

# City of Bemidji

## City Council Work Session

November 24, 2003 – 5:30 p.m.

Present: Lehmann, Downs, Hellquist, Johnson, Zachman, Meuers  
Absent: Erickson  
Staff & Others: Minke, Sherman

Mayor Lehmann called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and noted the purpose of the meeting was to receive information regarding Government Access Television.

Councilmember Johnson noted that the idea of having a government access station for the City was introduced during a Public Affairs Committee meeting in July, 2003. The response was favorable but the committee requested more information and suggested that the information be shared with the entire Council.

Since that time, Johnson has toured other facilities and gathered information on programming, equipment, staffing and funding, which he shared with the Council.

It was noted that the City's cable franchise agreements have specific provisions that require operators to grant cable access to the City.

Johnson discussed various uses for Public Education in Government (PEG) access including: Broadcasting live and recorded meetings of the City Council, Planning Commission, County Board and School Board; open letters to the community, forums, guest speakers, community events calendar, and marketing of services.

Funding was discussed and Johnson noted that the City currently receives a 5% franchise fee which is placed in the City's General Fund, but there are provisions in the franchise that would allow an additional \$1.00 per month (Franchise Capital Fee) to be added to cable bills in addition to the 5% the City already collects in franchise fees. The Capital Fee could be used to purchase/remodel a building to be used for a studio as well as the necessary equipment. Johnson suggested that staffing would probably be part-time – perhaps an internship.

Some discussion followed regarding the possibility of working with the cable providers to improve/expand our existing access. The possibility of having Planning Commission meetings aired received considerable support. Motion by Meuers, second by Downs, to have city staff contact Paul Bunyan Television and Charter Communications to have them begin airing the Planning Commission meetings. All voted aye. Motion carried.

The consensus of Council was that we immediately look into having Council meetings and Planning Commission meetings rebroadcast for public convenience.

Council expressed interest in the PEG access and reached consensus to have the Public Affairs Committee meet on December 2, 2003 at 7:00 a.m. for further discussion and review with City Attorney Felix. A meeting date will be scheduled with cable providers at a later date.

There being no further business presented for discussion, motion by Hellquist, second by Zachman, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Sherman, City Clerk