

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD

DOCKET NUMBER 8301

IN RE: RENEWAL OF THE CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC
GOOD OF COMCAST OF CONNECTICUT/GEORGIA/
MASSACHUSETTS/NEW HAMPSHIRE/NEW YORK/NORTH
CAROLINA/VIRGINIA/VERMONT, LLC, D/B/A
COMCAST, EXPIRING ON DECEMBER 29, 2016,
TO PROVIDE CABLE TELEVISION SERVICE --

October 21, 2015
7 p.m.

VIT
Montpelier, Vermont

Public Hearing held before the Vermont
Public Service Board, on the VIT network, Montpelier,
Vermont, on October 21, 2015, beginning at 7 p.m.

P R E S E N T

BOARD MEMBERS: James Volz, Chairman
Sarah Hofmann
Margaret Cheney

STAFF: Lars Bang-Jensen, Staff Attorney

CAPITOL COURT REPORTERS, INC.
P.O. BOX 329
BURLINGTON, VERMONT 05402-0329
(802) 863-6067
(802) 879-4736 (Fax)
EMAIL: info@capitolcourtreporters.com

	<u>I N D E X</u>	
	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Page</u>
1		
2	Wintin Goodrich	5
3	Charles Larkin	6
	Seth Bongartz	10
4	Robert Ellis	12
	Patrick Moreland	13
5	Deb Witkus	17
	Eric Berry	19
6	Barbara Tomb	20
	John Freidin	21
7	Kurt Gardner	22
	Pat McDonald	24
8	Sharon Campbell Biron	26
	Steve Merrill	28
9	Jessamyn West	31
	Tom Donahue	34
10	Sen. Kevin Mullin	37
	Marita Johnson	40
11	Bruce Johnson	43
	Linda Carbino	46
12	David Taft	48
	Marie Thomas	52
13	Gregory EplerWood	56
	Brian Savage	61
14	Marianna Gamache	63
	Berta Maginniss	64
15	Steven Schlusel	66
	Bill Staats	67
16	Jen Latham	67
	Chris Mason	70
17	Jason Mittell	71
	Nan Hart	74
18	Steve Whitaker	76
	Amy Shollenberger	84
19	Rik Palieri	87
	Tamra Higgins	90
20	Nancy Dobisky-Vaisey	91
	Stanley Williams	93
21	Mary Morrissey	95
	Mary Jane Dickerson	97
22		
23		
24		
25		

1 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Good evening, and thank
2 you for being here. This is a public hearing in
3 Docket 8301 in re: renewal of the Certificate of
4 Public Good of Comcast of Connecticut, Georgia,
5 Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, North
6 Carolina, Virginia, Vermont, LLC, doing business as
7 Comcast, expiring on December 29, 2016 to provide
8 cable television service.

9 I'm Jim Volz. I'm the Chairman of the
10 Public Service Board. With me in Montpelier is Sarah
11 Hofmann, she is a Board member, and in White River
12 Junction Margaret Cheney, another Board member is
13 present.

14 This evening the public hearing is
15 being conducted at 13 sites throughout the state
16 utilizing the facilities of the Vermont Interactive
17 Television network. The purpose of this public
18 hearing is to provide an opportunity to hear input
19 regarding the proposed renewal of a Certificate of
20 Public Good for Comcast to provide cable television
21 service in 197 Vermont cities, towns and gores.

22 Cable television Certificates of Public
23 Good have a term of 11 years, and Comcast's current
24 Certificate of Public Good expires on December 29,
25 2016. This is not the only forum for input. The

1 Board also welcomes letters and E-mails. You can
2 find the contact information at the Board's Web site
3 which is psb.vermont.gov.

4 Tonight's public hearing will be
5 transcribed by a court reporter. This transcript
6 along with all other comments received by the Board
7 become part of the public file so that the Board
8 members, staff, and the participants in the case can
9 review and consider the comments. The public
10 comments are helpful in raising new issues or
11 perspectives that the Board should consider, and
12 these comments often provide the basis for questions
13 that we raise with parties during the evidentiary
14 hearing that will take place.

15 Additional information about this
16 proceeding is available on the Board's Web site. The
17 purpose of tonight's hearing is to hear from the
18 public. Parties to the case will not be given an
19 opportunity to speak tonight. This is because they
20 will have an opportunity to present their cases
21 during the technical hearings and other formal
22 proceedings in this case.

23 We will hear from two members of the
24 public at each VIT site before moving on to the next
25 site rotating through the sites as many times as

1 necessary to hear from everyone who would like to
2 speak. We will begin by hearing from the first two
3 speakers on the sign-up sheet here in Montpelier. So
4 I would like to turn first to Mr. Wintin Goodrich.
5 If you would like to speak, go right ahead.

6 MR. GOODRICH: Great. My name is
7 Wintin Goodrich. I'm the superintendent of schools
8 for the Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union which is
9 the northwest corner of the state bordering Lake
10 Champlain and the Canadian border.

11 We televise school board meetings for
12 five school districts and our Supervisory Union
13 through public access cable channel 15 and 16 out of
14 St. Albans. I also produce television shows about
15 education issues on our PEG network.

16 Here are the items that are of interest
17 to us. Faster Internet speeds for complementary
18 accounts for schools, for towns, for families and
19 access television centers. The concern is the
20 current speeds offered are nearly useless in many of
21 these locations, and many of them pay additional fees
22 to Comcast to increase the speed to a useful level.

23 The modern statewide network in
24 Comcast's vast service territory from Brattleboro to
25 Bennington, St. Albans, they are in the position to

1 be key players in advancing the state-of-the-art
2 network with many capabilities. The end of Vermont
3 Interactive Television is close at hand, and with
4 continuing expansion of online learning the Vermont
5 Public Service Board could be a visionary in
6 addressing future education needs for Vermont's
7 students. Some needs cannot be foreseen as we
8 attempt to envision technology for 2027 which is the
9 final year of the Comcast license period. But now's
10 the time for the infrastructure to allow for these
11 new capabilities.

12 Other ideas. More cable line
13 extensions in rural areas. Many, many towns in
14 Franklin County have no access including Franklin,
15 Enosburg, Richford, Montgomery, Berkshire,
16 Bakersfield.

17 Improved signal quality for access TV.
18 We have no access to high-def channels currently.
19 Donation of equipment to schools who do not have
20 access to a complementary account because of distance
21 from cable lines. That's what I have to say.

22 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you very much.
23 Mr. Larkin, would you like to speak at this time?

24 MR. LARKIN: Thank you. My name is
25 Charles Larkin. I'm a former Telecommunications

1 Engineer for the Department of Public Service, and I
2 would like to address several issues.

3 The first one I'll start off with is
4 the statute 504 for rules under which you are
5 supposed to give a certificate if they meet all these
6 things. And I want to mention that they have to
7 abide by state and federal construction standards by
8 the National Electric Safety Code. I don't think
9 there is any policing methods to assure they are
10 conforming to these codes, and there should be some
11 way to determine that they are and bring them up to
12 speed if they aren't.

13 There should be a set of matrix like
14 you would have given to the telecommunications
15 utilities regarding different issues of quality of
16 service. You could think about those and come up
17 with one similar to the ones that you have in the
18 telephone industry. And these have to be enforced by
19 you or the Department. And level of complaints of
20 certain kinds should be one of the matrix.

21 The line extension policy, I don't
22 understand what happened, and I'll explain what I had
23 planned to do. When I helped decide where a cable
24 company should have its initial build in numerous
25 areas in Vermont, numerous towns, I drove every

1 single town, every single mile that was passable by
2 car, to determine how many homes per mile were
3 passed. And they came up with an equation based upon
4 each company's audited books to determine how many
5 homes per mile they would need in their system
6 annually, which might change this time. Things
7 happen. An example of that was it used to be 60
8 homes a mile, then it was 35, then it went down to 20
9 and even 15 in some more lucrative franchises.
10 Obviously it's probably less lucrative now with the
11 inroads from Netflix and Internet and all these
12 things. But the point was that once it was built the
13 company was required to annually determine the homes
14 per mile in their areas that were yet to be built.

15 As Mr. Young was talking about, and
16 they had to go out and determine how many homes per
17 mile they were passing, and if they passed the magic
18 number, they had to build it the next year.

19 Now I understand the policy is for the
20 consumers to get together somehow and create some
21 kind of group effort to convince the company to do
22 it. I think it should be brought back to what it
23 used to be. Require the companies to go out and
24 determine how many homes they are passing, determine
25 how many homes they have to pass for that company to

1 be able to break even, and then make them build it.

2 Finally, you've got a big problem with
3 funding. It's now only collected from the cable
4 companies on their revenues. It should be collected
5 from all of the utilities who are using the right of
6 way of the people. Let them all chip in. Though it
7 would be painful to some of the utilities like
8 electrical to have to start paying, it would lower
9 the cable company's level of tax greatly. All of
10 them would pay a lower fee because there would be
11 many, many different groups participating.

12 And the 10-year plan, how can you
13 decide what you want to do regarding CPGs and
14 telecommunications issues, cable, telephone,
15 Internet, if you don't even have a plan telling you
16 where you should be going and how to get there.
17 Statewide I'm talking about. Statewide plan. How
18 can you figure out what's appropriate and reasonable
19 if you don't even know where you're going, don't know
20 where you're starting from, and have no idea how to
21 get from A to B.

22 I think that you should not allow any
23 CPG be granted unless there is a valid and bona fide
24 10-year plan that is meaningful and useful, not
25 aspirational, and that I think would make a big

1 difference. Thank you. Thank you for your time.

2 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. At this
3 time I would like to go to Bennington. I understand
4 there are six people who wish to testify, and we
5 would like to hear from the first two from
6 Bennington.

7 MR. BONGARTZ: I'll start. My name is
8 Seth Bongartz. Barnes will talk about the importance
9 of cable access to be included in the program guide.
10 I want to focus on the importance of positioning
11 cable access stations to provide high quality live
12 broadcasts.

13 I have two jobs in my community in
14 Manchester. I'm the president of Hildene, and I
15 chair the Burr & Burton Academy board of directors.
16 I'll start off by saying that our local provider GNAT
17 does a very good job for both institutions by
18 recording events, interviews, etc., and helping to
19 expose us and our programming to the wider world. We
20 are grateful for that service. I know that GNAT in
21 my role as Chairman of Burr & Burton in particular
22 has been trying since 2012, so for more than three
23 years at this point, to develop the ability to
24 provide live broadcasts at Burr & Burton. I don't
25 pretend to understand the litany of problems they

1 have encountered trying to get it done, but I know
2 the process has been frustrating, and they have
3 gotten no where.

4 The problem, as I understand it, part
5 of the problem is that nothing in the regulations
6 speaks to how they can accomplish moving within a
7 specific site and language also refers to, for
8 instance, coax cable and outdated technology. My
9 understanding is that a number of levels they would
10 actually be required to use -- because of the old
11 plan to use outdated technology to produce third-rate
12 quality.

13 And I guess the biggest problem along
14 the way has been that GNAT has experienced a level of
15 dysfunction with their communications with Comcast in
16 their attempts to get this done, whereby they are
17 told one thing will work only to later be told it
18 won't, but wait for another and that will happen.
19 And that's been going on at this point for more than
20 three years. So there is confusion and lack of
21 flexibility for non-standard need.

22 So from the perspective of the school
23 and the 13 towns it serves live broadcasting of
24 things like sport events, political forums, and
25 various programs would be a tremendous service to

1 everybody in those 13 towns and would make GNAT an
2 invaluable asset. And that's my testimony about the
3 importance of positioning the local cable access
4 channels to be able to do live broadcasting and
5 change in the regulations that will require it to
6 really make it possible to do that in a flexible
7 system. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. If we could
9 hear from the next person in Bennington.

10 MR. ELLIS: Yeah, hi. Name is Robert
11 Ellis. I'm an independent film maker. I live in
12 Londonderry, Vermont.

13 I've produced a number of programs
14 independently for GNAT over the last couple years.
15 And I think my biggest disappointment is what I see
16 on the screen. Because when I'm sitting at home
17 editing and putting these pieces together they look
18 great. When you guys deliver them to the public they
19 look like crap. And I really think something has got
20 to be done about this part of it. I can't put the
21 effort in that we do to try to show the community
22 what's really going on and give them a good picture.

