

Minutes of Michigan NATOA  
Meeting of April 8, 2008

Bloomfield Community Television

Present: Caren Collins-Fifer, Leslie Helwig, Linda Badamo, Jeff Gudme, Steve Rota, Mike Watza, Mike Crimmins, Kermit Potter, Tim Lundgren, Celeste McDermott, Paul Dingeman, Jeannine Finegan, Dave Alberty, Deborah Guthrie, Jon Kruecher, Janet Christian, Lisa Wondrash, Chris Milia, Ralph Salmeron, Bill Irving, Bill Mathewson, Kristin Kolb, Diane Griffiths, Eric Angott, Zack Florance, Lisa Hawkins, Sue Ward, Mark Armitage, Don Huegerius, Lowell Peterson, Evelyn Goudreau, Rosanne Martell

1. Treasurer's Report Mike Ager was unable to attend due to a previous commitment, so Leslie Helwig gave the Treasurer's Report. There have been legal expenses incurred. The total assets are down.

2. President's Report Caren Collins-Fifer updated on the Strategic Plan, adopted by Michigan NATOA and authored by Jon Kruecher. Communities were urged to read through it and consider the enclosed proposal. Two communities asked for additional copies.

3. Presentation by Andrew Afflerbach\* via conference call from his office in Virginia . Mike Watza arranged for this presentation regarding PEG quality being achievable with any cable/video provider infrastructure. The limitations told to us by providers are the result of business decisions, not technological obstacles, as many of us have been told. AT&T's Channel 99, also known as the "PEG Solution", is a channel assignment issue, which AT&T could determine to handle as other program providers are handled, each with a discrete, unique channel, which the public is used to. Another problem with the Solution is that AT&T attempts to handle television with a T1 line, rather than fiber. A fiber run (Gigaband, a private line, quality-of-service monitored data delivery system that AT&T offers, capable of much more than the T1's 1.54 megabits per second transport) would be more costly for AT&T to provide; that is the problem, from AT&T's perspective. Regardless, an encoder will be part of the sending of audio and video to AT&T because theirs is an Internet Protocol (IP) based system. However, instead of Windows Media Player, it could be an MPEG 4 encoder, which is used by broadcasters who wish to translate their signals into "1s and 0s" - digital. A better quality method with the quality that matches our expectations is absolutely achievable, Andrew stated. The robust infrastructure that AT&T is building, even though it is a hybrid coaxial/fiber system, is going to be capable of thousands of channels. To allocate several hundred for the individual public, educational and government access channels in southeast Michigan and build the good quality delivery system would be a business decision, i.e. "part of the cost of doing business". Regarding closed captioning, I.P. will support closed captioning, but it is not on Line 21 (as it would be on an analog signal), rather it is allocated to a portion of the digital signal and needs a digital encoder to apply the captions therein. AT&T's PEG Solution does not currently support closed captioning.

4. Presentation by Deborah Guthrie\*\*, Cable TV Coordinator for Meridian Township and Station Manager for HOM-TV (Haslett, Okemos and Meridian Township ). Deborah spoke of the circumstances that prompted her community to contact attorney Mike Watza and to contract with law firms to stop Comcast from moving PEG channels to only the digital lineup in January 2008, as ordered by federal court Judge Virginia Roberts. While much has been achieved, including interpretation of federal and state law, the attention of Congressman John Dingell with a hearing on Capitol Hill: *PEG Delivery in the Digital Age\*\*\**, and a renewed interest on the part of Comcast in negotiating and speaking with communities instead of running with business decisions, Deborah stated that there is still much ahead. She spoke of her conviction that the work being accomplished is to help those residents who cannot afford digital packages, persons with limited incomes, who still wish to have access to their community information. She also said that the results will affect the entire state of Michigan , and will likely have precedent-setting impact nationwide. She again urged communities and individuals who may be interested in assisting with the legal costs to contact Meridian Township .

5. The meeting ended at 4:15.

\*Andrew Afflerbach's contact information for communities that may be interested in consulting him:

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**Communications Engineering & Analysis for the Public Interest**

\*\*Deborah Guthrie's contact information for those who wish more information in assisting in the ongoing Comcast matter:

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\*\*\* Congressional Hearing link: PEG Delivery in the Digital Age courtesy: C-SPAN [http://www.c-spanarchives.org/library/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_video\\_info&products\\_id=203829-1](http://www.c-spanarchives.org/library/index.php?main_page=product_video_info&products_id=203829-1)

Submitted by:

Linda A. Badamo

Michigan NATOA Secretary