



230 Main Street, #201 Brattleboro, VT 05301 Ph (802) 257-0888 Web brattleboro.tv

November 30, 2018

Marion Dowling
Chair, Newfane Selectboard
555 VT Route 30, P.O. Box 36
Newfane VT 05345

Dear Marion:

I'm writing to you today because the future of BCTV and similar organizations around the country is in serious jeopardy. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is currently engaged in a rule-making process which, if successful, could allow cable operators to reclassify certain services and charge those against the cable subscriber fees that are collected to fund our organization, potentially eliminating our operating funding. As this would represent the majority of revenue that BCTV and like organizations receive, many community TV stations nationwide could cease to exist.

Brattleboro Community TV (BCTV) has provided community media services to Brattleboro and the southern Windham County region for over 40 years. Beginning in 1976, for the towns of Brattleboro, Guilford, and Vernon, we've offered coverage of municipal meetings as well as video production equipment, training, and air time for residents to produce their own televised content via Comcast. In 2011, we added Dummerston, Jamaica, Newfane, Putney, and Townshend to our service area through Southern Vermont Cable. BCTV has won national awards and is a valued community resource.

The FCC has received thousands of comments opposing this rule-making. Between now and Friday, December 14, at 11:59 pm, there is the opportunity for letters of opposition to be entered into the record. Community television stations like ours are reaching out to organizations and elected officials to solicit as many of these letters as possible and demonstrate support for Community Media.

Would you be willing to write such a letter? Following this letter, please find:

- A letter template with suggestions for providing personal and specific details (in red).
- A fact sheet about BCTV's mission, programming, and services.
- A press release with details on the proposed FCC Rule.
- [Here is a link to a recent Rutland Herald article about the issue.](#)

Completed letters can be sent to me at cor@brattleborotv.org by 12/13/18 and I can submit them via the FCC's online filing system. There are also instructions on how to file it yourself by 12/14 at 11:59 PM.

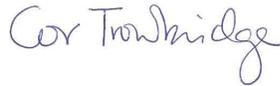
In addition, **please consider this letter a request to come before your board at the next available meeting to discuss this matter and its potential budgetary consequences.** I will be in contact next week to follow up on this request.

Board of Directors:

Chris Lenois *President* · Alex Beck *Vice President* · Jim Verzino *Treasurer* · Pauline Dean *Secretary*
Lynn Barrett · Martin Cohn · Bob Gammon · Leah Goodman · Jesse Kreitzer

Thank you for taking action to stand up for BCTV, a resource that so many rely on to participate in the life of their community.

Sincerely,



Cor Trowbridge
Executive Director

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILING FCC REPLY COMMENTS

- Adapt the following letter to describe your organization and put it on your letterhead if possible. Areas to change are marked in **Red**. Save your letter as a PDF file.
- Go to <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filings> and enter the following information:

Proceeding(s)	05-311
Name(s) of Filer(s)	Your Name or Organization
Law Firm(s)	<i>leave blank</i>
Attorney/Author Names	<i>leave blank</i>
Primary Contact Email	Your Email Address
Type of Filing	choose "Reply"
File Number	<i>leave blank</i>
Report Number	<i>leave blank</i>
Bureau ID Number	<i>leave blank</i>
Address of	choose "Filer" from menu
Address	Your Address
Address 2	City - State – Zip

- In the "Upload Documents" area, click to select your PDF file from your computer or drag and drop the file into the box.
- In the dialog box, add in Description: **Reply Comment in support of the Comments of Brattleboro Community Television, Inc. File ID 1113560010350.**
- Check "Email Confirmation."
- Click on "Continue to Review Screen."
- Click on "Submit."
- You should receive an email confirmation.

Thank you for supporting Community Media in Vermont and across the nation!

[Date]

The Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman
The Honorable Michael O’Rielly, Commissioner
The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner

Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
455 12th Street, Southwest
Washington, DC, 20544

Dear Chairman Pai,

We write to support the Comments of Brattleboro Community Television, Inc. (File ID 1113560010350) and to disapprove of the proposals and tentative conclusions set forth in the FCC’s September 25 Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making in *Implementation of Section 621(a)(1) of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 as Amended by the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992*, MB Docket 05-311.

[Describe your community and its relationship with BCTV and any other Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) Access Television and Community Media. Describe the value of PEG Access in your community and how organizations, populations, and groups benefit from PEG programming and services.]

This local presence enables the residents of our [town/city/county] to create and watch uniquely local programming about their community and local events and issues of interest to them. And that was the intent of the PEG provisions of the 1984 Cable Act – to enhance local voices, serve local community needs and interests, and strengthen our local democracy. By defining “franchise fee” in an overly broad fashion to include “in-kind” support, the FCC’s proposals will shift the fair balance between cable franchising authorities and cable operators – something that was never the intent of the Act – and could ultimately result in such reduction in franchise fees as to defund PEG Access in our state.

We appreciate your consideration and hope you will protect PEG Access in our community and others by choosing not to adopt many of the proposals in the Further Notice.

Sincerely,

[NAME, AFFILIATION]



Your Community Media Center

Who We Are

Brattleboro Community Television is a community media center serving eight towns in southern Windham County, Vermont.

Our Mission

To promote civic engagement and transparency, and to empower community members to share their knowledge, views and creativity, without prejudice.

What We Do

As the one and only television outlet for the area, BCTV covers municipal government meetings, educational matters, and documents local events and activities. BCTV also provides equipment and training that allow community members to create content, reaching viewers on cable channels 8 and 10 and online at brattleboro.tv.

