

12/13/18

The Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman
The Honorable Michael O’Rielly, Commissioner
The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner

Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
455 12th Street, Southwest
Washington, DC, 20544

Dear Chairman Pai,

We write to support the Comments of Brattleboro Community Television, Inc. (File ID 1113560010350) and to disapprove of the proposals and tentative conclusions set forth in the FCC’s September 25 Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making in *Implementation of Section 621(a)(1) of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 as Amended by the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992*, MB Docket 05-311.

My following comments apply to all of Vermont because this decision affects more than just my community and our amazing public access station, BCTV. The majority of Vermont is rural. Many people are not able to physically attend municipal meetings, local government candidate panels, school board meetings, church services, school graduation ceremonies, etc. for various reasons. Providing them with access via the televisions, computers, and mobile devices in their homes means they can still be engaged and aware of what is happening in their community. They can still have an informed voice when they go to the polls, or form opinions on the decisions of local government officials. BCTV in particular is the first public access TV station in Vermont, and they have been supplying and improving on their services to the public for decades. There is NO OTHER local television station in southern Vermont to cover local news. And in this current climate of questionable national media coverage, public access stations are absolutely a necessary resource in my community and in this country as a whole.

I have been involved with BCTV as a volunteer, producer, and board member since 2008. In that time, I have seen what BCTV - public access tv in general - can do for individuals in the community as well. Beyond providing access to local news, it provides education and a creative outlet. I’ve seen children, high school students, college students with special needs, international educators from a local graduate school, retirees, and everyone in between find a creative voice both in and out of the studio with BCTV’s training and guidance. Where else would our community members have access to the equipment and knowledge that you’ll find at our public access station?

BCTV relies on Comcast for the majority of its funding. Pushing the financial burden onto our communities in Windham County when the majority of them are working multiple jobs just to put food on their tables is ridiculous. I’ve been involved in fund raising efforts – the desire to give is there in our community members and businesses, but the spare money is not. Those who

push to shut down our public access stations by removing major funding should be ashamed – because that is what they would be doing if these proposals go through.

This local presence enables the residents of Windham county to create and watch uniquely local programming about their community and local events and issues of interest to them. And that was the intent of the PEG provisions of the 1984 Cable Act – to enhance local voices, serve local community needs and interests, and strengthen our local democracy. By defining “franchise fee” in an overly broad fashion to include “in-kind” support, the FCC’s proposals will shift the fair balance between cable franchising authorities and cable operators – something that was never the intent of the Act – and could ultimately result in such reduction in franchise fees as to defund PEG Access in our state.

I appreciate your consideration and hope you will protect PEG Access in our community and others by choosing not to adopt many of the proposals in the Further Notice.

Sincerely,

Wendy Mason
Brattleboro, VT resident
BCTV volunteer and former board member