Next meeting: August 19th, BCTV studio at 7:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. by John Verrilli.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Curtis

Acting Secretary for July 15, 2003