

APRIL 12, 2010 – PUBLIC HEARING

Minutes of a public hearing of the Town Board of the Town of Somers held on Thursday evening April 15, 2010 at 7:32 PM at the Town House, 335 Route 202, Somers, New York.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT:	Supervisor	Mary Beth Murphy
	Councilman	Harold R. Bolton
	Councilman	Richard G. Clinchy
	Councilman	Frederick J. Morrissey
	Councilman	Thomas A. Garrity, Jr.

ABSENT:

Also present were Kathleen R. Pacella, Town Clerk, Patricia Kalba, Deputy Town Clerk and Roland A. Baroni, Jr., Town Attorney.

The Supervisor said that this was a continuation of a public hearing with regard to the Comcast Franchise Agreement. She said that Comcast had an opportunity to meet with some of the residents of Heritage Hills to discuss some of the issues that came up at the last meeting. She asked Ms. Sharon Codeanne, Manager, Government and Community Relations, Comcast to update the Board with regard to the discussions.

The Supervisor declared the hearing open and asked for comments from the public.

Ms. Sharon Codeanne, Manager, Government and Community Relations, Comcast, said that at the last meeting they discussed getting together with the residents of Heritage Hills. She said that Patrick Perrefort, Senior Technical Operations Manager, Steven Kavanaugh, Technical Manager hired by Mr. Perrefort to handle issues at Heritage Hills, and herself met with the some of the Condo Presidents. She said that the meeting was very productive; they addressed the technical issues that the residents of Heritage Hills were experiencing. Ms. Codeanne explained that in addition to hiring Mr. Kavanaugh as a Supervisor for Heritage Hills Mr. Perrefort hired several more service technicians who were Comcast employees and Comcast trained. She said the flipside of that was that they would be relying less on outside contractors to handle service issues that come up. She said that they had already seen some improvements because of these actions, such as the number of truck rolls being decreased. Ms. Codeanne explained that a truck roll was when there was a service issue and a tech had to go out. She said that they intended to have quarterly visits at Heritage Hills where they will be setting up in the lobby of the Activities Center with a Technical Supervisor and a Customer Service Representative to address any issues that were brought to them. She said that they were going to work with the Heritage Hill Society to publicize the dates and the times of that and they were trying to schedule something for the first or second week of May at this point. Ms. Codeanne said that they had replaced about 5 miles of underground plant and that was another step to take to lessen the technical problems. She said that they thought that these steps were well received and they will continue to work on them. She said that the Presidents who they had met with had all of their direct contact information so if there was a problem they could be contacted. Ms. Codeanne said with regard to the Franchise Agreement they felt it was a favorable agreement to the Town and Heritage Hills.

Councilman Clinchy thanked Ms. Codeanne for coming back that evening and asked if all of the technicians that were going to do the service calls would have a handheld device where they could see the prior service calls or at least knowledge of past service calls of a location. Ms. Codeanne explained that all Comcast Technicians have that available to them. Councilman Clinchy asked if the outside contractors were going to have that as well. Ms. Codeanne said that she would have to check with Mr. Perrefort with regard to that. She said that they had doubled the number of techs at the Carmel Office and would be relying on outside contractors less frequently. Councilman Clinchy asked if there was a schedule for when they hoped to no longer have contractors working for them. Ms. Codeanne said that was something that she needed to speak with Mr. Perrefort about and see if there was an internal schedule. Councilman Clinchy asked if

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when she had the answers to the questions she would send them to the Supervisor's office.

Councilman Morrissey said that he shared Councilman Clinchy's same concerns. He said that the Board heard at the last meeting that there were different people showing up for service calls and the homeowners were getting different answers each time. He said that he also wanted to know when it was going to be 100% Comcast's Tech going out to deal with Comcast problems.