23 We are competing all the time against
24 everything else that's on television. When you show
25 us as badly as you do, it doesn't help us at all.

1 The other aspect I have is when I try
2 to find out when it's on or if it's on, there is
3 nothing in the guide. It just says local
4 programming. And everybody else gets a full
5 description. We don't. I mean I think we should at
6 least have that much. You know, and I would really
7 like the question of quality addressed. It's a very
8 big difference to get out the right message. That's
9 all I have to say.

10 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I
11 would like to go to Brattleboro where I understand we
12 have nine people. I would like to hear the first two
13 of those nine.

14 MR. MORELAND: Good evening. My name
15 is Patrick Moreland. I'm the assistant Town Manager
16 for the Town of Brattleboro. And I'm here this
17 evening to speak on behalf of the Town of
18 Brattleboro.

19 There are three basic points that I
20 would like to make this evening. The first is the
21 value of public access television in this community.
22 The second is the ability of the local public access
23 television provider to be able to provide industry-
24 standard programming. And then finally I would like
25 to say a couple of words about the line extension

1 policy as it's written in the CPG.

2 So first of all, with respect to the
3 value of public access television in this community,
4 I would like to make the point that Brattleboro is
5 not served by any other commercial television station
6 exclusively. And so, the public is really reliant
7 upon public access provided by BCTV for information
8 as it relates to their local government. And BCTV
9 does a fantastic job of covering our activities so
10 there is regular and routine coverage for selectboard
11 meetings, development review board meetings, planning
12 commission meetings, and each year our annual town
13 meeting is covered live.

14 In addition to these regular activities
15 which are covered, BCTV is available to work with us
16 to develop specific informational programming to help
17 educate, inform the public about transitions we are
18 undertaking. So this last year as we have undertaken
19 a transition in complying with Act 148 of the state
20 legislature we were able to develop specific
21 community programming that could be played again and
22 again to help inform the public about their roles and
23 responsibilities in this transition. And we think
24 that's very important.

25 And so I guess the point that we would

1 like to make is that the quality of the coverage
2 provided by BCTV represents a really critically
3 important link between local government and the
4 citizenry and one we hear about routinely.

5 So the second point I would like to
6 make relates to the ability of BCTV to provide
7 industry-standard programming. I think it's fairly
8 well understood these days that high definition
9 television has become the standard of the industry.
10 The irony here is that BCTV regularly records their
11 programming in high-definition television. However,
12 by the time it's presented to viewers, it's been
13 scaled back to standard definition losing much of its
14 quality. We think this is a loss of quality which is
15 something we would prefer to live without. We would
16 like to see high-definition programming provided for
17 all of the public access television. We think that's
18 important, and I think the community would expect
19 that as well.

20 Secondly, under that same heading I
21 would like to point out that viewers have become
22 increasingly reliant upon the use of the interactive
23 program guide for a variety of reasons, one of which
24 is it helps to inform you of what's on BCTV right
25 now, but because DVR technology is really linked to

1 the use of that interactive program guide, without
2 the program guide being able to specify what
3 programming is coming on later, you're not really
4 able or in a position to be able to record something
5 in the future. So we think that those basic features
6 are something that has become industry standard and
7 should be made available for public access
8 broadcasting.

9 Finally I would like to speak about the
10 Certificate of Public Good and the line extension
11 policy. The line extension policy spells out when
12 and how the holder of a Certificate of Public Good
13 should provide service without seeking direct
14 reimbursement from the individual customers for that
15 line extension. I've looked through the CPG, I've
16 read over the line extension policy, and I have to
17 admit I am not technically qualified to comment on
18 it. But I would like to point out that the public is
19 reliant upon the Public Service Board to conduct
20 their due diligence in reviewing this policy to see
21 that it is properly calibrated. And I really would
22 like to encourage you to do so. And while I may not
23 be technically qualified to speak to the policy as it
24 is presently written, I think there is reason to be
25 concerned that it may not be protecting the public

1 interest.

2 And I say that for two reasons. In a
3 town like Brattleboro that has a fairly substantial
4 population there is still wide swaths of this
5 community that do not benefit from access to the
6 public access broadcasting because they are not
7 currently being provided service.

8 And the second and last point I would
9 make about this is I happen to live in a neighboring
10 town, the town of Marlboro, and Comcast is provided
11 with a Certificate of Public Good for Marlboro even
12 as no service is provided anywhere in that town. So
13 that leaves me to question whether that line
14 extension policy has been properly calibrated with
15 the eyes of the public in mind. And thank you very
16 much for your time.

17 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. I would
18 like to hear from the next person from Brattleboro
19 please.

20 MS. WITKUS: Hi there. My name is Deb
21 Witkus. I work at Greater Falls Connections up in
22 Bellows Falls. We are a federally, state and
23 privately-funded prevention coalition, and we serve
24 12 towns up in northeast Windham County. We are very
25 reliant on our local community PAC-TV. We are funded

1 to do media campaigns, and we have -- we target
2 parents, businesses, we work with schools, we work
3 with many different sectors of the community and the
4 majority of our work is actually media campaigns.
5 And we are very fortunate to have PAC-TV filming them
6 for us and producing them with us. And we are
7 concerned because we want to be able to make sure
8 that we are reaching our target audience. If folks
9 are no longer watching standard TV and everybody is
10 watching, you know, high-definition TV, we need to be
11 there. We need to be reaching our community, to get
12 the information to them, to help them respond to the
13 opiate crisis, to help them get to resources for
14 smoking cessation. We run programs for parents that
15 help with parenting skills. We need to be reaching
16 our audience where they are at.

17 So we would ask that you require -- in
18 the agreement that you require that we have equal
19 access to that part of the programming. And I'm also
20 concerned about not being listed individually in the
21 cable guide. I know personally when I'm clicking
22 through the TV and I see a blank and I keep on
23 clicking, clicking, clicking trying to figure out
24 what's going on, there is no way to know what's going
25 on locally. We have no other local station that

1 covers local events. So I would have to say please
2 require that we be -- individual programs be listed
3 so we can reach our target audience. And I mean it
4 is the main source of our work is through media
5 campaigns. So thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I
7 would like to go to Lyndonville where I understand
8 there is one person who wishes to speak.

9 MR. BERRY: Yes. Thank you very much.
10 I'm here tonight to ask Comcast what your interest
11 would be in having a sports programming network in
12 the State of Vermont, specifically one channel
13 dedicated to either live or sports programming in
14 delay. I envision a partnership with a current
15 public access television network right now, RETN from
16 South Burlington, who would help manage the
17 programming aspect of this entity.

18 By the way, my name's Eric Berry, and
19 I'm the owner of Northeast Sports Network. We have
20 an office in Lyndonville and in Essex. In the past
21 year we broadcast over 150 high school and collegiate
22 sporting events in the State of Vermont. Those are
23 sporting events that we would like to get on to a
24 channel at some point in time, on one of your Comcast
25 channels as well. I believe there was a channel at

1 one time. Might have been an Adelphia way back in
2 the day.

3 But we also in my opinion feel there is
4 a need, a programming need, and we could fill that
5 void with the current game schedule that we satisfy
6 right now. I also believe this channel should be a
7 commercial channel, one that is supported through
8 advertising or DVD sales or electronic download sales
9 as well to help offset cost of production also.

10 Again, Eric Berry, Northeast Sports
11 Network. If anybody has any questions, they can
12 please call my office (802)626-8035.

13 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. You're
14 stating your name reminds me that I should remind
15 everyone that when you start to speak please state
16 your name clearly so the court reporter can get it,
17 get it down. And if it's not an obvious spelling,
18 please spell your last name. Thank you.

19 Next I would like to move to Middlebury
20 where I understand we have seven people who wish to
21 testify.

22 MS. TOMB: Hi. My name is Barbara
23 Tomb. I'm here just quickly to express my
24 exasperation with Comcast just as a television
25 consumer. Our family subscribes to Comcast just with

1 the very, very basic low-end television package, and
2 recently it was cut back. But it's been cut back
3 fairly consistently as our rates consistently go up.
4 So I really just wanted to ask the Public Service
5 Board if they kind of take a look at what's happening
6 to the very base package at Comcast, and how many
7 times can it be cut and subtracted from and the bill
8 go up before it's really not meeting the public good
9 any more? Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. I would
11 like to hear from somebody else from Middlebury.

12 MR. FREIDIN: My name is John Freidin.
13 F-R-E-I-D-I-N. I'm an elected member of the board of
14 trustees of the Ilsley public library in Middlebury.
15 And we are lucky and fortunate enough to have
16 Middlebury Community Television located in our
17 building and work with us in terms of educating
18 children and adults about the nature of broadcast
19 media. Community television is as necessary --
20 community television is as necessary as the postal
21 service, public schools, and Internet access to an
22 informed citizenry. It's essential to inform the
23 public about local governmental affairs. It's the
24 only place in Middlebury and the surrounding
25 community where people who are unable to attend

1 public meetings can actually learn what happened at
2 those meetings.

3 We cannot rely on commercial television
4 broadcast, nor can we be assured that it will be
5 covered by local newspapers. And it's equally
6 important to help educate local people about how
7 televised media works and affects them and enables
8 them -- enables them to be a critical viewer.

9 Finally I want to say that what's
10 important is that the funding stream for our
11 community television station be dependable. We can't
12 rely on something that's not dependable, and we can
13 only plan effectively for the future if we know that
14 our fund -- our stream of funding will be reliable
15 year after year. And I understand that there may be
16 some threat to that because of the fact that cable
17 television subscriptions are falling off.

18 Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I
20 would like to come to Montpelier and hear from the
21 two people we have here. Go ahead, sir.

22 MR. GARDNER: My name is Kurt Gardner.
23 I am an outraged and irate paying customer -- unhappy
24 cable customer here in Montpelier, and as such I am
25 particularly upset about the rates we are forced to

1 pay and the second rate service that comes with that.

2 As pointed out earlier, our rates keep
3 going up and the quality of service keeps going down.
4 We pay among the highest rates in the world for cable
5 service in this country and in this town, and the
6 service we get is at best second rate. I'm upset
7 about the speed that we are getting from the Internet
8 service. Comcast seems to be unwilling to make the
9 necessary investments that are required if we are
10 going to have the Internet service that we are going
11 to need tomorrow and the next day out in the future.
12 The entire community needs that kind of service, and
13 we are not getting it.

14 Third I think that we need to pay
15 really, really strong attention to the need to extend
16 the lines. We do not get the kind of response from
17 Comcast that's necessary when communities are growing
18 on the edges of current service areas and need to be
19 extended. It's not being done.

20 And finally, it seems to me that
21 Comcast missed a real opportunity when the current
22 Vermont Interactive Television system was defunded.
23 I don't know how well -- how easy it would be to
24 integrate that with the existing public access
25 system, but certainly there was a real opportunity

1 for Comcast to step into that void and to continue
2 this essential service.

3 That's all. Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Pat
5 McDonald.

6 MS. McDONALD: Yes. Thank you. My
7 name is Pat McDonald, and my testimony will be a
8 little bit different. I have nothing but excellent
9 words to say about my experience with ORCA here in
10 Montpelier channel 15. I have a show called Vote for
11 Vermont. It's a half-hour show every week. It
12 stemmed from my running for Senate this last go-
13 around and losing to the incumbents and being very
14 surprised about what people know or don't know about
15 issues. And the tag line of the show is listening
16 beyond the sound bites. And the service that ORCA
17 provides I've been fortunate enough to do 32 programs
18 in studio, and because we are able to use their
19 equipment we have gone out to four locations off site
20 and have brought them such things as a career job
21 fair to the audience that watches us, gone to the
22 Vermont Food Bank to talk about food insufficiency,
23 and to the Capstone Agency to talk about the
24 community kitchen. The feedback has been phenomenal.

25 Our best show was with Tom Pelham. Tom

1 and I talked about the questions people should ask
2 when they go to town meeting about the education
3 budget, and the response we got from people thanking
4 us for that information so that they were prepared at
5 town meeting to talk about the education budget.

6 There was an article written in the
7 Times Argus which helped us a lot. We are picked up
8 by 10 local cable stations around Vermont. And
9 whenever the people that -- the guests that I have
10 are names that I think most people that are here
11 tonight would know; local businessmen, people that --
12 of some prominence in Vermont. And Jackie Wyrath
13 (phoenetic) who is the program director always takes
14 the time to talk to them about the services that are
15 provided through public access, and many have pursued
16 those discussions about how their businesses can use
17 the services provided.

