

Mike Wassenaar, Executive Director  
Cable Access St. Paul d/b/a St Paul Neighborhood Network

Cable Access St Paul d/b/a St Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN) is a non-profit entity which has been designated by the City of Saint Paul to provide non-commercial PEG services to the City of Saint Paul, MN and Comcast Cable under terms specified in the local Franchise Agreement which continues until the year 2013. Following execution of a yearly contract between the City and SPNN, SPNN receives the following support from Comcast:

Channel capacity for five (5) PEG Channels. Channels must meet minimal technical standards outlined in the Franchise.

Provision of a sixth channel if expansion of local programming demands make it necessary.

Rent subsidy in the form of a sub-lease between the Designated Entity and Comcast. The term of the sublease was negotiated by the City and Comcast upon extension of the current Franchise in 2003 in a separate agreement.

Provision of adequate leased space if current space is made unavailable.

Quarterly capital grants of the equivalent of \$630,000 per year in 1997 dollars, adjusted for inflation yearly. This provision is jointly agreed to by the City and the cable operator in their 1997 Franchise Agreement.

Additional capital grants each year to the City of Saint Paul for PEG Equipment. SPNN has received approximately \$1.4 million in capital grants through the City since 1998 as a result of this provision.

Technical assistance and backhaul capability for the production of live video programming throughout the City of Saint Paul. This was provided on the cable company's subscriber network until 2001, when this service was transferred to the Institutional Network.

Promotion of community television services on channels and billing inserts within the Saint Paul service area.

SPNN has a further agreement with the cable operator to provide non-commercial programming channels, and to protect the cable operator from complaints over content for which individual producers are responsible.

Without a local franchising process, neither the City nor SPNN would have derived specific benefits for local community members. In its local service area in Minnesota, Comcast has promoted this investment in community television infrastructure to its viewers (*DElight!* Magazine, Minnesota, Summer 2005), and is seen as a valuable community partner to the non-profit, religious and artistic sectors of Saint Paul and Minnesota as a result of its support for SPNN and other community television operations in the Twin Cities.

The social impacts of SPNN's service can be summarized briefly as follows:

#### Local Origination

SPNN produces 250 hours of original programming about Saint Paul per year. This surpasses the amount of local production by several local commercial broadcasters which serve the entire Twin Cities market. However, the local programming focuses on the needs of Saint Paul citizens. It includes public affairs, community arts, and public information programming that supports the work of neighborhood groups, government institutions, minority coalitions, and non-profits. As an example, in 2004, SPNN used its production capacity to support the work of Ramsey County Public Health to create the ECHO project, which provides public health, emergency and safety information to non-English speaking communities in the Twin Cities, and will be used in case of a public health crisis to give life-saving information to viewers in seven different languages ([www.echominnesota.org](http://www.echominnesota.org)). This continuing public safety project would not be possible without PEG capacity provided at the local level. Each year SPNN provides technical capacity and channel capacity for 100 local non-profits and government agencies to communicate with the public.

#### Educational Access

The Saint Paul Public Schools provides six hours of informational programming each weekday on the Educational Access Channel provided for in the franchise. SPNN provides operations assistance and production equipment which the school system does not have access to. Without SPNN's operational support, there will be an increased burden on the local school system to provide this service. SPNN also provides educational access services to charter and private schools in Saint Paul, and to three of our local universities (Hamline University, Concordia University, and Macalester College).

#### Public Access

400 local producers work with SPNN and provide 2600 programs and 2000 hours of original programming for Saint Paul audiences. These include religious programs produced by Evangelical Baptist and Lutheran churches,

and Reform synagogues in our city. Political programs are produced by members of the Minnesota Republican, Democratic-Farm-Labor, Independence and Green Parties. Community programs are produced in over eight languages besides English to provide educational, vocational and civic information to Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Lao, Kmher and Spanish speakers. These communities have limited access to essential information from other electronic means. Without channel capacity or capital provided for in the Franchise, these communities would not have sufficient means for communicating with one another.

Without franchise provisions determined at the local level to meet local community needs, significant aspects of our service to the people of Saint Paul would not exist. These provisions were not created as a barrier to entry for competitors, but rather represent an ongoing recognized communication need for which the marketplace has not provided, and which thus require government intervention.