

**TOWN OF SOUTH BETHANY
TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING COMCAST AGREEMENT MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2020**

**This hearing was conducted electronically pursuant to Governor Carney's State of
Emergency declaration, effective March 13, 2020, as amended.**

PUBLIC HEARING CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Saxton called the November 4, 2020, Public Hearing regarding Comcast Agreement to order at 10:00 a.m. He reported that there was a quorum of Town Council members on the call. Including the public, Town Council members, and the Comcast representative, there were 31 callers who joined the hearing. Mayor Saxton stated that the public hearing is on the cable franchise agreement between the Town of South Bethany and Comcast. He said the legal terms have been worked out between the attorneys and Town Council will vote on the agreement at the November 13, 2020, Town Council Regular Meeting.

PRESENTATION BY COMCAST REPRESENTATIVE ON THE COMCAST AGREEMENT

Mayor Saxton introduced Comcast Representative Chris Comer who is the Director of Government Affairs Beltway Region.

Mr. Comer stated that Comcast was founded in 1963 by Ralph Roberts, and today Comcast's network supports 136 million emails, 142 million phone calls, and 15 million on demand views every day. He said Comcast is excited to provide all the various products and services they have to South Bethany, and they look forward to working with everyone. Mr. Comer said the franchise agreement allows Comcast to place its infrastructure in the Town right-of-way. He noted that it is not an exclusive franchise agreement and the franchise agreement only applies to cable services. Mr. Comer said it is a 10-year term agreement comparable to the agreements Comcast has with neighboring jurisdictions. Later in the hearing Mr. Comer clarified that under federal law local governments can have a cable franchise agreement, but broad band is regulated differently through the Public Service Commission.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD REGARDING THE
COMCAST AGREEMENT**

Mayor Saxton asked for public comment.

Dick Oliver (Councilmember, 410 Victoria Dr.) – Asked what the timing is for installing infrastructure. Mr. Comer said Comcast hopes to get started as soon as possible and they anticipate completing the build within 12 to 18 months of having all the necessary permits and approvals. He stated that Comcast does not own any utility poles. Comcast will have to apply for permits from the utility companies to attach to their poles. Mr. Comer added that it can take a couple months to get the necessary permits.

Mike Thomas (405 Periwinkle Dr.) – Inquired if Comcast will be digging up on the sides of the roads in driveways. Mr. Comer said Comcast will follow the path of the existing utility right-of-way. If it is underground, Comcast would have to go underground as well. Mr. Thomas asked if paver driveways would have to be pulled up. Mr. Comer said normally Comcast would send a technician out to survey the area and work with the property owner. Normally Comcast would go under pavers and the property owner would not have to pull up pavers.

Randy Bartholomew (Councilmember, 6 S. 6th St.) – Inquired about pricing. Mayor Saxton stated that Mr. Comer has forwarded their current area plan to the Town, and the Town will send that out to the community once the Council has approved the agreement. Mr. Comer said as Comcast gets closer to offering service, he could have a representative from the marketing team do an

overview of the different products and prices. Mr. Comer said he is not sure if local rates can be viewed on xfinity.com.

Unidentified participant – Asked if there would be a discount if a property owner already had a Comcast subscription in another location. Mr. Comer said he is not aware of any discounts, but if internet is available, a property owner may be able to watch any of the programming that they have in their first home at their second home with Comcast's Xfinity stream service.

Sue Callaway (Councilmember, 240 Bayshore Dr.) – During the construction process and thereafter will the Town have a point person from Comcast for customer service and follow up issues. Mr. Comer said customers would go through the normal process of calling the call center or visiting the Ocean City or Lewes offices to resolve issues. He added that if a constituent escalated the issue to the Mayor or Council, the Town could reach out to him to help with those escalated issues.

Leo Miller (Unidentified address) – Asked if being near the shore and bay needs specific technology to improve the quality of internet service. Mr. Comer said Comcast believes they have a superior product and service and competition makes everyone better. Fortunately, what Comcast will be building in the community will be a brand-new network.

Unidentified participant (S. Ocean Dr.) – Inquired how the transition works from Mediacom to Comcast. Mr. Comer said typically a customer who wants to switch would contact Comcast to schedule an appointment and contact their other provider to cancel that service. Usually the wiring inside the house is owned by the homeowner. Comcast may have to come out and run a new line to the house. The internet router and the cable boxes would be from Comcast unless the customer has their own router. The customer would have to work with Mediacom to return their existing equipment.

Tom Peralta (118 Layton Dr.) – Asked if the contract with Comcast is exclusive. Mr. Comer said it is not exclusive and added that under federal law all public cable franchises are nonexclusive.

Natalie Petti (63 S. Anchorage Ave.) – Asked if Comcast's network will have higher capacity than the existing Mediacom network, particularly for houses at the end of the line. Mr. Comer said he is not familiar with the kind of bandwidth or the specs for the Mediacom system. Comcast's network will be a new network. Mr. Comer explained how Comcast addresses capacity issues.

Mayor Saxton thanked Mr. Comer for answering questions from the public.

Mayor Saxton closed the Public Hearing at 10:30 a.m.