18 So we focus on education, the economy,
19 energy, budget, health care, mental health. We have
20 done a lot of shows on entrepreneurships and how
21 wonderful a place Vermont is for a small businesses
22 to start up here. And we have also covered social
23 issues. I mentioned food insecurity and child abuse
24 as well. We did a great show sadly on preventing
25 child abuse.

1 So I can only encourage you to renew
2 this certificate. The feedback I have gotten has
3 been very positive and just energizes me to keep
4 going.

5 Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I
7 would like to go to Newport where we have two people
8 who wish to speak.

9 MS. CAMPBELL BIRON: Good evening
10 members of the Board. My name is Sharon Campbell
11 Biron. I live here in Newport and up in Island Pond.
12 It's a very rural part of the NEK, and I'd really
13 like my testimony to be in support of Comcast because
14 I have an unusual story.

15 I started out as a community producer
16 in Newport, and with the assistance of Todd Pronto
17 and Terry Defecto (phoenetic) I was able to do
18 something I would never have been able to do in
19 England which was produce television programs for the
20 community dealing with really hard and local issues
21 such as domestic abuse, unemployment, the
22 difficulties of rearing children in deprived rural
23 areas, and programs such as just basically prevention
24 of suicide and -- which is very close to my heart.
25 So I was able to make those programs and really

1 connect with the community. And NEK-TV absolutely
2 made that possible for me.

3 But the interesting thing is I then got
4 a job with The Meeting Place which is a day care
5 center in Newport for brain-damaged adults suffering
6 from all kinds of brain trauma, but also elderly
7 people with dementia and Alzheimers. And I actually
8 stopped producing my community program and took the
9 program camera which is a video camera lent to me by
10 NEK-TV, I took that into The Meeting Place where I
11 work. We are now able to produce our own TV program
12 from inside this day care center. So we have 80 and
13 90 year olds really making full use of these
14 services, which if they weren't offered by Comcast we
15 just wouldn't be able to do it.

16 And it has improved dementia sufferers'
17 and Alzheimers sufferers' focus their attention.
18 They are able -- their abilities to concentrate have
19 actually just massively increased. They know that
20 they are creating a program, they are writing the
21 plot, they are able to remember the lines for the
22 scripts, Thanksgiving plays, simple things like role-
23 playing, making videos of them, reading the news, and
24 we then developed into their own TV show. So we have
25 all these things going on, and Comcast to us has been

1 invaluable. It's absolutely brilliant.

2 We would be devastated at Meeting Place
3 if all of our care clients could not avail themselves
4 of this brilliant free service. Our programs may not
5 always be great or well shot or well edited, but it's
6 given us a whole new lease of life. And NEK-TV with
7 Todd Pronto and Terry Defecto could not have been
8 more helpful to us. They have been patient.

9 We have actually sent seriously brain
10 damaged patients up to the NEK-TV studios where Terry
11 has taught them sound and audio, and taught how to
12 gently take them through how to record, how to use
13 the zoom, and you know, just use a camera. It's
14 invaluable. We couldn't do without it.

15 So I really fully support the renewal
16 of this license in 2016 because it would be a huge
17 loss to the disabled and mentally handicapped sector
18 of the community, and they are the unspoken -- you
19 know, they don't have much of a voice here tonight so
20 I'm speaking for them.

21 Thank you, members of the Board.

22 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. The next
23 person from Newport?

24 MR. MERRILL: Hi. My name's Steve
25 Merrill. I live in North Troy. And I have been a

1 community producer with NEK-TV since about 2007. And
2 I want to thank the good folks at Vermont Interactive
3 TV here, because you know, without them I know there
4 is talk with budget cuts for these good people. And
5 I think without them, we wouldn't be able to even
6 have this kind of a meeting if we had to rely on
7 commercial TV like Skype or any of those systems. So
8 thanks to the VIT people.

9 Regarding build out, it's important
10 that we build out into the rural areas obviously.
11 And perhaps we could see if we could get USDA grant
12 money or something to help Comcast do a build out,
13 maybe fiber to the towns and coax from the town --
14 from the hubs to the people similar to FDR's Rural
15 Electrification Program. Information in this day and
16 age is just as important as electrification was in
17 FDR's time in the 1930s, provided that the build out
18 is -- has confirmable -- confirmable standards and
19 measurable benchmarks to hook up more people so that
20 we can cover local meetings. And we cover the local
21 meetings and where we have -- we jokingly call it
22 relativity where we delve into local government and
23 find out whose relatives are working for whom and
24 whatnot and ask a lot of other embarrassing questions
25 that don't seem to get covered by the typical press,

1 the print press or the other local media.

2 And I think that what with the speed of
3 fiber and coax and the durability of it, it's putting
4 wireless to shame. I don't think that there is that
5 much -- that there is as much future in wireless for
6 local programming as there is with cable. Especially
7 when, like I do, you use -- I use Comcast for
8 Internet specifically due to its speed. And over at
9 NEK-TV we have got like this young lady was saying,
10 there is people there to help the public, and you
11 know, bring them in from start to finish.

12 And I would like to see their CPG be
13 extended, obviously you know, provided you know, that
14 there may be conditions that they have these
15 benchmarks and that they would be able to adhere to
16 them to get more cable into rural areas. It's just
17 that important from where we stand. And we have
18 covered -- we have covered everything in our area
19 from the local meetings, solid waste district
20 meetings, the -- some of the stuff at Jay Peak, the
21 sewage treatment plant hearings, and just anything
22 and everything.

23 And if Comcast can't afford to do these
24 build outs by themselves, perhaps we could maybe ask
25 Senator Leahy and try and get some USDA money to help

1 with the build out. It's just that important. It
2 really is.

3 Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I
5 would like to go to Randolph Center where I believe
6 we have one person who wishes to speak.

7 MS. WEST: Yes. Thank you. My name is
8 Jessamyn West. That's J-E-S-S-A-M-Y-N. Last name is
9 W-E-S-T. I teach at Vermont Technical College. I'm
10 a basic technology educator at Randolph Technical
11 Careers Center which is a vocational high school.
12 And I'm also a local Justice of the Peace, and I work
13 during the elections.

14 I agree with some of the previous
15 commenters that I think Comcast CPG renewal should be
16 contingent on plans that are meaningful and not just
17 aspirational. I think we have seen lots of
18 aspiration and, you know, that's good news, but what
19 we are looking for is sort of deliverables.

20 My three concerns are, dealing with the
21 digital divide every day, I teach people how to use
22 the Internet and how to use E-mail, people who have
23 never interacted with technology before. I would
24 like to see Comcast being more committed to not just
25 closing the digital divide in the technology way,

1 though it would be nice if everybody in Randolph had
2 access to the Internet, but also dealing with issues
3 like the useability divide and the empowerment
4 divide.

5 We are seeing people in our communities
6 who don't feel that the Internet is for them, who
7 don't feel that there are things that they need to do
8 with it, and we are seeing that they are not getting
9 information and assistance from their service
10 providers from Comcast in order to be able to use
11 that.

12 I had a negative anecdote of a woman
13 who came to a drop-in session, and she was trying to
14 get her Netflix working, and she had called Comcast
15 and Comcast said Netflix isn't our thing. Just go to
16 Google and Google Netflix repair, which I know is a
17 bad idea as a technology educator, but she did not.
18 See relied on Comcast to give her good information.
19 She wound up going down a rabbit hole of sort of bad
20 advice.

21 I would like to see them committed to
22 dealing with our digitally-divided patrons and
23 customers in ways that actually help empower people
24 to use the tools that they deliver and not just be
25 sort of a fire hose of content.

1 Second issue I would like to see is
2 real broadband for everyone. As we know in Vermont
3 -- heard somebody mention Rural Electrification
4 Program -- and people may or may not know the last
5 town that got electricity in Vermont was Victory in
6 1962, which I think makes a lot of us shake our heads
7 because it was within living memory for many people.
8 I think we are going to be seeing that with the last
9 people getting broadband I would like to see Comcast
10 being more affirmative about trying to get those last
11 people together, whether they need to be incented
12 with lower prices, whether they need to be incented
13 with better technology, whether they need to be
14 incented for ease of use. That would be helpful.

15 And the third thing as a Justice of the
16 Peace I work at the elections every election year,
17 and we count the votes, and we put the votes to bed,
18 and we get everything all settled up. And what we
19 don't get is we don't really have a method of getting
20 that information out to our community members. Many
21 people read the election results in the newspaper.
22 And as much as ORCA I think is terrific, and I have
23 nothing but good things to say about VCAM and ORCA,
24 we would like to see more tools that would empower
25 our community with sort of the G in PEG programming

1 so that we could have more government information
2 available to more people both through the programming
3 guides, in HD, listed and predictable so that people
4 can actually consume public, government and
5 educational information the same way that they
6 consume the rest of their content in HD, quickly and
7 conveniently.

8 Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. If I could
10 go to Rutland, I understand we have two people who
11 wish to speak.

12 MR. DONAHUE: Hi. I'm Tom Donahue.
13 During the day I'm the director of the Rutland Region
14 Chamber Of Commerce. And I'm also speaking tonight
15 as a resident of Rutland City.

16 First like to echo the sentiments of
17 the gentleman from Newport for thanking the Board for
18 holding this on VIT. This is very conveniently
19 located and provides us a convenient access so that
20 we can speak with you on important topics like
21 tonight. And the weather is pretty nice out tonight,
22 but it's not always, and sometimes these things can
23 be a snowstorm that make it difficult even to get to
24 hearings, and VIT makes it possible. So thank you
25 for holding it on VIT first and foremost.

1 Secondly, I want to mention the Comcast
2 offices here, and I just want to say a couple of
3 positive words about the staff that's here on North
4 Main Street in Rutland. A lot of times I will call
5 -- I'm a Comcast subscriber. We have the Triple Play
6 so we do get our Internet, telephone and cable
7 service through Comcast. I have had very good
8 experience with them. And while I've occasionally
9 called on the telephone, a lot of times I'll go right
10 into the office. And I want you to be aware that the
11 staff at the office here is very good, and I always
12 leave actually more than satisfied, which is
13 surprising. I go in with an issue or problem or
14 question desiring to get that rectified and
15 surprisingly exceeding my expectations. So I think
16 that's to their credit, and I want to make sure that
17 I recognize them for that tonight at Comcast, because
18 that is a tremendous experience in a time when
19 customer service is paramount for any business and
20 public service, I think.

21 And then thirdly, and most important
22 tonight here to talk about our Community Access
23 Television and how important that is, and how much we
24 appreciate that Comcast facilitates that happening
25 here through public, education and government

1 television, affectionately known here as PEG-TV. And
2 I have to say I think we have all due respect to the
3 PEG-TV stations around the state. And there is a
4 number of them watching tonight probably, but ours
5 has got to be one of the best, if not the best in
6 Vermont. And we are very, very fortunate to have
7 this level of service here. The staff is tremendous.

8 One of the things they do well is truly
9 public outreach, so they truly try to make it a
10 community-based public, education and government
11 television station. They do a tremendous amount of
12 outreach to get the public to come in and do the
13 programming. And the access is just easy, and I
14 think the technology is some of the best if not the
15 best.

16 Having said that, also the programming
17 that they do both for public, for education and for
18 government is also I think somewhat unprecedented and
19 exceeds expectations here. We are very fortunate
20 that we have access to this kind of information, and
21 fun, because there is a lot of programming on there
22 that is just entertaining, and really brings it --
23 becomes a part of the fabric of the community. This
24 is something that's beyond my imagination when I was
25 growing up without it, and you didn't have this kind

1 of access to this kind of level of information or
2 just sporting events or community events that are
3 happening around. But now you have access to so much
4 of it that it's quite incredible. And we are very,
5 very appreciative of both Comcast and PEG-TV for
6 providing that to us.

7 Lastly I would say just in an era where
8 transparency and government has become so significant
9 that I think this is the kind of transparency that it
10 begins to provide into our local governments that is
11 critical and very, very important.

12 Thank you very much.

13 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. I would
14 like to hear from the next person from Rutland.

