

Councillor Triantafillou said that she is very troubled by the process by which this proposal has come to the committee. She is very concerned that there has already been a meeting with the School Department without the committee knowing. Committee members should have been informed, and should have had the opportunity to participate in all meetings regarding this matter.

Councillor Galluccio stated that he did not feel comfortable bringing this proposal to the committee without raising the matter with the Superintendent's staff.

Councillor Triantafillou said that she wants to participate in any meetings that are held with Continental Cablevision.

Councillor Galluccio said that public hearings will be held on all issues and that all decisions will be made in the committee. However, he is not going to commit to not make himself available if Continental wants to bring up an idea to him.

Jenny Casner, 48 Irving Street, stated that she has concerns about the process, and whether any other alternatives had been considered. Channel 47 is doing some remarkable work and is growing. CCTV has 4 channels, which it has difficulty filling. She stated that she also has questions about other language channels, because there are other communities that may be interested in a language channel.

Councillor Galluccio said that all options should be looked at and that the committee should review why we don't have Radio Television Portugal International already and request Continental to explain the reasoning again.

Steve Marks said that there is not a formal proposal; there are ideas which can be the basis for a discussion. Months ago he wrote to the Schools and CCTV with ideas about how to consolidate the channels. Susan Fleischman was not interested in that proposal at the time; the schools were interested.

Councillor Triantafillou asked why the Portuguese channel cannot be offered without taking back another channel.

Steve Marks said that Continental did make an offer for a stand alone channel but it was not acceptable. The only difference was that while Radio Television Portugal International would be free those who waited the channel would have to call in to have it switched on.

Manuel Bonifacio, Radio Television Portugal International Local Committee, said that it was not acceptable to Portugal.

Councillor Toomey asked if other negotiations are going on. Steve Marks said that he understands that there have been discussions on a higher corporate level, but he does not know any details.

Councillor Triantafillou asked what happen with the negotiations last year.

Noelle Serpa said that she came to this meeting because she knew Radio Television Portugal International was going to be discussed. She is here as a citizen who hopes that Radio Television Portugal International will be made available on cable. She feels that Councillor Galluccio was very clear that this was just a proposal and exchange of ideas. She agrees that the schools should be involved for open discussions because she would not want to see any proposal that would hurt youth. She thanked all the Councillors present for their interest and support for this issue.

Councillor Triantafillou asked why Continental needs to take back a channel in order to offer Radio Television Portugal International as part of basic.

Steve Marks said that there are two issues, to the best of his knowledge. One is bandwidth; he believes the other relates to the social contract under FCC regulations.

Councillor Toomey said that in October of last year he was told that there was an agreement. He would like to know where the breakdown is.

Joyce Hillcoat said that she believes that the breakdown was that there was a real concern in the Portuguese community with the requirement of having to call in to request that they get the Portuguese channel.

Bill August, Cambridge, Attorney, said that the first question that this subcommittee needs answered is whether there is channel capacity. The second question relates to the social contract. Usually, under the rate schedule, you need to raise rates when you add a channel to the basic package. The question is whether it will affect the cost of the basic rates.

Councillor Triantafillou asked whether if the additional station on basic is offered free, they have to raise rates. Bill August said that raising the rates may be permissive, not mandatory.

Steve Marks said that even though there is no cost for the programming itself, there are costs to Continental for building and maintaining a channel.

Jose Gandez, 57 Springfield Street, Somerville member of committee for Radio Television Portugal International local access, said that in Somerville, Time Warner has agreed to provide a channel as part of basic.

Steve Marks said that he believes it is on an expanded basic which they call "standard".

Councillor Galluccio requested that for the next meeting Continental provide clear answers for these questions.

Roberta Fusari, Continental Cablevision, agreed that the information would be provided.

Councillor Toomey stated that it is totally inexcusable that this much time has gone on without Radio Television Portugal International being available. The School Department should not have to lose a channel. He does not intend to vote for Continental at the time of license renewal.

James Ares asked whether Radio Television Portugal International could be a free-standing channel that was just always turned on.

Steve Marks said that this could be another possibility, Roberta Fusari said that goes back to the same question about the social contract.

Peter Kasner, Cambridge, stated that use of the channels by the School community is increasing, and is very important to the school community. By the fall, Channel 47 will be broadcasting 3-4 hours per night and more during the day.

Jenny Kasner described the video club at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School for which Peter Kasner volunteers his time. Two school channels are needed.

Councillor Galluccio stated that he is a strong advocate for increasing school cable programing to promote our schools and does not want to do anything to impede this growth. Councillor Galluccio thanked all of those present for coming.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

For the Committee,

Anthony D. Galluccio
DMD

Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio, Chair

City of Cambridge

The Cable TV and Communications Committee held a public meeting on Thursday, May 30, 1996, beginning at 5:45 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of discussing changes in the cable industry and Portuguese television.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Katherine Triantafillou, Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present was Deputy City Solicitor Donald Drisdell, and James Ares, Director, Cable Office.

Councillor Galluccio convened the meeting and explained the purpose. He stated that he hopes that the committee will be considering a new proposal for Continental Cablevision regarding Radio Television Portugal International.

Councillor Galluccio started by summarizing recent events. He was contacted by Continental with a possibility of offering Radio Television Portugal International as part of basic programming. In return, Continental would like the return of one of the two channels that are currently allocated to the School Department. Continental would also provide equipment and programming assistance to the schools. The School Department and Committee would need to be involved in this; and would have to have ultimate approval. He has had preliminary conversation with the Superintendents's office through Jim Ball. He sees this as a possibility to get Portuguese programming offered to the schools and increasing school programming but it is a very preliminary discussion.

Noelle Serpa, Cambridge, asked whether it would be 24 hour programming; and also whether there is anyone here from the school committee. Councillor Galluccio explained that this proposal has come up very quickly. The School Committee was informed of this meeting, but the notice was quite late.

Steve Marks, Continental Cablevision, stated that the proposal is not really yet a proposal; it is at the concept level. There is room for flexibility. Continental understands the desire of the Portuguese community to have this service. There is a valid contract with the city. This is an effort to persuade, not coerce. The license calls for equipment, and two channels; however, if the schools feel that a change is in their interest, there should be a way to come to such an agreement. The two channels at the school are an underutilized resource. The material presently on the two channels could be compressed easily into one channel.

Councillor Triantafillou asked how this proposal originated. Councillor Galluccio stated that this issue was on the agenda for the committee. Then Continental took the initiative to make this proposal. He then met with Jim Ball and Steve Marks earlier today.

Committee Report #3

S-368

A communication was received D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk, transmitting a report from Councillor Galluccio, Chair, Cable TV and Communications Committee, for a meeting held on May 30, 1996 for the purpose of discussing changes in the cable industry and Portuguese television.

In City Council June 24, 1996

*Report Accepted -
Placed on file.*