Service Territory

Brattleboro, Guilford and Vernon receive BCTV's signal via Comcast Cable, while residents of Dummerston, Jamaica, Newfane, Putney and Townshend receive BCTV via Southern Vermont Cable. BCTV's channels reach 6,000 subscriber households.

How We're Funded

BCTV is funded by cable subscribers in our service territory and by our generous underwriters.



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Ph (802) 257-0888 Web brattleboro.tv

Every year, BCTV's staff and volunteers produce over **1200 hours** of original local content, including:

Public Access

The World Fusion Show
Here We Are: Brattleboro's Community Talk Show
Rotary Cares
Energy Week with George Harvey
Green Mountain Mornings Tonight
Windham World Affairs Council
Poets Speak
St. Michael's Catholic Mass
Keep Talking with the Brattleboro Retreat
Community Parades, Concerts and Events

Educational Access

BUHS-TV
Landmark College Academic Speaker Series
Live Streaming Coverage of BUHS, Leland and Gray,
Landmark College Graduations
BCTV Youth Video Camp
Act 46 Committees
Brattleboro Town School Board
BUHS Board
Dummerston School Board
River Valleys Unified School District
West River Modified Unified Education District
Windham Southeast Supervisory Union
Windham Central Supervisory Union

Governmental Access

Brattleboro Development Review Board
Brattleboro Housing Partnerships
Brattleboro Planning Commission
Brattleboro Selectboard (live)
Brattleboro Representative Town Meeting (live)
Dummerston Selectboard
Guilford Selectboard
Jamaica Selectboard
Newfane Selectboard
Putney Selectboard
Townshend Selectboard
Vernon Selectboard
'Meet the Candidates' interview series
Town Meeting coverage throughout service territory

Contact:
Cor Trowbridge, BCTV Executive Director
802-257-0888
cor@brattleborotv.org
For Immediate Release

November 30, 2018

Press Release: FCC Action Threatens BCTV's Future

BCTV today announced today that its future and that of similar organizations around Vermont and the country is in serious jeopardy. On September 25, The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued proposed rulemaking (Docket 05-311) which, if successful, could allow cable operators to reclassify certain services and charge those against the cable subscriber fees that are collected to fund public access stations in Vermont and across the country.

Cor Trowbridge, executive director of BCTV says, "It's conceivable that BCTV's operating funds could be eliminated. BCTV and public access stations nationwide could cease to exist," she said.

Specifically, the proposed FCC rulemaking will allow cable companies to assess the value for 'in kind' services related to providing PEG channels and deduct that amount from the Franchise Fees passed to municipalities and nonprofits like BCTV.

These loosely defined 'in kind' costs can include the 'value' of the cable channels themselves as well as any other services provided. The FCC ruling fails to set any guidelines or limitations to the values that cable companies can assess. According to its press release, the FCC's stated objective is to "reduce barriers to infrastructure investment."

Trowbridge and other station managers are concerned that the rule change could put PEG stations out of business.

"We are calling on supporters to take a moment to file comments with the FCC expressing outrage at its proposed actions. Instructions for filing comments are available at brattleborotv.org, BCTV's website." Comments must be filed by December 14 at 11:59 PM.

Lawmakers were quick to respond to the impending loss of the vital services that PEG stations provide. In Vermont, both Senators Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders have signed onto a letter by Massachusetts Senator Edward Markey to Trump-appointed FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai. The October 29 letter objects to the fact that the proposal would "alter, at the cable operators' discretion, the terms of the local franchise agreements," thereby putting "at risk critical funding for public, education, governmental stations, as well as broadband connections to schools and other public buildings."

Other senators signing the letter include Sens. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wisc.; Maggie Hassan, D-N.H.; Ben Cardin, D-Md.; Jeff Merkley, D-Ore.; Gary Peters, D-Mich.; Ron Wyden, D-Ore.; Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.; and Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.

BCTV and stations like it provide transparent coverage of local government meetings, educational matters and community events, coverage that is available nowhere else. BCTV also provides equipment and training that allow community members to create content, reaching viewers on cable channels 8 and 10 and online. BCTV's staff and volunteers produce over 1200 hours of

original local content each year. BCTV was named winner of the Overall Excellence Award from the Alliance for Community Media in 2016 and again in 2018.

Brattleboro, Guilford and Vernon receive BCTV's signal via Comcast Cable, while residents of Dummerston, Jamaica, Newfane, Putney and Townshend receive BCTV via Southern Vermont Cable. BCTV's channels reach 6,000 subscriber households. Currently BCTV relies on cable revenues for 85% of its annual budget, or \$250,000.

According to the Museum of Broadcast Communications, public access television is one of the most exciting and democratic U.S. media developments perhaps ever. The rationale for public access television was that, as mandated by the Federal Communications Act of 1934, the airwaves belong to the people, that in a democratic society it is useful to multiply public participation in political discussion, and that mainstream television severely limited the range of views and opinion. Public access television, then, would open television to the public, it would make possible community participation, and thus would be in the public interest of strengthening democracy.

The term "Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) Access" was officially adopted by the federal government in its Cable Communications Act of 1984, which, by building upon what was already fairly well established in cabled communities around the country, allowed local cable franchising authorities to require cable operators to set-aside one or more of their cable television channels to non-commercial, nonprofit local programming, and also to house, equip and fund these operations.

"The future of public access is uncertain and with it a critical venue for the people and communities to participate in our democracy," adds Trowbridge.
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