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Office of the Secretary



CITY OF
FAYETTEVILLE
ARKANSAS

July 31, 2019

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Chairman Ajit Pai and
Commissioners Michael O'Rielly, Brendan Carr,
Jessica Rosenworcel, and Geoffrey Starks
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Chairman Pai and Commissioners O'Rielly, Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks:

Regarding MB Docket No. 05-311 — Agenda item "Implementation of Section 621" for the August 1, 2019, meeting — where in-kind services could be offered by cable operators in place of franchising funding for Public Access/Education/Government channel (PEG) services, I am writing to provide you with a snapshot of the Fayetteville, Arkansas, PEG operation.

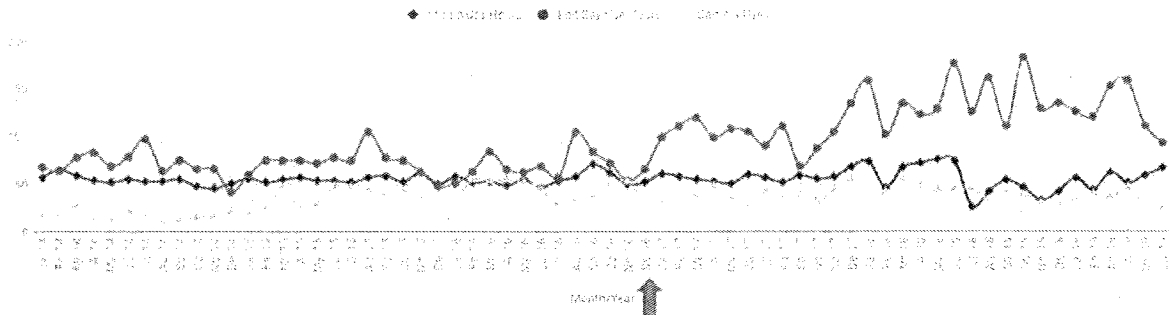
In 2010, the City of Fayetteville's PEG operation was a beleaguered hodge-podge of 10- to 20-year-old analog, standard-definition cablecasting equipment, with audio speaker wires serving either as video cables in some instances. Seeing the disrepair and drop off in community use, our City Council voted to set aside a small portion of cable franchise funding each year over the course of five years to eventually revitalize, modernize, and digitize the PEG operation. (Manufacturers were phasing out analog gear, television delivery was moving to digital means, and "archival" tapes and even DVDs were breaking down.)

By the end of 2016, the City of Fayetteville had PEG and its Television Center upgraded to a digital, high-definition operation — all thanks to a portion of the cable franchising funds set aside over five years. This funding has allowed the City of Fayetteville to pursue better and more fully its mantra of open, transparent government and to increase community engagement through cablecasting on the Fayetteville Government Channel (FGC) more than 30 government meetings per month and digitizing — rescuing — older meetings for public record and reference. The digital HD upgrade actually has made maps and presentations legible on screen, a small but important detail for public record.

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For Fayetteville Public Television (FPTV), the City's public access channel, the upgrade has resulted in record growth and usage by the community, as evidenced by this usage chart:

Studio Use Hours, Edit Bay Use Hours and Camera Uses



(Note: December 2016 marks the completion of the two-month upgrade.)

This increase in community involvement has resulted in a 32.1% increase in programs produced by the community with FPTV services and facilities. In fact, in 2018, a community program produced through FPTV garnered a regional EMMY Award nomination, the first ever for Fayetteville's public access operation.

Being given some fiber, or internet service, or Wi-Fi hotspots, or cable television service, or other in-kind offerings would not have facilitated the communal growth and engagement illustrated above. The public and nonprofit organizations alike cannot make programs with their messages and voices with only fiber, a hotspot, or free cable in some building. They need cameras, computers, classes for learning, mentoring, support, and resources – and the City of Fayetteville can provide these things to its community because of cable franchising funds. Cable operators should continue their vested interests in the communities they serve through cable franchising funds, because community growth benefits everyone, include the cable operators themselves.

Sincerely,

Doug Bankston
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