Councilman Garrity said that Ms. Codeanne stated that there were a lot of problems in the last 3 to 4 months and asked her if they had hired a lot more in-house technicians. Ms. Codeanne said according to Mr. Perrefort he had doubled his technical staff. Councilman Garrity asked the amount that was doubled. Ms. Codeanne believed that there were 41 technicians on staff at this point but she would have to check that with Mr. Perrefort. Councilman Garrity said that he would like to know if the number was currently 41 what the number was in December and November when the issues were occurring. Ms. Codeanne explained that a lot of the technical issues were traced back to a faulty piece of equipment in a node and was discovered after an investigation and replaced.

The Supervisor asked what the size of the customer base that was being serviced by the 41 techs. Ms. Codeanne said that within the 10 Towns and Villages that were served in New York there were about 20,000 customers.

Councilman Garrity said that the questions he would like answered are the number the staff was and what it is now and what percentage of service calls were handle in-house and what percentage were handled by contractors.

Councilman Morrissey said that he would like to have a projection as to when it would be going to all Comcast techs.

Councilman Clinchy said that if would like all the techs to have the hand held devices with customer information. Ms. Codeanne said that they do try to use Comcast employees as much as possible and every tech had information on the call they were responding to.

The Supervisor said that the point was that the outside contractors should work within the same framework that the in-house tech does. She said that Comcast should require that the outside contractors have the devices or provide them with devices.

Mr. Jim La Rosa, said that last month he challenged Comcast to have Senior Management present at the meeting and they did not come. He explained the issues that he had with having a manager call him back and with his telephone service. He said that they could have all the meetings that they wanted nothing was going to change until upper management was present at a meeting to make decisions.

Ms. Fran Schultzberg, explained to the Board that she had an issue with her television service which she had to wait on hold for an hour and twenty minutes before she was able to speak to customer service. She continued that when the tech came he could not fix the problem because it had to do with her television. She stated that she bought a new television and still had that same problem. Ms. Schultzberg said that the problem was still occurring and it had for the last 6 months.

Mr. Ray Strobel, President of Condo 12, said that his telephone was working and thanked Ms. Codeanne for her help. He asked why it took 7 months and a Board meeting to have the issue resolved. He said that he suggested to Rodger Felis that he attend the next meeting. He distributed photos to the Board of some of the inferior patch work that was done by Comcast and asked who was supervising the work. Mr. Strobel said that the rumor he was hearing was that there would be no inside wiring done they would have to have a bulk agreement.

Ms. Grace Butterweck, 600 B Heritage Hills, said that she had not had television in her living room for several months. She said that she was told there was nothing that could

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be done until the warmer weather. She continued that she had been trying for over a month to have the wiring put in.

Dr. Henry Olsen, 652 A Heritage Hills, stated that Comcast knew what the problems were although they were not fixing them and briefly explained his issues with the internet connection.

Councilman Garrity asked Ms. Codeanne to get Ms. Butterwecks information and try to help her. Ms. Codeanne said that she received Ms. Butterweck's information from the Supervisor's Secretary that day. Ms. Butterweck said that she did call the Supervisor's office and received a call from Comcast at 5 PM and was told they were looking into the problem.

The Supervisor said that she was happy to help the residents in any way she could but they should not have to call the Town Supervisor's office in order to get their telephones, internet or televisions to work.

Mr. Harry Bolton, President Condo 2, said that there was cable running on the ground at Condo 2 for the past 2½ years that had not been buried, it was not properly installed. He said that his service was so bad that they could not work from home and explained some of his experiences with the internet service. He said that the service was abominable and the customer service center was horrible. Mr. Bolton said that it was unacceptable and they needed to monitor and fix the system.

Councilman Clinchy asked if what was happening at Heritage Hills was indicative of Comcast service all over or was it bad luck in an area. Ms. Codeanne said that there were 2,200 customers at Heritage Hills and the majority of the customers were pleased. She said that happy customers did not usually show up to public hearings. She said that there were 20 service issues to deal with and at that point did not mean that it was a trend throughout Heritage Hills. She explained that they inherited a subpar system. The Supervisor said the problem was there were a lot of service calls and it was that the service calls were not getting resolved in a timely fashion. Discussion ensued with regard to the infrastructure and the steps that were being taken to update it. Councilman Garrity said that it was more than 20 residents that were not happy with their service and he did not want her indicating that the residents that were present were the only people having problems.

