



## CAMBRIDGE CONSUMERS' COUNCIL

831 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge, MA 02139

Tel. (617) 349-6150

349-6153

City Of Cambridge

Paul J. Schlaver  
Executive Director

serving the  
residents of:

Cambridge  
Boston

TO: Robert Healy  
FROM: Paul Schlaver  
THROUGH: Benjamin Barnes  
DATE: May 5, 1999

SUBJECT: Council Order #033, dated 3/22/99 RE: REPORT ON VARIOUS  
CABLE ISSUES

At various times Cambridge citizens and also City Councillors have made inquiries about the cable TV channel line-up, packaging of options, and possible variation in the same that might be more to the liking of Cambridge customers. Once again I must answer these inquiries in the same manner as before. The City of Cambridge has little voice in these decisions made by our cable provider. Our franchise agreement allows for a certain amount of negotiation over local access programming, senior discounts, and the like. It is not conducive though, to specialized agreement as to what overall channel line-up the cable provider(s) must provide to Cambridge residents.

As mergers and buyouts occur to make cable providers in control of larger and larger segments of the communities and the customer base in Massachusetts, it could well be that the channel line-up and options will become more and more the same in virtually every community serving the area. MediaOne was already the largest cable provider in Massachusetts and fairly recently expanded further when it bought segments of the Time-Warner's service area. Now the hot news is the pending acquisition of MediaOne by AT&T. It is hard to say if this will influence channel choices but it might. AT&T will definitely want to "package" offers to consumers of telephone services, Internet services and Cable TV. AT&T will soon be offering local telephone services in direct competition with Bell Atlantic as well as long distance options. If they now can provide Cable TV services as well the marketplace of choices may evolve significantly.

While I would never discourage any consumers from raising their voice in approval or disapproval of the products and services they find in the marketplace, I cannot offer any tangible and effective plan for influencing MediaOne/AT&T as to programming. Maybe some of the items on the "wish list" in this Council Order will emerge as new choices in our service area as this "new" company faces the possibility of competition from another Cable TV company AND as it tries to capture our telephone services dollars. It is very possible that part of the marketing to persuade us to choose one company over the other will be based on the difference in channel line-ups as well as pricing inducements.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 349-4300  
FAX. 349-4307



12.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
ROBERT W. HEALY  
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI  
Deputy City Manager

May 10, 1999

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 99-58, regarding a report on various cable issues, received from Consumers' Council Director Paul Schlaver and License Commission Chair Benjamin Barnes.

In addition, I would like to inform the City Council that I will be conducting two public hearings this month on MediaOne: Wednesday, May 19, 1999 at 2:30 a.m. in the Senior Center; and Wednesday, May 26, 1999 at 6:00 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber in City Hall. The purpose of these hearings is to gather input from Cambridge residents and organizations on future cable-related needs and interests, as well as performance of MediaOne during its current license. These ascertainment hearings are a part of the re-licensing process.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy  
City Manager

RWH/mec  
Attachment

Consent Agenda #12 347 5

Relative to AW #99-58, regarding  
a report on various cable issues.

In City Council May 10, 1999

**PLACED ON FILE**