15 SEN. MULLIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
16 members of the Board. Senator Kevin Mullin from
17 Rutland. I would like to begin by thanking you for
18 taking this time tonight to hear concerns from around
19 the state, and it's interesting to hear some of the
20 complaints that I've heard so far from other areas of
21 the state. Because I can tell you as a public
22 servant we are a funnel for complaints, and I get
23 very few complaints about Comcast. If there are any
24 complaints whatsoever, it's about the price of the
25 service, and of course, we are here tonight to ask

1 you to make sure that they do as much as possible for
2 us to continue with the public service programming
3 and everything else.

4 So as we say in economics, Tanstaafl's
5 law, there ain't no such thing as a free lunch, we
6 have to understand if we want all those good things,
7 we have to pay for them.

8 I'm here tonight to support the
9 Certificate of Public Good, and I would say that
10 having served in public service for over 30 years, we
11 have a problem that we are facing in Vermont as far
12 as protecting our democracy, and that is that we
13 don't have the type of local news coverage that we
14 used to have.

15 When I first served on the Board of
16 Aldermen many, many years ago with the previous
17 speaker Tom Donahue, we had local radio stations and
18 local press that were covering every single local
19 meeting. We no longer have that today. Newspapers
20 are struggling to survive in very trying times. So
21 really the only really good, hard factual news that
22 people are getting is from the local public access
23 television programs. And I can tell you that in
24 Rutland we are blessed to have an incredible set of
25 people working for PEG-TV led by Tom Leopold and

1 formerly by Mike Valentine. They do an outstanding
2 job of making sure that all the local school board
3 meetings, local selectmen meetings, local sporting
4 events for young children are covered on those
5 channels.

6 And I can tell you that people do watch
7 these shows, because I talk to people on the streets
8 all the time that said, you know, we heard at the
9 Proctor select board meeting such and such. And it's
10 just amazing to me how many people will watch the
11 local access channels.

12 So I'm hopeful that their Certificate
13 of Public Good is extended. I can tell you that I am
14 a Comcast customer. I have the Triple Play. That
15 allows me to run my businesses which are not local
16 here to Rutland out of the basement of my house.
17 Without that ability, it would take me much more time
18 on the road and everything else. So I'm very
19 grateful for the service that I have.

20 And on this anniversary of "Back to the
21 Future," I just want to tell you a short story, Mr.
22 Chairman. I know the time is limited. But recently
23 we had the birth of our second grandchild. And one
24 of the new services that we have now at Comcast in
25 Rutland is that if you have the Triple Play, if

1 someone calls you, the phone number shows up on the
2 bottom of your television screen.

3 And we were at the hospital for the
4 birth of my second grandchild. My wife went to call
5 her elderly father, and he was watching the channel 3
6 news, and he said "Cynthia, oh my God, you've got to
7 hold on a second. They are putting Kevin's phone
8 number on the bottom of the screen and they want
9 people to call him for some reason." So it's just
10 amazing what technology is today.

11 And again, I just want to say that I
12 fully support the Certificate of Public Good that at
13 least here in Rutland I can tell you that we are
14 getting outstanding service and that we are very
15 fortunate to have what we have.

16 So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you, Senator.
18 Appreciate your coming out tonight.

19 I would like to hear now -- I would
20 like to go to Springfield and hear from two people
21 from there.

22 MS. JOHNSON: Yes, good evening. I'm
23 Marita Johnson. And our public access station
24 Springfield Area Public Access TV, SAPA-TV, serves
25 Springfield, Weathersfield and Chester. And our

1 community members really appreciate the local
2 educational programs that we are able to provide.

3 I'm a volunteer independent producer,
4 and I produce 30 to 40 educational programs a year,
5 and I'm just one of the independent producers. And
6 our community organizations really appreciate having
7 this local programming, and we are well known for
8 servicing the community.

9 Some of the groups that I'm involved in
10 providing programs are the Springfield Garden Club,
11 the Springfield Art and Historical Society, the
12 Weathersfield Historical Society, the American
13 Precision Museum in Windsor. I was able to cover the
14 wonderful collection of Howard Coffin's civil war
15 collection, and then I was able to -- and he spoke
16 about his collection. And I was able to share that
17 statewide through the VMX, the video media exchange.

18 And also I do walks with the Crown
19 Point Road Historical Association, and we are able to
20 share that statewide and all the history that goes
21 along with that. I also create travel logs in my own
22 travels such as Montpelier, St. Michel, and the D-day
23 beaches of Normandy.

24 One of the really important things that
25 I cover is the Osher Life-long Learning Institute

1 series of lecture programs and that's associated with
2 the University of Vermont. There are nine sites
3 throughout the state. And I'm a facilitator here in
4 Springfield. It's for seniors who are 50 years and
5 older to enjoy learning just for the fun of it. And
6 our speakers graciously allow us to videotape them
7 and share them with the community. And those we are
8 able to share statewide as well.

9 Our person -- our director of the --
10 and it's OLLI, it's called OLLI, Osher Life-long
11 Learning Institute, our director of OLLI at the
12 University is Cathy Cote-Hudson. She wasn't able to
13 be here this evening but she did write a letter of
14 support, and I would like to just read it -- a little
15 bit of that.

16 "OLLI and Springfield has utilized
17 SAPA-TV's resources in getting the word out about our
18 educational lectures and programs. Our Springfield
19 OLLI membership has increased over the years because
20 of the wide exposure we have had by sharing the OLLI
21 programs on the local TV station. Additionally, the
22 use of the public access TV has helped with the
23 broader mission of providing educational programming
24 for our senior citizens throughout Vermont. Several
25 of our OLLI sites throughout the state work with

1 their respective public access stations to air their
2 weekly educational lectures allowing us to reach many
3 more senior Vermonters in their homes. Having a
4 strong and vital public access station such as
5 SAPA-TV in the area allows community members to stay
6 informed about their local issues and enjoy quality
7 educational programming." And that's from Cathy
8 Cote-Hudson, the director of OLLI at the University
9 of Vermont.

10 And I would like to say that our
11 communities certainly do enjoy all of the educational
12 programming that we are able to provide through our
13 public access SAPA-TV and sharing them statewide.

14 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. I would
15 like to hear from the other person in Springfield.

16 MR. JOHNSON: My name is Bruce Johnson.
17 I'm an independent producer, volunteer independent
18 producer for SAPA-TV. For since 2005 I've worked
19 with a high school class in producing a live
20 television program of school news every Friday
21 morning. Students create their product. We then
22 utilize the SAPA-TV studios which happen to be in the
23 public's high school. And they produce a program
24 that goes out live to the community.

25 In regards to one of the things --

1 everything that we do in the student classroom is
2 done in HD video. Our -- when we go into the studio
3 at SAPA it's all HD as well. And then it's converted
4 into a little box and sent out as an analog signal to
5 Comcast where it's then retranslated back to
6 something else, which then goes out to the digital
7 network. It just seems that -- I have been doing
8 this now for nearly 10 years, and it seems as though
9 technology has changed greatly, and yet we are sort
10 of flying a Curtis Jenny, if you will, with baling
11 wire and chewing gum holding it together.

12 With this new public Certificate of
13 Public Good, I hope that the Board will look
14 carefully towards the future because you're looking
15 at 11 years, that's more than a decade. The
16 technological changes that I've seen in the business
17 in the last 10 years have been unbelievable. If this
18 continues to fly along as that bankrupt, if you will,
19 Curtis Jenny, we really have problems going to the
20 future.

21 You know this is the anniversary -- the
22 25th anniversary of that movie -- speaking of the
23 future. And we seem to be looking towards the past.
24 I know the chair seems to be amused at what I'm
25 saying.

1 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: No. I thought the
2 "Back to the Future" reference was amusing. Thank
3 you.

4 MR. JOHNSON: It just seems that our
5 programming sent young people to schools throughout
6 the country, some following careers in the media
7 field, but we need to look forward to the future.
8 Many areas of the Springfield community are without
9 service from Comcast, and as a result people can't
10 see the broadcasts of our program and all of the
11 other programs that are produced for the community.
12 And people are upset.

13 I had a woman speak to me the other
14 evening about the fact, as someone mentioned earlier,
15 one of the other sites that the base package grows
16 smaller, the price goes higher, and she is very, very
17 frustrated that she now has lost another news station
18 off that small fee.

19 Looking forward, I think it's important
20 that Comcast be forced into a position where they
21 have to have a plan for the future to bring those
22 services to the people of our community and of the
23 state. I think that pretty much sums up my point of
24 view.

25 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you very much. I
2 appreciate your comments.

3 Next I would like to go to White River
4 Junction where I think we have a couple of people who
5 would like to speak.

6 MS. CARBINO: Hi. My name is Linda
7 Carbino. It is spelled different. The last name is
8 C-A-R-B-I-N-O. And I wanted to speak a little bit
9 about a couple of things.

10 First of all, I am a local producer
11 here in White River Junction. I have been producing
12 my show "Walking the Life" for 10 years. And my show
13 actually started as a way for me to tell my story of
14 long-term recovery from addiction and mental illness.
15 And it's grown from that, of course. It's just
16 exploded over 10 years with the help with the CATV
17 staff.

18 And another thing I would like to say
19 about it too, I was somebody that only had an 8th
20 grade education and told that I could never learn to
21 read or write. I've proven that wrong. I want to
22 say that the CATV staff has given me a lot of
23 support, has taught me quality -- how to be a
24 videographer, how to edit, how to produce my show,
25 and doing this it has made me progress through

1 recovery just awesome. I mean I just feel like a
2 whole person again. And it was really hard for me,
3 and into just celebrating 600 Walking the Life shows
4 in 10 years, I was really, really honored when CATV
5 had nominated me for a national award for the best
6 impact show through community access. And I got the
7 call that I had won. And I was just so honored, and
8 I love community access TV, and all that it stands
9 for, and thanks to Comcast for doing that.

10 And I just want to encourage everybody
11 else that this is something that you can do in the
12 public. And the way that we get the word out to the
13 public, how do we let them know that this is
14 available to you. And one of the concerns is we
15 don't have the interactive guide. If people knew
16 when they walk into the -- if it's one of their
17 favorite shows, they are more apt to tune in. Or if
18 they know when the government meeting is going to be
19 on, or whatever the education programs are, that's
20 one of the things that's great about CAT-TV is it
21 focuses on a little bit of everything, you know.

22 And I really want to point out the
23 education part because, you know, yes, I'm an adult.
24 Yes, I'm 55 years old, but I learned. And when
25 somebody told me that I could not learn, and I did

1 it.

2 And one of the other things too is that
3 I know we were speaking about another channel with
4 through eight, and I think that that would be great
5 to have that second channel to, you know, actually
6 have more content. I mean I think there could be a
7 lot of content on a third channel. And I just wanted
8 to make sure that I made my voice heard about that.

9 And also the Internet. I think is a
10 great access for people that can't get out and go to
11 meetings, can't go to the government meetings. And
12 I've heard from a lot of people they do watch the
13 government meetings on CATV and the quality is good.
14 But like I said HD is better, that's what I truly
15 think.

16 Anyway I want to thank you guys for
17 taking the time to listen to me and my story and the
18 love that I have for CAT-TV.

19 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Is there
20 someone else in White River who would like to speak?

21 MR. TAFT: My name's David Taft, and
22 I'm a life-long resident of Windsor. I'm also an
23 independent producer for Windsor on Air. I want to
24 echo -- everybody here seems to be commending and
25 supporting the PEG stations and the situation that

1 Comcast helps to finance and provide.

2 Windsor has an enormous percentage of
3 elderly people in their community. And due to
4 physical and other limitations they often can't get
5 out and participate the way they wish they could. So
6 it gives them the ability to see the local government
7 programs, the recreational programs, the things that
8 they really would love to go to, but due to their
9 circumstances they are not able to.

10 But I would like to say that -- but
11 with working with Windsor on Air as an independent
12 producer and stuff, I also know we are a very small
13 station, and the Comcast might provide some funding,
14 but in a small station like Windsor by the time you
15 have a very, very limited paid staff, or we actually
16 have only one person, and by the time you take the
17 revenue that you get, it's very difficult to do all
18 these things that a lot of you are talking about with
19 the advanced technology and high definition. And we
20 are lucky that if, you know, we can get the word out
21 and quality enough so people can hear the audible you
22 know sometimes. So maybe some of the bigger stations
23 have the luxury of doing all this stuff, but Windsor
24 has a hard time of just -- a person does a quality
25 job it's excellent, we are blessed to have it.

