

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN &  
WENHAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MINUTES OF JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

Teleconference

September 21, 2020

Hamilton Selectmen Present:	Shawn Farrell, Darcy Dale, Rosemary Kennedy, and Jamie Knudsen
Hamilton Selectmen Absent:	William Olson
Hamilton Town Manager Present:	Joe Domelowicz
Wenham Selectmen Present:	Jack Wilhelm, John Clemenzi, and Gary Cheeseman
Wenham Town Administrator Present:	Anthony Ansaldi
Other Hamilton Staff Present:	Pat Shannon, Assistant to the Town Manager/ Community Preservation Committee/ Affordable Housing Trust Coordinator

**Call to Order; Pledge of Allegiance**

Hamilton Board of Selectmen (BOS) Chair Shawn Farrell called the online Joint Public Hearing on Verizon Cable Licensing to order at 6:01 p.m. A roll call of the Hamilton BOS was taken. Mr. Farrell and Rosemary Kennedy were present at the start of the hearing; Town Manager Joe Domelowicz was present.

Wenham BOS Vice Chair John Clemenzi called the Wenham BOS to order and took a roll call at 6:04 p.m. Mr. Clemenzi and Wenham BOS Chair Gary Cheeseman were present; two members constitute a quorum. The Pledge of Allegiance was not recited.

**Public Hearing on Verizon Cable Licensing Agreement—Joint with Wenham BOS**

Mr. Farrell gave a welcoming statement. He noted HWCAM is an important resource that serves as a connection between the two town governments and connects the residents to their communities. He said more people are becoming involved in government and due to

the pandemic are relying on technology now more than ever to stay informed and connected. He expressed the need for HWCAM to have access to improved technology and improved infrastructure to make for better connectivity. Also he said the two towns have to make Verizon aware of their needs through the cable licensing renewal.

Jack Wilhelm, a Wenham BOS vice chair in addition to Mr. Clemenzi, joined the online meeting. At 6:12, Mr. Farrell acknowledged that Jamie Knudsen and Darcy Dale of the Hamilton BOS had also joined the meeting.

HWCAM's Executive Director Bill Melville identified himself and said he wanted to echo Mr. Farrell's comments. He said the pandemic had brought up a new way of thinking and a new "virtual public square." He said HWCAM had increased its government programming and had seen an increase in viewership. With new technologies comes funding, he said, and a need for more resources for operations, such as the hiring of employees. He noted that HWCAM is now in HD. People are expecting more service, such as having a meeting aired on You Tube within minutes of a meeting's conclusion.

Wenham Council on Aging (COA) Director Jim Reynolds said the Wenham COA is communicating now more than ever with other COAs. He said Mr. Melville had been great about hosting COA content. He cited HWCAM was a useful tool and he pointed to the work of Cape Ann's 1623 Studios as a goal to strive for. He said he strongly supported HWCAM and anything to amplify and improve its services. Ms. Kennedy asked for more information about 1623; he said he would send her links.

Hamilton Wenham Regional School Committee Member Michelle Bailey said HWCAM was essential for getting School Committee meetings out to the public. She commented that HWCAM covers school events, such as concerts and sporting events, which is helpful for her with family members living away because this way, they can view those events. She agreed with Mr. Reynolds about 1623 Studios' work. She said she wholeheartedly supported HWCAM.

HWCAM Board of Directors President Brian Doser introduced himself and said Bob Gray, HWCAM board member and treasurer, was also online. Mr. Doser discussed the new Railroad Ave. studios and said having the separate facility will afford more community involvement. He said he'd like to see more locally produced talk shows and public interest shows.

Hamilton COA Director Mary Beth Lawton praised HWCAM and Mr. Melville. She said HWCAM had become a lifeline for seniors. She said sometimes it is difficult to get technology, such as smart phones, into the hands of seniors who may be socially isolated and might not be able to afford a Zoom account. She said she was searching for free content that the COA can put out. She noted the HWCAM bulletin board was where seniors go to find out about things going on in Town rather than social media.

Mr. Clemenzi said one thing he has been frustrated with is communication with the residents. He said the technology part is challenging. He said HWCAM has potential for the towns to communicate in a more meaningful way.

Mr. Farrell said the HD component is important, but with that, equipment is needed. He said support is needed from Verizon to be able to keep up with the load of virtual meetings. Ms. Kennedy agreed and said more complete HWCAM programming would be beneficial for the Town. Also, there would be a human connection if someone in Town gave the information.

Gary Cheeseman said two challenges are that nobody uses telephone landlines anymore and it is difficult to get printed materials. He sees HWCAM as a solution to make information available to the public.

Mr. Farrell inquired about next steps. Counsel to Wenham William August said ultimately the towns would be requesting a draft license document from Verizon. They usually wait until after the hearing to ask for that document. Now that they've had the hearing, he said, they can use the information received to request the draft license document and then the actual renewal license document. In between the hearing and conclusion of negotiations, it is common to generate documents in more specificity, such as itemized budgets. He said it is helpful if the documents are reduced to findings and there is more force behind the negotiations if the documents are endorsed or adopted by the Selectmen, who are the licensing authorities. He introduced his colleague Attorney Bill Solomon. Mr. Solomon said it would be helpful if the towns can finalize a license in early December. He thinks the beginning of 2020 would be a great time to push to complete the financial deal and license terms. He said that would be his goal.

Mr. August noted there are two renewal procedures: formal and informal. He said the formal process is usually for if you are having difficulties with a company. If so, you can issue an RFP to the company. He said he wanted to flag it in case anyone had questions about the formal process, although he didn't see a need for the formal process. Mr. Solomon said getting it done by December would be doable with the informal approach. Mr. Farrell commented he didn't think the Town had ever gone the formal route.

There was a discussion that Verizon now issues shorter licenses than it had in the past. Mr. Clemenzi asked Mr. August what the two towns had done in the past: formal or informal. He replied they went with an informal process but the results are the same as with a formal. He said informal is more cost-effective.

Mr. Clemenzi said he would rely heavily on Mr. Melville for what he is looking for through this process and if they were missing something, to make sure it was on the table. Mr. August and others praised Mr. Melville for the technical detail in his reporting during past cable licensing negotiations.