Mr. Bruce Prince, President of Condo 25, said that he was at the meeting at Heritage Hills with Comcast and he wanted to make a proposal to the Board. He said that he observed over the last few months that Comcast purchased a very inferior deteriorating infrastructure. He said that Comcast about 6 to 8 months ago started to do some major installations and rewiring on the East Hill and some on the West Hill. He said that they had a good meeting and there were a lot of promises from Comcast. Mr. Prince proposed the Board give Comcast the franchise agreement contingent on in 6 months the issues were revisited and issues were resolved.

The Town Attorney said that was not allowed although the Board could grant an extension to the current service agreement and adjourn the hearing to a future date.

Alfreda Savarese, 637 A Heritage Hills, said that the most recent bill she had received that there was a 12% increase. She said that she had a bundle package which included telephone, internet and television and was wondering if anyone had gotten an increase. She said that she did call the customer service center and was told that her contract had expired but she did not know why that would happen after 4½ years. Ms Savarese continued that she explained that she was on a fixed income so they gave her a reduced rate although she did not know what that was going to be and she had to forfeit some channels. Ms. Codeanne explained that some customers had bundles that lasted 12 to 24 months and when that period was over the rates go to the original rates. She explained that usually the customer can go onto another bundle. She said that she will have one of the reps call Ms. Savarese about that.

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Mr. Dominick Rubino, President of Condo 24, said that many of the things he was going to say were already brought up. He said that what was not mentioned was a lot of the problem areas were already discussed at the meeting Comcast had with Heritage Hills. He said that he wanted to impress upon everyone was the problems were with the calls to the call center. Mr. Rubino said to the residents, when they call the service center take a record of the time, date, name of person, extension number and a brief description of what the person said. He said that was if they have to go to Mr. Perrefort they could give details and then they will know who needed further training. He said that there also was no change to the bulk agreement, if it is signed only than they will rewire the West Hill. Mr. Rubino said that it was interesting to find out that Comcast was aware of a lot of problems in the area.

Karen Johns, Heritage Management, asked if she could obtain the contact information for Comcast for the residents that call her. Mr. Rubino said that he could get that to her.

The Supervisor suggested that the hearing be adjourned to the July regular meeting.

Thereupon motion of Supervisor Murphy, seconded by Councilman Garrity, the public hearing was adjourned at 8:40 PM to the July 8, 2010 meeting.

Town Clerk

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Minutes of a public hearing of the Town Board of the Town of Somers held on Thursday evening April 15, 2010 at 8:50 PM at the Town House, 335 Route 202, Somers, New York.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT:	Supervisor	Mary Beth Murphy
	Councilman	Harold R. Bolton
	Councilman	Richard G. Clinchy
	Councilman	Frederick J. Morrissey
	Councilman	Thomas A. Garrity, Jr.

ABSENT:

Also present were Kathleen R. Pacella, Town Clerk, Patricia Kalba, Deputy Town Clerk and Roland A. Baroni, Jr., Town Attorney.

The Supervisor said that this was a public hearing to consider a partial waiver of Recreation Fees for the Senior Affordable development known as the Mews at Baldwin Place.

The Town Clerk presented affidavit of public notice of the public hearing that appeared in the North County News on March 31, 2010 and posted on the Town Clerk's bulletin board the same day.

The Supervisor said that they were close to getting all of the different approvals that were needed. She explained that it was a Senior Affordable Housing Project consisting of 72 units. She said that a request was made for a waiver of Recreation Fees and this hearing was for a partial 50 % waiver of those fees.

The Supervisor declared the hearing open and asked for comments from the public.

There being no one to be heard on motion of Supervisor Murphy, seconded by Councilman Garrity, the hearing was declared closed at 8:51 PM.

Town Clerk