

City of Cambridge

November 4, 1991

The Committee on Cable Television and Communications conducted a public hearing on Thursday, October 24, 1991, in the Sullivan Chamber City Hall beginning at 5:29 P.M.. The purpose of the hearing was to receive public testimony relative to cable television rates, audio supplement a communication from Mr. Stanizzi regarding Continental Cablevision's discontinuance of the cable guide and communications received from ~~George Welch~~ ^{George F. Welch, Jr.} regarding cable matters. Members present were: Councillor William and City Clerk Joseph Connarton.

Councillor Walsh opened the hearing and recognized Mr. George Stanizzi, 15 Holmes Street, Cambridge who stated that during the summer he had sent a communication to Councillor Sheila Russell informing her that Continental Cablevision had been issuing a Cable guide free of charge but as of May 1991 it came to a stop. He further stated that he believed that under the contract with Continental Cablevision a guide was part of the package that was sold when you first bought Cable. Finally he stated that he believed that many people relied on the guide and that it should be re-issued of fees reduced.

Mr. Philip Ripa, General Manager of Continental Cablevision responded by stating that it was in fact true that the Cable guide was discontinued, but it was done after a survey had been conducted among subscribers during last August relative to the Cable guide and the result was 2/3's of those who responded indicated that they did not wish to receive it any longer. He further stated that the guide cost approximately .80 cents per copy and Cable was charging \$1.00 to its customers. However, Mr. Ripa stated that it was no longer cost effective to produce the guide and therefore coupled with the feedback from subscribers Continental Cable decided to discontinue it. He further stated that he had been made aware that the original franchise mandated the distribution of such a guide and consequently spent a lot of time reviewing the contract and did not find such language.

George F. Welch, Jr.

The Committee then heard from ~~Mr. George Welch~~ ^{George F. Welch, Jr.}, 3 Woodrow Wilson Court, Cambridge who stated that the charge for the guide and the requirement for its distribution is written into the franchise. Furthermore he stated that he thought that if the guide was

going to be discontinued than Continental Cable should reduce its rates to subscribers.

Mr. Ripa responded by stating that the license talks about changes due to cost availability etc. Furthermore, he continued that although they discontinued the guide they continue to expand and improve their basic package.

Councillor Walsh questioned whether or not the consumer is paying more and getting less for it.

Mr. Ripa responded in the negative reminding the Chairman of the expansion of their product.

Responding to comments by Mr. Welch, the Chairman requested that the City Clerk obtain a legal opinion from outside legal counsel, Philip L. Sussler relative to Sections 6.48 and 11 D(4) of the Cable franchise in order to resolve the issues raised this evening.

Mr. Ripa agreed with this and stated that if it is the legal opinion from the outside counsel that such a guide should be distributed to subscribers then he will comply.

The Committee then heard from Mr. Ken Krohn, 12 Arnold Circle, Cambridge, who stated he too was concerned with the decision to stop the Cable guide and further questioned who was surveyed because although he found the guide very informative and was glad to pay the extra dollar, he did not remember ever getting a survey.

Finally Mr. Stanizzi stated that during the past four years rates have increased by \$6.00 and it seems the people are getting less.

The hearing was adjourned at 5:57 P.M.

For the Committee,

s/ William H. Walsh
Councillor William H. Walsh
Chairman

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For the Committee,

s/ William H. Walsh
Councillor William H. Walsh
Chairman

COMMITTEE REPORT # 1

5-1193

Report from the Cable Television and Communications Committee for a hearing held on Thursday, Oct. 24, 1991 relative to cable television rates, audio supplement and the discontinuance of the cable guide and communications received from George Welch regarding cable matters.

In City Council,

Nov. 4, 1991

11/4/91 No action taken

11/18/91 Amended report
accepted

Placed on Awaiting report
list for legal opinion
from outside legal counsel
relative to 6.48 & 11 D(4)
of the cable franchise.