

*Cheryl A. Balala*

\*\*Meeting recording is available at <https://www.youtube.com/c/FreetownMA/videos> \*\*

Town Administrator David DeManche opened the meeting at 5:00pm.

Town Administrator David DeManche, Committee Members Bruce W. Wilbur, Josh Tefft, and James Campbell, and Bill Hewig, Town Counsel and Mike Galla, Comcast were present.

Town Administrator David DeManche read statement regarding public meetings:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, sec. 18, and the Governors March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Freetown Police Sub-Committee will be conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. A recording, transcript or other comprehensive record of proceedings will be posted to the Town's YouTube Channel and/or the Town of Freetown Website [www.freetownma.gov](http://www.freetownma.gov)

Town Administrator put the Bargaining Points for Freetown Comcast Negotiations document on the screen. Mr. Hewig stated that based on the last meeting we are very close. Mr. Hewig reviewed the points on the document below.

1. Increase 1% Franchise Fee to 2.0%. Net Increase Per Subscriber. To support paying videographer to cover meetings/events, basically salaries, training, operating expenses, equipment and/or facilities as it relates to PEG Access programming and legal fees as it relates to the cable franchise agreement)
2. Three (3) Standard Definition channels (PEG, Public, Education and Government) and at least one HD channel.
3. Senior Discount – Side Letter for the Discount (up to \$5.00 per bill)
4. Capital Funding request: \$250,000
  - a. Build out a new studio at a local to be determines (FES/Regional School/other)
    - i. Equipment:
    - ii. Part-time cable teacher/assistant for school studio
  - b. Equipment: Police Station
5. Electronic Program Guide – Scrolling information guide which lets subscribers know what is on all of the PEG channels.
6. Free cable drops/monthly basic cable tv service for Municipal Buildings (Mr. Hewig noted that the town is aware they may have to pay for some)
7. Infrastructure improvements in cable transmission boxes to improve local service. Bay Shores has a problem with cable and wifi. (Mr. DeManche noted we want this addressed in the contract, Mr. Galla mentioned that Comcast has gone out and done some work and there should have been some improvements. Mr. DeManche will check in with Ali Golz in his office as she lives in the area)
8. Term: Five (5) Year Contract. (Mr. DeManche noted wanting five years as we do not know what is coming with technology like 5G or Fios may be available)

Mr. Hewig said total values are between \$800,000-\$810,000 based on a ten-year license we are looking for 2% \$810,000 with \$250,000 (\$25,000 capital grant for 10 years) your counterproposal of 2 ½% came to \$700,000 over ten years and \$100,000 capital. The town is nervous about having to rely on the GAR (Gross annual revenues) and 2 1/2 % and would prefer the 2% giving us \$250,000 in capital as a set sum rather than a set \$100,000 as we are aware cable subscribers are

cutting the cord and this number will decrease over time. Mr. Galla stated the \$250,000 is too large of a sum for Comcast to agree to for a town the size of Freetown. He feels going up to the 2 ½ would give Freetown that but cannot guarantee the \$250,000 amount. Mr. DeManche pointed out moving the contract from 5-10 years is going to be a hard sell with the Board of Selectmen as they may not want to be locked into a 10-year contract. Mr. Galla said Comcast would not be able to do the 5-year and that he will have a directive to make the license for 10-years. Mr. Hewig suggested capital in amount of \$250,000 and tweak percentage so we would get the same amount in the capital. The Town needs a larger reliable revenue stream than what Comcast is currently offering with their proposal. Mr. Galla said by going up on the percentage you will be able to get the capital number the town desired \$25,000/year. Mr. Hewig said can you get us \$200,000. Mr. Galla thinks that number is too high and he will not be able to get it approved on his end. He suggests 3% with \$100,000 over ten years. Mr. Wilbur noted this all comes out of the consumer and the problem that with the service we are getting in this town right now is not good. He notes online Facebook Freetown Groups constantly complaining about the level of service, especially internet. He noted Comcast is not going to be able to increase subscribers as the service is not good. Mr. Hewig asked Mr. Galla to go to the waiting room so the committee to talk. Mr. Hewig said his offer is up to \$84,000 instead of \$56,000 over ten years which would be another \$280,000. That is an increase of the total value above what we have even requested. He does not think we will get anymore capital out of him this may be the way to go. Mr. Tefft what is the disadvantage to have more capital if it does not come out of their pocket? Mr. Hewig said if subscribers go down the capital cost will raise the rates for subscribers which could result in more subscribers leaving. James Campbell note that as the fees increase more people will most likely drop the service. Mr. Hewig agrees that it will cost subscribers more as the numbers go down. Mr. DeManche suggests taking this back to the Board of Selectmen next Monday's meeting. He noted that it is a shame we cannot have these discussions in Executive Session as it gives an unfair advantage to Comcast. The offer is 3% and \$100,000. The committee agreed to take this to the Board for their opinion/commitment. Mr. Wilbur asked which scenario hurts Comcast the most. They get hurt the most by the amount of capital they agree to in the contract. Mr. Hewig is surprised Comcast is willing to offer us capital at all as they have done this in other towns. He noted he thought they would have been giving us a straight 4% with no capital.

Mr. Galla was brought back into the meeting. Mr. Hewig let Mr. Galla know we are going to take Comcasts offer (3 channels 1 is HD, Senior Letter, 3%, \$100,000) to the Board on Monday night and will let him know how that turns out. Mr. Galla was noted the SD and HD channels may take 18-24 months to become available.

Mr. DeManche set the next Cable Advisory Committee Meeting to be on 30<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

The meeting ended at 5:28pm. Recording ended in error and restarted to adjourn the meeting.

- Motion to adjourn the meeting was proposed by James Campbell and seconded by Josh Tefft
- Vote: approved in a unanimous roll call vote

Respectfully Submitted  
Lu-Ann Souza  
Senior Clerk, Board of Selectmen