1 But the backbone of our PEG station is
2 the volunteers that -- and as this woman said, we
3 have to do a better job of getting the word out that
4 if you have something, a message, or story, or
5 something that this resource is available, and it's
6 for everybody. And but it's very difficult, a lot of
7 the people are technically challenged, I can tell you
8 that from personal experience. So I think that it's
9 a great service.

10 Without the PEG station on my Comcast
11 TV I would quite honestly be a different subscriber
12 to a different network of -- and one of the reasons I
13 say that is I agree with the woman that says they are
14 always changing and offering you a little bit less
15 but the bill isn't going down. It's going up a
16 little bit. And I wish there was a way that you
17 could personalize what you get on your television so
18 that I only want to watch 10 channels, but the 10
19 that I want to watch, to get those 10 is on a package
20 of 200 channels, you know. And I don't think that
21 it's proper to have to pay for 200 channels if I'm
22 only watching 10. And but they don't have the
23 flexibility to really pick out what an individual
24 wants. They give you these options where you kind of
25 have to take a lot more to get the little bit that

1 you really, really use regularly.

2 And the last thing I would like to add
3 is well I get a lot of feedback from the elderly
4 because in my public access show they admire and
5 respect people that are out there trying to get the
6 message out. But I also have a lot of people in my
7 community that come up and say they would like to get
8 the Comcast but -- and I've heard talk about there is
9 a mechanism of how that's supposed to happen, but I
10 know personally people have been waiting for years
11 hoping to be able to hook on to Comcast, but due to
12 whatever reason they are not able to.

13 So I understand it's probably a
14 financial thing, but I think that more effort should
15 be given to people that would like to get on board to
16 have the ability to do so. But I would hate to see
17 the PEG stations go away, because I agree with -- I
18 think -- I haven't heard anybody here say anything
19 negative about the ability to get the local shows and
20 government, the schools, everything. It's the best
21 tool for most small communities that is available
22 right now.

23 So thank you for having the meeting. I
24 appreciate listening. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I

1 would like to go to Williston where we have 15 people
2 who wish to speak. I would like to take the first
3 two.

4 MS. THOMAS: Hello. My name is Marie
5 Thomas. I'm the executive director of Our Community
6 Cares Camp, which is a small non-profit corporation
7 serving eastern Chittenden County. We're a summer
8 food service program enrichment camp for children.
9 We deal with issues of food insecurity and
10 achievement gaps, opportunity gaps with children.

11 I would like to speak quickly to the
12 value of PEG access to non profits, and our local
13 station is Mt. Mansfield Community Television. It
14 really enhances our ability to get our message out to
15 target the audience, and since I only serve five
16 towns, I need to get this message out to five towns.
17 It took me seven years to get one of the Burlington
18 channels to cover our program, but three or four
19 times a year I'm able to produce a public service
20 announcement at my local PEG station, and people do
21 watch it. The access to the media is really
22 invaluable.

23 I don't have a media budget. So being
24 able to go to the PEG access station and record
25 something or to use their equipment as part of my

1 program just really enhances the experience for
2 everyone. To the citizens it's an unparalleled,
3 unfiltered access to government meetings, school
4 meetings. It's a value to seniors and shut-ins, and
5 also to parents with children who can't go to
6 meetings. I figure if you wanted to stay fully
7 informed as to what is happening in the community you
8 would have to go to 15 or 20 meetings a month between
9 school meetings, select board meetings, planning
10 commissions, conservation commissions, whatever else.
11 And you know, nobody is going to be able to do that.

12 But I've seen the local PEG access
13 channel as -- since it's a small market it's not very
14 well funded. But they have done an incredible job of
15 making these things available to people. And it's
16 changed the way people interact with their
17 government. There is a lot more participation, there
18 is a lot more voting, so it's very, very important.

19 And especially now since we have been
20 hit with some -- a little crime sprees, having the
21 monthly police reports is very valuable to everybody
22 to know what's been happening and what our police
23 force is doing to control -- address crime.

24 But PEG should not be treated as a red-
25 headed stepchild. It seems like PEG stations are

1 funded, you know, sort of because they have to, not
2 because they want to. Not because they really want
3 to address the public good, not because they want to
4 make this accessible. Because if they would, they
5 would fund them adequately. They would figure out
6 what you need to have basic station, and they would
7 help it. And I haven't seen a PEG access station
8 that's extravagant at all. In fact, in our PEG
9 access I think one of staff's mother's made the
10 curtains for the studio. I mean it was just very
11 frugal, and they reuse things, and they are very cost
12 conscious. But they also need to be broadcast in HD.

13 Why should they have lower quality? In
14 years past it was when you hit the PEG station the
15 volume went down, so you had to make adjustments. So
16 they just make it difficult for people to watch it,
17 for people to access that, and you know, access to
18 government is very important.

19 And also, why can't they be listed in
20 the program guide? I mean again that's an access
21 issue. It's almost like it's a conspiracy to keep
22 people from knowing what's happening in their
23 government. And heaven knows the Burlington Free
24 Press doesn't cover anything out in our towns unless
25 there is a scandal, and we can't provide that many

1 scandals or something as controversial.

2 But despite all of these hardships and
3 these challenges PEG access has really changed the
4 way locals get the news about the communities.
5 People have to work hard to find out when meetings
6 are. I think there is a little network that somebody
7 watches it one day, and they say you've got to watch
8 this meeting, you've got to watch it at this time and
9 people sort of figure it out. Why should people have
10 to work that hard? When they are paying for a
11 service, they are paying for Comcast, this should be
12 part of the service, and it should be.

13 So I think if you renew the Certificate
14 of Public Good you need to condition it so that these
15 things are taken care of. You need to allow for a
16 change in technology. You need to have a way for the
17 PEG to address -- PEG stations to address grievances.
18 So if things aren't being done the way it's supposed
19 to, if upgrades aren't coming at the speed that they
20 need to come, that they have a way of going to the
21 Public Service Board and saying, you know, we were
22 supposed to get this service three years ago and we
23 still don't have it.

24 Some PEG budgets are too small for
25 adequate coverage. They can only cover -- they say

1 well we can only cover three school meetings this
2 month, but they don't always have the right
3 information to know which three meetings are the most
4 critical. Especially in this time consolidation,
5 it's really important for them to have more ability.
6 And not everybody can depend on volunteer producers
7 to do that.

8 Comcast is a profitable company, and
9 they should show their commitment to local
10 communities by offering to embrace PEG access and not
11 just treat them like second-class citizens. The
12 focus group last week we talked about the
13 ghettoization of public access. And that's what's
14 happening. And it's sort of like off in the back
15 corner where it's hard to find out what's happening
16 and when it's happening. You really have to work at
17 it. People are doing that. They are making that
18 commitment, but I don't know why they should have to
19 work that hard, especially when Comcast is using our
20 public rights of way. It should be part of the cost
21 of doing business. And they should do it joyfully
22 frankly, because they are making a lot of money from
23 people.

24 Thank you very much.

25 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Who else

1 would like to speak in Williston?

2 THE WITNESS: My name is Gregory
3 EplerWood from Burlington. And because I want to get
4 my comments in under three and-a-half minutes I'm
5 going to speak rather rapidly, but I want to assure
6 the court reporter that everything is written down
7 and I'll give her the copy afterward.

8 I'm here representing myself as a
9 professional consultant supporting community media
10 for the public good. I started in 1979 academically
11 and as a volunteer, and then professionally beginning
12 in 1989 contracted by the Vermont Department of
13 Public Service.

14 Since then I've worked in the field of
15 PEG access as a manager and consultant doing
16 community needs assessment and other things to help
17 AMOs negotiate their PEG access agreements with cable
18 operators.

19 With respect to full disclosure, I'm
20 currently contracted by the Vermont Access Network,
21 or VAN, to provide a half day a week of member
22 support services such as maintaining a Web site,
23 responding to inquiries, editing a newsletter and the
24 like. I'm prohibited from contacting cable operators
25 and conducting any advocacy on behalf of the

1 organization.

2 I'm here solely as a concerned, albeit
3 a pretty well-informed individual, and my views and
4 opinions are my own and don't necessarily reflect
5 those of VAN. While I have many professional
6 viewpoints regarding community media and specifically
7 Comcast's PEG access obligations, I'll confine my
8 remarks to two areas; the significance of PEG Access
9 to Vermont, and the importance of finding a way to
10 sustainably maintain into the future PEG Access'
11 hyper-local form of media creation and delivery.

12 Surveys conducted by Comcast, the
13 Department, myself, and other third parties have
14 consistently indicated an extraordinarily high level
15 of recognition and regard of PEG access by people and
16 organizations in all parts of the state. One telling
17 piece of data is that in 2014 Vermont's 25 PEG access
18 AMOs, 22 of which are in Comcast systems, together
19 broadcast almost 17,000 unique, local, original video
20 programs. That's over 20,000 hours of community
21 programming, and considering there are fewer than
22 9,000 hours in a year, you can grasp the scope of our
23 PEG access. Schools, libraries, municipal
24 governments, and non-profit corporations, churches,
25 clubs, seniors, youth and individuals from all walks

1 of life have come to regard our PEG AMOs as anchor
2 institutions, and depend on their video services much
3 like they depend on their broadband connections to
4 deliver their E-mail and Web site messages.

5 Speaking of broadband, at one time
6 before broadband and cell service came to Vermont,
7 cable TV was the killer app of citizen
8 telecommunications, and the state's interest was to
9 support the PEG access as the non-commercial public
10 benefit to balance the cable operator's commercial
11 use of its public rights of way. And to do this the
12 Board used federal law to leverage cable operators to
13 extend their wires into as many towns as possible and
14 also require them to support independent PEG access
15 operations financially and in other in-kind ways.

16 But by the time Comcast acquired
17 Adelphia Cable broadband and cell service was
18 becoming the new killer app, and attention was
19 redirected at ways in which these newest technologies
20 could be deployed. Even though broadband is carried
21 over the same wires and over the same rights of way
22 as cable TV, the state, under federal law, couldn't
23 regulate broadband, and so it became up to Comcast
24 alone to decide whether or not to extend its lines.

25 So my question is, has Comcast been

1 proactive in expanding it's cable TV and broadband
2 services to more households than it served in 2005?
3 That year Comcast was granted permission to serve
4 about 180 municipalities, but today it only serves
5 about 120, and in those 120 has it voluntarily
6 extended its commercial services? I'll let others
7 fully answer that question.

8 If Comcast were to extend its lines
9 significantly over the next 11 years that would
10 achieve three things. One, it would help the State
11 of Vermont reach its telecommunications goals. Two,
12 it would extend the delivery of public benefits by
13 our PEG access AMOs into unserved areas with the
14 additional cable TV revenues. And three, the company
15 would gain respect as a concerned partner in
16 improving the economic and social quality of life of
17 all Vermonters.

18 In closing, Comcast as the largest
19 telecommunication corporation in the world should
20 have the socially responsible band width to make
21 certain that in those areas where it sells its
22 services and PEG access is thriving, community media
23 remain healthy and able to meet the non-commercial
24 communication needs of the public sector. It would
25 be smart business in a smart state.

1 Thank you very much, Public Service
2 Board, Chairman Volz, and the other members of the
3 Board for allowing me to present my views and
4 opinions in this most important Docket.

5 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I
6 would like to go to St. Albans where we have three
7 people who would like to speak. I would like to hear
8 from the first two.

9 MR. SAVAGE: Good evening, Mr. Chair
10 and members of the Board. I'm State Representative
11 Brian Savage of the Franklin 4 House District
12 representing the town of Swanton and Sheldon. I'm
13 also the moderator for the town of Swanton and the
14 town of Swanton Town school district.

15 This evening I would like to address
16 the relicensing of Comcast and how they relate to
17 Northwest Access Television. For many years
18 Northwest Access Television has broadcast the Swanton
19 Town information meeting live from the Swanton
20 municipal complex in anticipation of town meeting.
21 The town of Swanton, town of Swanton school district
22 adopted the Australian ballot for town meeting format
23 years ago.

