

March 1, 2000

The Commissioners
Federal Communications Commission
via electronic filing

Re: Bell Atlantic vs. The Community (CC Docket NO. 98-184)

Dear Commissioners:

For several years I've endeavored to bring the fruits of the Internet to my "middle of the road" community. We're "middle" because we don't have any home grown high tech manufacturers or media centers. Nor do we suffer classic digital divide characteristics. So bringing in digital fertilizer has been difficult.

Our largest information and communications company is Bell Atlantic. They serve 90+ % of our residents. I've contacted them many times seeking their assistance, via a variety of proposals. Only once did I perceive real potential for community assistance, and as a consequence, I wrote the NYS Public Service Commission in 1998 and urged them to approve BA's merger with GTE. (I thought the merged BA/GTE, particularly the GTE Internetworking unit, would help overcome some of the limitations the IP protocol imposes on place-based communities.)

But I was subsequently told that I'd been seeing things - that no assistance was forthcoming for our community.

But I remained ever hopeful. I placed my request up and down the ladder at BA. Getting frustrated, I even challenged CEO Ivan Seidenberg at a public forum to focus on the needs of local communities. He promised to do something, but didn't follow through.

When I saw the recent GTE Internetworking 'separate data entity' scheme I thought - if they do this they won't even be able to help. So I wrote the FCC on 2-15-00 indicating my opposition.

Last weekend I had the opportunity to check the FCC web site and review the comments presented. And what did I find - BA's response to my objection was totally ignored. They said,

"The only significant opposition to our DataCo proposal comes from AT&T and its allies at CompTel."

Their message once again said, in essence, "SLAP-BAM you cockroach. We've ignored you in the community. We've ignored your community. And we'll ignore you in Washington. We're huge. We're powerful. And we don't have to pay you any attention whatsoever. SLAM-BAM."

Most will think me overly sensitive, but I took the time to submit comments that spoke to the future of my community and the negative impact the Internet was having on us. And I spoke of how important BA's involvement would be, and how that will not happen under the latest proposal. And I said, I am opposed to the merger.

So, what do I add with this message today?

Bell Atlantic should not be able to weasel out of their community responsibilities. The FCC has a responsibility and the power to make sure BA doesn't do a SLAP- BAM on my community - and on the thousands of communities it serves across the country.

Now, I'm certain they'll bury you with reams of paper on the many contributions they make to communities. And they'll say, 'Who is this guy? Doesn't he know how the world works? We're not a bunch of pansies - it's tough out there? It's kill or get killed.' And on and on and on~

But there is a basic civility we strive for in my community. And I'm certain it exists in Washington D.C. And they're not following it.

And it's up to the FCC to enforce a civility standard. Don't allow these gorillas to stomp all over well meaning citizens. Don't allow them to disregard the needs of our communities. Slap them down when they take and don't give back. Set a standard that says truth, people, and communities are important.

Sincerely,

Thomas Lowenhaupt
Vice Chair, Community Board 3Q