



# CITY OF HARRISONBURG OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801  
OFFICE (540) 432-7701 • FAX (540) 432-7778

TO: Ande Banks, City Manager

FROM: Chris Brown, City Attorney

DATE: July 24, 2023

RE: Comcast Cable Television Franchise Amendment to provide High Definition (HD) Public Education, Governmental (PEG) access channel.

**Summary:** Amendment of the existing franchise agreement between Comcast and the City for Comcast to provide a HD PEG access channel to the City.

**Background:** The City and Comcast entered into a franchise agreement on July 16, 2023. That agreement required Comcast to provide 3 PEG access channels to the City for its use. Those channels were standard definition (SD). One of the channels is used by the City to broadcast City Council meetings and other meetings of boards and commissions. One of those channels was for the School System, but the School System does not use its PEG. The third PEG has never been activated.

For some time now City staff has been working with Comcast to upgrade the City's SD PEG to HD. An upgrade to HD should significantly improve the audio and visual quality of the broadcasts of City's PEG channel, including City Council and other meetings. The HD PEG should work well with the City's existing audio-visual equipment used in its PEG broadcasts.

The amendment provides that Comcast will provide one HD PEG channel. This reflects the City's current usage. The amendment also provides that the number of channels can be increased to meet future demands.

Staff inquired with Comcast if this upgrade will prevent any current Comcast customers from watching the HD PEG channel. Any adverse effects should be minimal. Comcast's current video package includes HD at no additional charge. Customers on old video packages may need to upgrade to get HD. Any old Comcast converters used by existing customers can be swapped out at no cost. If an existing customer has an old package and old converter and does not wish to go to the trouble of upgrading their package and converter, they should still be able to view the City's PEG channel, just in SD (the HD signal should be converted to SD).

Staff has worked for many months to get this upgrade, which should be a dramatic improvement in broadcast quality.

**Key Issues:** Amendment of existing franchise agreement with Comcast to provide a HD PEG channel.

**Environmental Impact:** N/A



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**Fiscal Impact:** The cost to the City for the upgrade will be approximately \$5000.00.

**Prior Actions:** Franchise agreement entered into in July, 2013.

**Alternatives:**

- (a) Approve franchise amendment as presented or,
- (b) Not approve franchise amendment as presented or,
- (c) Request other changes to the franchise agreement.

**Community Engagement:** None. Since this amendment does not include an extension of the term of the franchise or contain other substantive changes no public hearing is required.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends approval of the franchise agreement amendment

**Attachments:** Cable Television Franchise Amendment

**Review:**

*The initiating Department Director will place in Legistar, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda. The completion of review only addresses the readiness of the issue for Council consideration. This does not address the recommendation for approval or denial of the issue.*