24 Until the summer of 2014 Northwest
25 Access TV was able to broadcast live on channel 15

1 and 16 simultaneously. After a partial upgrade by
2 Comcast during that summer, Northwest Public Access
3 TV lost the ability to be live on more than one
4 channel from their remote sites. Because of this the
5 towns of Swanton and the town of Swanton school
6 district informational meetings cannot be broadcast
7 live because it conflicts with the regular St. Albans
8 town meetings. This is a loss to the community of
9 Swanton because one, the residents are unable to come
10 out in the evening who are not able to tune in and
11 watch the meetings from the comfort of their homes.

12 In past meetings phone lines have been
13 set up to allow residents to call in a question to
14 their local select board and school board members.
15 This will no longer be available to them.

16 And lastly in the event the candidates
17 for elected offices are at the meeting they are asked
18 to speak for a few moments and take questions from
19 the audience. Without a live broadcast, again the
20 voters watching from home are not able to call in and
21 ask candidates questions.

22 I respectfully request that any
23 decision by your Board include an order to Comcast to
24 do the necessary upgrades to allow the return of two
25 simultaneously broadcasts on each channel. Thank

1 you.

2 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. I would
3 like to hear from the next person from St. Albans.

4 MS. GAMACHE: Yes. Good evening. My
5 name is Representative Marianna Gamache, and I
6 represent district Franklin 4, the towns of Sheldon
7 and Swanton. First I would like to state that I
8 commend public access TV for providing a very
9 valuable community programming and services. My
10 comments reflect the current state of TV
11 communications and how it could be improved to better
12 serve the public.

13 We are in a time that demands
14 government transparency. Towns across Vermont have
15 come to expect their local select board and school
16 board meetings to be recorded and shared with the
17 public, but they do not yet receive the same level of
18 transparency from the Vermont State House. We are in
19 the information age, and the Vermont government needs
20 to ensure that our citizens receive unbiased
21 information on the creation of the laws that affect
22 their daily lives.

23 Many constituents are unable to attend
24 important proceedings because of the distance to
25 Montpelier and weather conditions of the legislative

1 session. Beyond the legislative session this
2 statewide channel could be utilized for cultural
3 events of interest to the entire state. With the
4 loss of Vermont Interactive Television at the end of
5 2015, the Public Service Board should ensure that
6 other avenues for connecting Vermonters across the
7 state be investigated for the feasibility.

8 Comcast's existing network that runs
9 along roadways and public lands in nearly every
10 corner of our state is an excellent candidate for
11 serving the statewide connection needs. I also
12 believe that the public guide listing should be
13 required for access TV in order to inform the public
14 as to content and time on the public access channels.

15 Thank you very much for listening.

16 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Now I would
17 like to go to Bennington and hear from the next two
18 people there.

19 MS. MAGINNISS: Good evening. I'm
20 Berta Maginniss, Executive Director of Manchester and
21 the Mountains Regional Chamber of Commerce. We
22 represent 18 towns and communities here in
23 southwestern Vermont.

24 We are very fortunate to be served by
25 GNAT-TV which continually against all odds, and I'll

1 come back to that, presents wonderful programming
2 throughout our community. I look at this from a
3 Chamber perspective as the communication thread which
4 unites our entire community. Our businesses, our non
5 profits, our schools, our town government, our school
6 boards, all of these people are reliant on the
7 facilities of GNAT-TV and the staffing that is
8 excellent there. I think that in today's world -- I
9 mean we are all living in the digital age, whatever
10 business you're in, you are continually upgrading
11 your technology. And what hasn't happened in the
12 GNAT-TV and other access areas is that people are
13 using outdated equipment, which is unfortunate
14 because I think we are also educating our young
15 people, and that's a very key issue in our community.

16 The programming that's being done with
17 our students and showcasing the broadcast media and
18 public TV to the young people is just tremendously
19 important. And I think to upgrade the systems to
20 really be where they should be and not be in the
21 "Back to the Future" original area, would be a
22 tremendous help. To have live origination at certain
23 sites, at remote sites, we are currently doing almost
24 all of our school boards and our town meetings
25 certainly, and our select boards which brings the

1 message of what's going on in the community to the
2 broad audience and helps them make informed
3 decisions.

4 So again, I think they are doing a
5 tremendous job, but they are -- they are handicapped
6 by not having the technology that they need to do a
7 better job for all of us and for our community.

8 Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. I would
10 like to hear from the next person in Bennington.

11 MR. SCHLUSSEL: Steven Schlusssel. S-C
12 -H-L-U-S-S-E-L. I'm an independent video producer in
13 the Manchester, Vermont area with a concentration
14 mostly on the arts, sustainable agriculture,
15 charitable institutions.

16 I'll be brief by saying that continuity
17 of funding toward our local cable station is of --
18 high on my list. That to reiterate the quality of
19 the programming which gets dumbed down from my HD
20 work to standard definition is a problem. You've
21 heard it again and again. And once again, the online
22 interactive guide is -- the lack of it is a problem.
23 And it's just another vote going that way on those
24 three things.

25 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Now I would
2 like to go to Brattleboro.

3 MR. STAATS: Bill Staats, and I'm a
4 local producer and a Comcast customer. And my main
5 concern is we do a lot of work with children, a lot
6 of educational programs, have a lot of kids from the
7 high school come in and they work in high-quality,
8 high-def equipment. And then it's turned out in
9 substandard broadcasting. And we are doing a great
10 disservice, I think, to the customers and to the
11 people that are doing this, that are producing these
12 programs, by doing it this way. And thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Is there
14 another person from Brattleboro who wishes to speak?

15 MS. LATHAM: Yes. Thank you. My name
16 is Jennifer Latham. I'm a Brattleboro resident and a
17 Comcast customer. And BCTV is my local community
18 television station.

19 For my work I'm actually an Emmy-award-
20 winning producer, and I have been very lucky to have
21 programs that got distribution on HBO, Show Time, and
22 PBS, but I'm really here to give some comments in
23 regard to the impact and improvements that are needed
24 on behalf of community television service here in the
25 state.

1 Community television is an essential to
2 an open society and free press. With more and more
3 media consolidation it is impossible for some
4 producers to find anywhere to air their shows. This
5 is a really, really important place to keep going, so
6 I want to just really reiterate what everybody else
7 has been saying. It's sometimes the only place that
8 some voices can be heard. There is still a lot of
9 work to be done to improve the service.

10 I don't want to sound like a broken
11 record, because I think I have the same complaints,
12 when I go to the television I think I'm in a position
13 to talk about some of these issues. But it really
14 boils down to that community television is not on an
15 equal footing. It's not on equity with the other
16 stations in the channel guide. It's just not. You
17 see these things, and then you see local. And you
18 see it downgraded to standard definition. I mean
19 this HD issue is just crazy. I haven't worked in
20 standard definition since 2004.

21 Like this is so -- what this gentleman
22 said earlier in the program, if we don't move to HD
23 now, in 10 years I don't even know -- most shows are
24 now being shot in 4K which may not mean much to you,
25 but it's -- HD is old now.

1 Comcast is taking high definition,
2 downgrading it, and is sticking it on the thing.
3 It's like why spend the money to do that step. This
4 is something that mystifies me, and it shouldn't be
5 happening. If I'm producing in high definition I
6 want to see my work. It also affects the viewer
7 experience. Everybody is looking at so much media
8 now, if you look at it and it looks terrible, you're
9 going to keep moving. So it changes what people
10 choose to watch.

11 The other issue is the channel guide.
12 How do you know what you're watching when it just
13 says local, and if you don't have good Internet
14 service or you're not as familiar with the computer,
15 you have to go to the computer, you have to figure
16 out when the show is airing, and then you can't
17 record it.

18 So these basic features are really
19 important so that community television is on equity
20 with all other service providers, because the media
21 that they produce is more -- or as important as
22 what's on other channels provided by Comcast. And
23 it's much -- I would say it's almost more important
24 to this community in particular.

25 So please give them equity in

1 presentation. Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I
3 would like to go to Middlebury and hear from the next
4 two people there.

5 MR. MASON: Hi there. You hear me?

6 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Yes, we can hear you.
7 I hope we will be able to see you soon.

8 MR. MASON: You might regret that.

9 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Now we can see you. Go
10 ahead.

11 MR. MASON: Excellent. The full
12 package. My name is Chris Mason, and I am a police
13 officer in Middlebury. I work for the Middlebury
14 police department. And my local channel is
15 Middlebury community television. And I have hosted a
16 show for -- it's in our fourth season now, called
17 Middlebury Five-oh, and it's an interview show. It's
18 a talk show. And I don't know how many shows I've
19 done at this point. Definitely more than a hundred,
20 and a very wide range of broad spectrum of people
21 that I've interviewed. On one level it serves as an
22 informational show, so some of the interviews are
23 with people who are representing organizations,
24 businesses, institutions within the community. So
25 it's a way to get the word out about those things.

1 And enrolled in the democratic process
2 as well, the select board races, candidates have
3 appeared on the show and gotten the message out that
4 way. So that's one part.

5 I think the more critical part is that
6 it really -- it's to connect people to the -- for the
7 Middlebury police department, so it's very much
8 aligned with the police department's mission of
9 community policing. And it connects people within
10 the community. And I am a really firm believer that
11 the more connected we are in community, the stronger
12 the community is and the richer our lives are. So
13 it's really -- it's been an incredible privilege
14 being able to do this, being able to put this show
15 on, meet these people, and have it broadcast locally.
16 It's been really inspiring as well. So I feel like
17 it's good work. I feel like it's important work.
18 And I really hope that we are able to continue it.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. If we could
21 hear from the next person in Middlebury.

22 MR. MITTELL: Thank you. My name is
23 Jason Mittell. M-I-T-T-E-L-L. And I am here both as
24 a citizen of Middlebury and Comcast subscriber, and
25 also something of an expert. I'm a Professor of Film

1 and Media Studies at Middlebury College, and my
2 expertise is in American television.

3 And one point I wanted to mention, a
4 number of my fellow citizens have thanked Comcast for
5 providing PEG access in their various communities.
6 And I think it's important to remember that Comcast
7 provides the funding and channels for PEG access not
8 because they want to. It's not an act of charity or
9 community service. They do it because we make them
10 do it. Because us citizens through our
11 representation through the Public Service Board
12 insists that this is part of the Certificate of
13 Public Good. So it's not a matter of thanking
14 Comcast for doing this out of their necessity, but
15 rather us standing up and saying this is something
16 that we need.

17 And I do think that PEG access is
18 something that we still need. One thing that people
19 ask me when I talk about PEG access is why does this
20 matter in the age of YouTube where anyone
21 theoretically can post a video and share it with
22 millions of people worldwide. And I think that
23 that's a real big misconception, and there are two
24 main things I want to focus on the way in which
25 Middlebury community television in my community as

1 well as the PEG channels you've heard from around the
2 state serve a function that YouTube does not.

3 The first is that PEG station is a
4 community media center. It is a place where people
5 gather to create media, to learn how to create media,
6 and to share their ideas. And in Middlebury we are
7 very fortunate that our station MCTV is housed in our
8 public library. And they have a great partnership
9 with our public library to create media education
10 programs for local kids and teenagers. And for me as
11 an educator, this is hugely important, that the
12 students who go off to higher education have exposure
13 to how to make media, how to watch media critically,
14 how to think through how media functions in our
15 society. And that's not something that YouTube can
16 provide. That is something that the staff and the
17 volunteers at PEG stations and our library can
18 provide. And that's one of the huge functions of a
19 PEG station beyond just making videos and sharing
20 them.

21 The second major function that I think
22 is vital is that a PEG station is a -- is community-
23 based distribution. Yes, anyone can create a video
24 and put it online for everyone, but when you put a
25 video on to your local PEG station, what you're doing

1 is you're sharing it with your neighbors. You're
2 sharing it with your fellow citizens. If you're a
3 government official, you're sharing it with your
4 constituents. If you're a police officer, like my
5 friend Chris here, you are sharing it with the people
6 who you protect and serve. And that is crucial.

7 A PEG station is one of the vital ways
8 in which a community talks to itself. And one of the
9 great things about Vermont is our sense of community.
10 We have small towns. We do not have major media, but
11 we have a vibrant community media. And that's why I
12 urge you the Public Service Board and our fellow
13 citizens to keep insistent that Comcast provides,
14 expands this vital service.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Now I would
17 like to hear from someone from -- I think we have got
18 somebody in Rutland who wishes to speak.

19 MS. HART: Hi. Can you all hear me?

20 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Yes.

