

**Center Harbor Board of Selectmen  
Public Hearing Minutes  
MetroCast Cable franchise agreement renewal  
Saturday, August 29, 2009**

Chairman Charley Hanson called the public hearing to order at 10:01 a.m. Selectmen Richard Drenkhahn and Randy Mattson were also present. The following MetroCast representatives were in attendance:

Moira Campbell, New England Regional Manager  
Jeff Drapeau, Director of Operations  
Steven Mazzaschi, Technical Operations Supervisor  
Brad Kulacz, Customer Service Manager

Center Harbor resident Gail Ledger and Selectmen's Secretary Robin Woodaman were also in attendance.

Mr. Hanson reported the MetroCast franchise agreement will expire in one year and the purpose of the public hearing is for the Selectmen to receive input. The following items were discussed:

**Other cable companies:** Ms. Ledger asked if the Selectmen were looking at other cable companies. Mr. Hanson reported they have not yet, but will look into other cable companies as part of this process. Ms. Ledger reported she feels the Town's voters should decide on the cable company.

**Franchise renewal:** Ms. Campbell referenced document 626 in the communications act regarding franchise renewals. She explained this document gives the cable operator the opportunity to present their information first. Ms. Campbell explained there has to be just cause, such as a violation of the agreement, to remove a cable company

**Length of contract:** Ms. Ledger questioned the ten-year length of the contract and suggested the contract be for between two and five years. Ms. Campbell explained the current agreement was a ten-year agreement, but the length of the contract is part of the negotiation process.

**Town buildings internet service:** Mr. Drapeau reported complimentary internet service is provided to Town buildings. There was discussion regarding Nichols Memorial Library paying \$15 per month for a static i.p. address; this is for their connection to the State database. There was discussion regarding the Town paying \$5 per month for six internet addresses in the Town Office area.

**Town buildings phone service:** Mr. Hanson reported Fire Chief John Schlemmer asked if complimentary phone service could be provided to the Town buildings. Ms. Campbell explained the cable franchise agreement is based on video service only. There was discussion regarding the Public Utilities Commission's regulations and how this can impact the cable provider offering phone services.

**MetroCast grants:** Ms. Campbell reported MetroCast has awarded grants to communities for the purpose of purchasing studio equipment to broadcast live meetings on their own channel.

**Franchise fee:** Ms. Campbell reported Center Harbor's current annual franchise fee is 3%; this fee is passed onto the individual subscribers, then the funds are returned to the Town. Mr. Hanson reported the franchise fee goes into the Town's general fund. Ms. Ledger asked if the franchise fee is a hidden tax. Ms. Campbell reported it is up to the individual town's to determine the franchise fee; it can be from 0% to 5%.

**Number of MetroCast subscribers:** Ms. Campbell reported there are currently 473 current MetroCast subscribers in Center Harbor.

**MetroCast coverage:** Ms. Campbell reported MetroCast added 23 miles of wires in Center Harbor in 2001 at a cost of approximately \$500,000. She reported the standard line extension installation is 300'

or less; there are approximately 25 – 30 homes that don't have access to MetroCast in Town. Ms. Campbell reported MetroCast owns the wires and a new cable company would either buy the wires from MetroCast or install their own.

**Public hearing postings:** There was discussion regarding the notification for this public hearing being posted on the Town's web site for approximately six weeks, the Laconia Citizen, the Meredith News, the Post Office lobby and the Municipal Building lobby. Ms. Mattson asked Mr. Hanson and Mr. Drenkhahn if they had received any questions from any residents regarding the MetroCast agreement; they have not. Ms. Mattson explained the Selectmen scheduled the public hearing on a Saturday to be more accessible to the public and reported one resident attended and one emailed a question (Bernie Volz emailed the Selectmen reporting he would not be able to attend the public hearing, but would be interested in serving on a temporary committee to negotiate the new franchise agreement if there is a committee. Mr. Volz also reported he feels it would be nice to have some of the committee meetings broadcast on a public access channel).

At 10:26 a.m. Mr. Hanson ended the public hearing.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Woodaman,  
Selectmen's Secretary