

FCC Letter re: Notice of Proposed Rulemaking 05-311 on “Video Franchising”

February 8, 2006

RE: Notice of Proposed Rulemaking 05-311 on “video franchising”

To: The Federal Communications Commission,

I am a resident of Seal Beach, California and I have managed the city’s PEG facility as Station Manager since 1994. Our PEG facility actually began in 1984 and over the course of the past 20 + years, the PEG facility, the programming and the look of the channel has grown by leaps and bounds. Our community is very committed to local programming. We are a close-knit community that celebrates its quaintness in community events and it’s non-profit organizations, which are covered or profiled by our community access channel. That’s how people know what is going on in their city. That’s how the non-profit organizations inform and educate their community on their mission, philosophies and goals.

PEG TV channels reflect the diversity of local communities. They provide noncommercial programming for seniors, for the disabled, for youth, multi-lingual programming for ethnic communities, and others that are often neglected by the commercial media. Seal Beach, for example, also has a very large senior population in the gated community of Leisure World. Many of the residents are homebound and have no connection with their community other than the local newspapers and our PEG community access channel. We have a large group of producers in Leisure that produce programs and events within LW that pertain to LW. This also helps keep them connected to their community. In addition, just like the residents of greater Seal Beach who are unable to attend the government meetings, they have the opportunity to see what is going on in their community by watching their government meetings on our community access channel. Our PEG facility also airs described movies for the hearing impaired. This benefits not only LW residents, but hearing impaired residents throughout the city too.

We have one elementary school in our city, which has won several awards and has been recognized as a California Distinguished school. We cover many musical and art events at the school that have won awards and are very popular with the viewing community. In fact, the Leisure World residents LOVE watching the children perform – can’t get enough of it. We also air high school sports and other events from the neighboring PEG TV community access center, since many of the students that attend that high school live in Seal Beach.

Our PEG TV provides information to our community about our community. We are the direct connection to our community, for our school, our police department, our public works department, our city government, the many non-profit organizations and the community at large. PEG TV channels in general reflect the diversity of local communities. They provide noncommercial programming for seniors, for the disabled, for youth, multi-lingual programming for ethnic communities, and others that are often neglected by the commercial media.

Because we are a seaside community, we often times have high tides, high surf and flooding several times during the year. We are the link for the residents of where to get sand and sand bags, what to look out for, when to evacuate, what areas to avoid, who to call if necessary as the emergency situations arise. We take control of the channel immediately to provide the community with the most up to date information as the situations develop.

During election years, we produce candidate forums in which the members of the community can hear from the candidates in their area neighborhood who are running for office. Several years ago, we hosted a candidates forum for members of the public who were running for Congress. Yes, it included our own Congressman Dana Rohrbacher. This program was produced in Seal Beach but requested by and sent out to several neighboring communities in the district who also aired the program in their cities on their PEG channel. I’m certain that other members of Congress have participated in similar locally produced candidates forums. This type of direct local involvement is invaluable.

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Local franchises are the cornerstone in the operation of Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) TV. PEG TV provides the important service of supporting localism in the media, and the making and airing of programs that reflect the diversity of American life. PEG TV is essential in providing a place where the public can be informed about local government affairs and where individuals and community organizations can express their viewpoints and opinions. When the widest range of ideas is made available to all people, democracy works best and PEG TV plays an important role in doing this.

It seems to me that in this “cutting-edge” world of technology we live in now, that there should be more of an effort being made to encourage, support and provide the public’s access to it’s local government and PEG TV and preserving local franchising rather than discussing how to dismantle it. Verizon has already entered into cable franchise agreements with local governments, thereby establishing that not only do they have the opportunity to compete in the video market, they can and will compete with the cable companies through a local cable franchise.

Our PEG facility and community access television channel is an integral part of our community and has been for more than 20 years. It is invaluable to our community and it is for most communities throughout the United States. In order to preserve this, we must preserve local franchising. If we don’t, who will be meeting our community’s needs and those of the thousands of others throughout the United States in providing these essential PEG TV programs to the communities? The answer, of course, is no one.

Please do whatever it takes to preserve our community access PEG TV and local franchising. Please rule for the maintenance of local franchises.

Best Regards,

Robin Fort-Lincke
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Seal Beach, CA 90740-5903
Resident of Seal Beach and PEG Station Manager for the City of Seal Beach

Cc: Honorable Ted Stevens - Chairman, Honorable Daniel Inouye – Ranking Member,
Congressional Committee on Science, Commerce and Transportation

Honorable Joe Barton – Chairman, Honorable John Dingell – Ranking Member,
Congressional Committee on Energy and Commerce

Congressman Dana Rohrbacher

Senator Barbara Boxer

Senator Diane Feinstein