21 MS. HART: Okay. My name is Nan Hart.
22 I actually direct three elder service programs in our
23 community here in the Rutland area. I have been --
24 had the pleasure of producing a show locally here for
25 about 15 years on PEG-TV, and what our show mainly

1 focuses on is sharing information that non-profit
2 organizations in the region provide to our community
3 members, and what we do on the show is not only
4 provide them the opportunity to talk about what their
5 organizations do and the service that they provide,
6 but it's an outlet for them to try and recruit
7 volunteers.

8 What I do is deploy volunteers in the
9 community, our organization does, I should say. And
10 so it's a wonderful opportunity for these
11 organizations to do outreach and build their own
12 capacity by utilizing volunteers. It's just one of
13 those little subtle things that PEG-TV provides in
14 the community that a couple of people have touched
15 on. I don't want to reiterate everything everybody
16 has gone over, so I'm not going to do that.

17 But I do want to express my real
18 support for the need for HD in our public access
19 channels. I talk to people all the time, and having
20 done a show for many years before we had the HD
21 channels and now that we have the HD channels, the
22 amount of people that see the shows now versus a
23 decade ago is dramatically different. People have to
24 really seek it out now because it isn't readily
25 available. Because oftentimes people -- we have all

1 done it -- just sit and channel surf. And one of the
2 things you would do is stumble across a show on the
3 public access channels and go this is really
4 interesting, I'm going to watch this. So it's
5 important because of the spontaneity sometimes of
6 watching a show.

7 And on the heels of that I would say
8 that that's why the guide is also equally important
9 because there are people that really do catch a show,
10 seek out the particular schedule of a show, and want
11 to know when it's going to be on. I think for PEG-TV
12 to continue to be the voice of the people of our
13 region and really throughout the state the
14 accessibility needs to be intuitive, useful and
15 certainly a high quality, especially technologically
16 speaking.

17 So I would certainly encourage the
18 Public Service Board to renew the Certificate of
19 Public Good.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Now I would
22 like to go to Montpelier where we have two people to
23 speak. Mr. Whitaker.

24 MR. WHITAKER: Good evening. My name's
25 Steve Whitaker. It's my understanding that the CPG

1 will be renewed. It's the questions are all about
2 what conditions and what PEG support and what service
3 quality will be required of the company.

4 In my informed opinion Vermonters
5 require reestablishing the tradition of three to five
6 percent of the channels' capacity being made
7 available to PEG. When there were 100 channels,
8 three channels in a community was three percent. If
9 there is 300 channels, nine channels would be
10 equivalent. You get the idea. We need a comparable
11 three to five percent not only on the local systems
12 but on the interconnect.

13 Comcast has combined and eliminated
14 headends across Vermont, and those fiber
15 interconnects have abundant capacity. There is a lot
16 of dark fiber all over Vermont that's not being used.
17 That channel capacity needs to be available to the
18 PEG stations to share programming and create that
19 statewide channel. We need access to all the
20 features of the Comcast electronic program guide.
21 And similar to the way a program guide from Comcast
22 cascades out to tivo and tivo feeds it into a DVR in
23 the home, that same functionality should accrue to
24 the public access channels, be they three or nine, so
25 that someone can set their DVR up to record what they

1 are interested in and see it coming a week ahead of
2 time.

3 We need open access. That's a goal in
4 202c, has been for years, has yet to be defined or
5 implemented in Board orders. We need open access to
6 the dark fiber, not only Comcast's, but the other
7 utilities as well. Access to the conduits for
8 underground service entrants. If a competitor needs
9 to pull a fiber connection into a building and there
10 is already a conduit there, we need open access to
11 the conduit, with legitimate safety protections, et
12 cetera. We might need to explore the rights to
13 overlash community fiber such as EC fiber on
14 Comcast's strand.

15 I noticed that when I got the permits
16 that VTrans issues for the building of the fiber
17 there is a condition in there that the state has the
18 right to overlash on to those strands at no cost.
19 Now I don't know what the structure of a government
20 VTA-type entity would build such fiber and utilize
21 that feature, but that needs to be explored and/or
22 negotiated.

23 We need full HD and ultra HD capacity.
24 We can't play catch up and finally get HD after it's
25 been on the market for years and then fight this

1 battle again 11 years later for ultra HD. People are
2 producing in ultra HD now which was also referred to
3 as 4K in the prior testimony.

4 We need emergency backup power
5 requirements for all coax amplifiers and optical
6 electronics, especially as more and more customers
7 have let go of their five-volt power FairPoint lines
8 and relied on a Voice-over-IP telephone service,
9 those services go down. The cable amplifiers go
10 down, we have lost the ability to even call emergency
11 911.

12 There are many areas in Vermont yet to
13 have cell service, and there is gaps, and with the
14 power outage on the cable system combined with no
15 cell service, you've got no way to call for help. We
16 might explore as an interim measure that open access
17 to the unused dark fiber, FairPoint's and others,
18 immediately be used to install micro cells in those
19 dead cell zones to provide emergency calling and fill
20 the gaps.

21 I believe there is an incremental step
22 that it cannot be argued that the FCC prevents --
23 preempts Vermont regulating what is simply a piece of
24 dark glass in the public right of way. That is not a
25 piece of a cable television system. That is a piece

1 of dark glass residing in the public right of way.
2 We need to insist on network ring closure and
3 survivability, geographically diverse circuits, not
4 only for Comcast, but for all the carriers. These
5 are fragility in the network, they can't be tolerated
6 in this day and age.

7 Al a carte channel selection someone
8 spoke to earlier, the ability to -- we are in a
9 unique position in a small state with a progressive
10 Board and we should use our community to negotiate
11 these things in a CPG. We need funding for PEG
12 access from all users of the public right of way, not
13 just Comcast. As more video service moves over onto
14 broadband, on to Netflix, Hulu, et cetera, all the
15 users of the public right of way should contribute to
16 this important community media and civic
17 participation agenda.

18 Video conferencing and public hearings
19 such as this. VIT is scheduled for going dark next
20 month or in December. That should be an essential
21 application on a PEG network. There is a logical
22 synergy between VIT functions and public access AMO
23 functions. This type of thing could be done and
24 funded with that shared funding model that I
25 described, all users of the right of way.

1 This Docket, as do others, require
2 appointment of an independent public advocate. Act
3 56 required the Department to conduct an assessment
4 of its public advocacy. Last night was the first
5 public hearing. They got a unanimous vote of no
6 confidence in their public advocacy. And until that
7 gets remedied, the Board needs to consider appointing
8 a public advocate even as a prophylactic measure such
9 that we don't discover that the Board's inadequate
10 representation is akin to having a devious crime lab
11 investigator tech putting a whole bunch of past
12 decisions in suspect. Do you understand the analogy
13 there?

14 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: No.

15 THE WITNESS: Okay. When recent crime
16 labs were found to be compromised by a deceitful
17 operator, and in this case a compromised Department
18 of Public Service --

19 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Now I get it, yes.

20 THE WITNESS: Many of your decisions,
21 even ones already made, have to be revisited. For
22 instance, the focus group. The Department doesn't
23 know how to run a focus group. They didn't choose to
24 invite Charlie to their focus group yesterday.
25 Charlie is one of the most knowledgeable people in

1 the state on this topic. Many of these issues were
2 spoken to in the 10-year-plan hearings, on a public
3 comment draft, yet none of them ended up in the final
4 draft or in a subsequent draft which was not a final
5 draft. No hearings were held.

6 There is legislation required I would
7 ask you to consider because the Board's point of view
8 is listened to and respected strongly in the
9 legislature, and that is three points. All -- just
10 as contracts under 226a and IRPs, incentive
11 regulation plans, under 226b must be found to be
12 consistent with the 10-year-plan, all Certificates of
13 Public Good should be required to be found consistent
14 with the 10-year plan.

15 DPS should not be the agency adopting
16 its own miserably deficient plan. That needs to be
17 either a Board function or a legislative function
18 after a finding of completeness by the Board. That's
19 the only place the qualifications and the lack of
20 conflict can occur. CPGs should no longer be for an
21 11-year period. Six is more reasonable in this day
22 of rapid technological evolution. 11 years is too
23 long to issue a CPG with the ramifications that
24 you're hearing about tonight.

25 So we don't want a Comcast-run VIT

1 network. It's more of a function that should be
2 managed as is PEG managed by the community-based non-
3 governmental organization. We need to define and
4 establish possibly in this Docket what open access
5 means on the ground in Vermont and what net
6 neutrality means on the ground in Vermont. We need
7 to define the overlap between the 1990 open network
8 architecture Docket and how that applies to cable and
9 telephone service today.

10 Comcast should be steered in the
11 direction consistent with our goals of 30 V.S.A.
12 202c. And lacking a plan, it's up to the Board to
13 interpret those goals and apply them in conditions on
14 this Certificate of Public Good.

15 Currently there is a goal of fiber to
16 the premises in nine years, and there is another goal
17 of not to invest in soon-to-be-obsolete or
18 soon-to-be-outmoded technology. It can be argued
19 logically that continuing to do line extensions in
20 copper does not make any sense because the massive
21 depreciation of the entire FairPoint ILEC and Comcast
22 network once there is a strand of glass to every home
23 in Vermont which is scheduled by 2024, needs to be
24 evaluated in the context of this Docket.

25 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Ms.
2 Shollenberger.

3 MS. SHOLLENBERGER: Hi. My name is Amy
4 Shollenberger. That's S-H-O-L-L-E-N-B-E-R-G-E-R. I
5 live in Barre, Vermont. I am a Comcast customer at
6 my business, really can't get it in Barre. I'm here
7 to ask you to ensure that the CPG requires continued
8 and stronger support of PEG-TV for all the reasons
9 that have already been mentioned, I won't get into
10 any technical details for that.

11 I'm a big fan of public access
12 television. I think it's a vital community resource
13 that helps people connect to their community and get
14 information that helps them to be part of the
15 community. Many people have mentioned participation
16 in government programs, being able to know what's
17 going on in the community and the government in the
18 community. But it also helps people just to connect
19 with other human beings in their community and to
20 know what kind of place they live in.

21 I myself have moved many times in my
22 life, and when I had access to community access
23 television when I moved to a new place I was able to
24 get a sense of a place where I was moving to, to
25 recognize people on the street, because I saw them on

1 TV and I knew what they looked like. I could tell
2 who my local officials were. I think that's a really
3 important service that community access brings.

4 I have been to many of the local
5 stations around the state. I've helped people to
6 produce shows, I have been guests on various shows,
7 and I think it's really exciting to see some of the
8 things that happen in those stations. Many have
9 mentioned the volunteer spirit in the community that
10 helps these stations go. And I think also one of the
11 really good benefits of public access television is
12 the variety of voices that you can hear by watching
13 PEG-TV. Even in the same show sometimes you get a
14 variety of different opinions and voices and
15 different kinds of people. And I think that's really
16 important also to build our community in the state.

17 Another thing that I haven't heard
18 mentioned yet is the archival services that public
19 access TV stations provide, both I think on video and
20 also more and more on the Internet. I think that all
21 the shows should be available on the Internet to
22 people, you know, after they have aired. I also
23 think that the Internet is not enough. I think
24 having these shows available on television for people
25 who don't have access to the Internet or prefer to

1 watch it on TV is very important.

2 The educational services that these
3 stations provide are also important. I've taken
4 classes myself at PEG-TV stations. I know others who
5 have. And one of the things that I find very
6 exciting about PEG-TV stations and the classes and
7 the programming that they do is that I have seen many
8 times young people in the community connecting with
9 community leaders, with artists, with just their
10 neighbors, because they are coming into the station
11 learning how to use the TV cameras, learning how to
12 produce video. They are learning marketable skills,
13 but at the same time they are meeting people in their
14 community and also getting mentored by the people who
15 work at the station.

16 I think that one of the best things
17 about PEG-TV is that anyone can use it. It's
18 available to everyone. I think some of the access
19 issues have been mentioned, but I do think it is very
20 accessible if people do know about it. As I said
21 I've visited many stations, and my overwhelming
22 experience has been a very welcoming environment, and
23 they do support people who want to produce television
24 shows.

