

Groton Cable Advisory Committee
via Internet Conference

Meeting Minutes for: 11/15/23

In Attendance:

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Cable Committee Members: John Macleod, Eric Fischer, Janet Sheffield,
& Neil Colicchio

Other:

Town Manager - Mark Haddad

Assistant Director of Finance, Town Accountant - Patricia Dufresne

Program Director - Ashley Doucette

Public Hearing - The Status of the Cable Access Enterprise Fund to Fiscal Year 2025

Mark Haddad, the Town manager, made a presentation on the financial situation of the Cable Enterprise Fund - whose funding has come primarily from Charter and Verizon but has been declining over the years as people choose to no longer utilize cable television. Due to declining funding, the cable enterprise fund will no longer be able to cover expenses after this fiscal year (2024).

Potential solutions that were investigated included significantly cutting staffing and services, shutting down the cable department and no longer offering services, and dissolving the enterprise fund to become a town department funded by receipts reserved for appropriation.

The Town Manager's recommendation would be to fund the department with receipts reserved for appropriation.

The Town's funding of the first full fiscal year was also discussed - covering the costs of the cable department for FY 2025 instead of transferring the \$160,000 in PEG fees and other revenue out of the receipts reserved fund, allowing the department to save those funds and remain a year ahead of the budget that we would need to draw off of.

The same process would apply to the separate equipment grant funding that will come from the current franchise negotiations.

In addition to the funds from Charter and Verizon, there is the potential of a State bill being passed that would bring in additional revenue from streaming service providers. Those additional funds would also be available through receipts reserved for appropriation, helping further offset the costs of the department.

Following these discussions, Ashley will submit a budget for FY 25 without the intergovernmental reimbursements that are normally included - to reflect the potential change to a full Town department.

VOTE: Janet moved to recommend dissolving the Cable Enterprise Fund in Fiscal year 2025. John seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

VOTE: Janet moved to recommend becoming a Town department in Fiscal Year 2025 - whose operational costs will be offset through receipts reserved for appropriation from the funding that comes from the two cable carriers (Charter and Verizon). Neil seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

These votes/recommendations are for the Town Manager who will now bring them to the Finance Committee.

Next Meeting is planned for Thursday 12/7/23 at 4:30 PM on Zoom.

Meeting Adjourned at: 7:34 PM