25 I do think one thing I would ask if

1 it's possible as part of the CPG is that everyone
2 should have access to the programming even if they
3 don't have a cable subscription. For instance, if
4 they have only the Internet subscription but not the
5 cable subscription because some of that programming
6 is still vitally important, and if for some reason
7 the person can't afford the basic package, I think
8 they should still have a way to access the
9 programming that's available on the local TV channel.

10 Thank you for listening, and thanks for
11 having the hearing.

12 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I
13 would like to go to Williston where I understand
14 there are still 13 people who would like to speak.

15 I would like to hear from the next two.

16 MR. PALIERI: Okay. Hi. This is Rik
17 Palieri. P-A-L-I-E-R-I. And I'm a producer over at
18 VCAM. And I have been doing it since 2009. And the
19 one thing that I can tell you is how this public
20 access TV can change someone's life and give meaning
21 to their lives. It gives new skills that you didn't
22 know that you had, and you can do things that you
23 couldn't imagine.

24 When my show started all those years
25 ago it started as an art kind of thing where I was

1 interviewing musicians, and it opened up an
2 opportunity for local musicians and then later
3 national and world musicians to have their voice
4 heard. The show started out with a lot of people
5 from Vermont. But then I was able to get people like
6 Pete Seager, Tom Paxton, people from -- Anthony
7 DeCurtis from Rolling Stone Magazine, people from all
8 over the world to participate in the Songwriters'
9 Notebook.

10 In 2009 I was contacted by the Library
11 of Congress, the American Folk Life Center. And they
12 wanted to create a collection of my show for our
13 national archive. So I think that it's important to
14 understand that something can start out small, a
15 local kind of community thing, and then grow to be a
16 part of our history. Because the Library of Congress
17 would kind of look at things a hundred years from
18 now. There are already researchers going to my
19 collection at the Library of Congress and watching
20 these shows that we made in our VCAM studio and
21 learning from them. And that will continue because
22 they want more and more shows.

23 But I can't express how important
24 having this opportunity, that this, you know, this
25 kind of opportunity changes your life, for artists,

1 people who have a dream, this is an important thing
2 because you can go to the community station without
3 any experience, and the skilled staff will train you
4 to give you all the tools that you need. It's sort
5 of almost like, you know, creating jobs in the
6 future. You know, because they are training you with
7 all of the skills that later you can apply to so many
8 other things. And I just can't say enough about all
9 the wonderful things that VCAM has done for me and
10 for so many other producers out there.

11 And I know that, you know, when you
12 look at -- you're looking at the budget and saying,
13 okay, so where is the money going and what's the
14 purpose here. When you realize how many people
15 you're touching, not only the producers, but you're
16 touching the community and letting so many musicians
17 have a voice, today, that's hard, to have a chance to
18 be heard in a meaningful way.

19 My program is not just a performance
20 program. It's an interview program where people get
21 to know about the performers. And a lot of times
22 that really helps them start to build up their
23 audience. They are so grateful to have that
24 opportunity to have their voice heard.

25 So I would like to thank VCAM and RETN

1 for giving people so many of the skills that will
2 help them to create new possibilities in the future.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Can we hear
5 from next person in Williston?

6 MS. HIGGINS: Yes. I'm Tamra Higgins.
7 And I'm going to continue talking about the arts and
8 local access television. I'm co-president of Sun Dog
9 Poetry Center, a non-profit charitable organization
10 that promotes poetry throughout the state. We just
11 finished a 10-part, statewide lecture series held in
12 independent book stores throughout the state which
13 was sponsored by the Vermont Humanities Council and
14 recorded and aired by MMC-TV and other local access
15 stations. We could not have reached the audience we
16 did without the excellent service of MMC-TV and the
17 other stations. We could have had however, an even
18 larger impact on the state had these shows been
19 promoted by cable viewers.

20 Additionally these shows were only able
21 to be in high definition due to two of the local
22 access stations transmitting in HD through non-
23 Comcast distribution. This coming year we are
24 involving students in all of the schools in Vermont K
25 through college in a new poetry series that will be

1 involving the state's leading poets. And it will be
2 imperative that ROS, remote origination sites, are
3 available for students to be involved in these
4 cultural offerings. These will allow direct
5 discourse with leading poets in the state.

6 And so in summary, visibility and
7 programming, access for all viewers, including access
8 in remote sites without the prohibitive heavy
9 connection fees, and high quality broadcasts are
10 needed in our state. And we feel our local access
11 stations are doing their part in providing those
12 services.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Now I would
15 like to go to St. Albans. And take what I think is
16 the last person there who wishes to speak.

17 MS. DOBISKY-VAISEY: Hello, my name is
18 Nancy -- hello?

19 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Go ahead.

20 MS. DOBISKY-VAISEY: My name is Nancy
21 D-O-B-I-S-K-Y, V-A-I-S-E-Y.

22 Many years ago when channel 15 first
23 got going I was a volunteer, and I'll date myself
24 back to when we had to program a recording on VHS
25 tapes, and we had to come in after hours and shift

1 tapes so we could continue our programming. I've
2 seen the station grow over the years, and it has
3 offered a lot.

4 Vermont is a rural state. And there is
5 a lot of lack of communication, and channel 15 now
6 and 16 have provided a lot of communication that
7 people in the outlying areas can't get because either
8 they can't get Internet service or cable service or
9 even now problems too with cell phone. They were
10 working on that.

11 But I've heard different people say
12 that, you know, they look so forward to the local
13 programming because even the cable channels you get
14 little bits of news, but you know, they show a whole
15 football game and sports event, a concert, school
16 events, showings that people either can or can't
17 attend or are unable to. And it's made a big
18 difference in the local area.

19 And I really appreciate, you know, your
20 giving me this chance to talk. I don't want to say a
21 whole lot more than what's been said tonight. But I
22 think it's very important that this continue, and I
23 think that going on with the high-def and further on
24 and making more improvement would be a definite asset
25 to the community.

1 Thank you very much.

2 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Now I would
3 like to go to Bennington and hear from people
4 remaining there who would like to speak.

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Stanley Williams. Mr.
6 Chairman, I'm a Comcast customer, I live in
7 Shaftsbury, Vermont. And to the gentleman who said
8 there is no such thing as a free lunch, right, but
9 the lunches have been turning into expensive dinners
10 because Comcast rates are like over the moon. They
11 are extremely high. Every year they seem to increase
12 their rates on everything from their packages to the
13 rentals, their modems, their converters and whatever.
14 And originally when you needed basic TV you had to
15 get an adapter, a digital adapter. So they gave
16 everybody these free adapters. Then all of a sudden
17 now they decided well let's make the money on these
18 adapters, so they started charging a dollar 99 a
19 month for these adapters. Then maybe the next year
20 they said we will charge 2.99 now for the adapter.
21 When is the bleeding going to stop? There's got to
22 be a peak. They keep doing whatever they want.
23 Charge people whatever they want.

24 And the other thing is, with the
25 channel selection that other gentleman was right.

1 Why should you pay for 400 channels when you watch
2 seven or eight. Why can't you pick your own channels
3 and pay for just what you use. I mean cable bill's
4 becoming a car payment. It's unbelievable.

5 Furthermore when you're trying to watch
6 a movie they throw the info. commercials in on you
7 and they last 10 or 15 minutes. By the time you
8 watch them, you forgot what you were watching.
9 That's the way I look at it. I don't know what the
10 heck the movie was, you know.

11 Customer service is lousy. You call
12 customer service up. Okay. Don't worry about it.
13 We will try to fix it over the line. Call us back if
14 it doesn't work. You call them back and you get a
15 different rep, and you've got to explain the whole
16 thing all over to them again, and they tell you the
17 same thing. We will shoot a thing through the TV and
18 that doesn't happen. So you know, it's very
19 frustrating.

20 And I don't want to mention anything
21 about -- but you know, I hear that the workers, you
22 know, they get free cable and free Internet. I work
23 for a utility. I didn't get nothing off of my
24 electric bill. Why get free electricity. I didn't
25 get no bonuses. Give them a discount if you want,

1 but don't give it to them free. Put that money back
2 in the customers so they lower their customers' rates
3 down. That's what I would do.

4 And that's about it. I vented myself.

5 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Anybody else? Go
6 ahead.

7 MS. MORRISSEY: Mary Morrissey. State
8 representative in Bennington. And I'm here tonight
9 to enthusiastically support our local access channels
10 from around the state, but especially here in
11 Bennington our CAT-TV station. CAT-TV has a long and
12 proud history of providing a vast array of
13 programming to benefit the viewers. Program coverage
14 consists of education, government, local and regional
15 board meetings and forums, local and regional stories
16 of interest, local church services for those who are
17 unable to attend sporting events, calendar of notices
18 of events in our region, and timely emergency
19 information when needed.

20 Our local access channels across the
21 state are indeed a public good. It is a way for
22 citizens to be further connected with their
23 communities, even if they are physically not able to
24 do so. I can only hope their other access channels
25 are run as well as ours in Bennington. Our Executive

1 Director and her staff are always looking to improve
2 and broaden their programming, so there is a public
3 forum for free speech, civic engagement and an
4 important alternative from monopolized media sources.

5 In closing, I strongly encourage you to
6 continue to ensure that our communities have access
7 to local, unfettered community media by continuing to
8 certify our local access channels as a common good
9 for our community and our state. Also anything that
10 you can do along with Comcast could enhance
11 technology, resources and opportunities for access
12 channels would be greatly appreciated.

13 Thank you for your time and
14 consideration.

15 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. Next I
16 would like to go to Williston, and I would just like
17 to let you know that we've been told by the VIT staff
18 here that we have run over the time that they have
19 allotted for us to do this hearing, and so we are
20 going to hear from two more people from Williston,
21 then we are going to have to end this public hearing.

22 But anybody who wants to can write to
23 us or go to our Web site and file comments to us
24 about this matter. We will be happy to read all of
25 those. We do read all of the written comments that

1 we receive in any format which we receive them. So
2 feel free to write to us.

3 I think we have picked up very strongly
4 what the theme of the evening has been, and so I
5 think you can be confident that we know what all of
6 you are thinking.

7 So let's go to Williston and hear from
8 the last two people for the evening.

9 MS. DICKERSON: My name is Mary Jane
10 Dickerson. I'm from Jericho, Vermont. Retired
11 Professor of English at the University of Vermont.
12 And the other half of Sun Dog Poetry Center, the
13 non-profit organization.

14 And I would like to continue just a few
15 words about the cultural impact of our local Mt.
16 Mansfield Community Access Television. They are at
17 every event. They make sure they know what is going
18 on. And when we went to them to ask about doing the
19 poetry series, they organized, they contacted all of
20 the local access television stations around the
21 state, and they were there. Somebody was there at
22 every event.

23 They have also collaborated with
24 Vermont PBS, because the whole series is now going to
25 be a program on Vermont PBS. And I think that

1 collaboration that our local access stations do with
2 other venues around the state is so very important
3 for our cultural lives.

4 As an educator, I feel that I have been
5 able to continue being a educator, though retired
6 officially, because in my poetry workshops for the
7 last 13 years, number 14 will be this April, they
8 always come, they always televise our final community
9 poetry reading at the local library. And they cover
10 so much in my area, and if all the local access
11 stations do that well, we are well served. And
12 everything should be done to heighten and to increase
13 the quality of what they are able to do.

14 Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: Thank you. If we could
16 hear from the next person.

17 MS. DICKERSON: I think I am it. With
18 a southern accent. I'm sorry.

19 CHAIRMAN VOLZ: No need to apologize.
20 I would like to thank everybody for coming out
21 tonight. I appreciate all the comments that we
22 received.

23 Like I said, if you have -- if you
24 didn't get to speak tonight, you would like us to
25 hear what you have to say, please write to us. We

1 will read everything that you send us.

2 Have a nice evening. Good night.

3 (Whereupon, the proceeding was
4 adjourned at 9:11 p.m.)
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I, Kim U. Sears, do hereby certify that I recorded by stenographic means the Public Hearing re: Docket Number 8301 on the VIT network, Montpelier, Vermont, on October 21, 2015, beginning at 7 p.m.

I further certify that the foregoing testimony was taken by me stenographically and thereafter reduced to typewriting and the foregoing 100 pages are a transcript of the stenograph notes taken by me of the evidence and the proceedings to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties thereto or their counsel, and I am in no way interested in the outcome of said cause.

Dated at Williston, Vermont, this 23d day of October, 2015.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kim U. Sears". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.