



Legislation Text

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Resolution to Request Preservation of the Existing Channel Locations for the Public, Educational, and Government Access Channels Known as PEG

The attached resolution will convey a request from the Ann Arbor City Council to Comcast, the Governor, Michigan Public Services Commission (MPSC) and the State Legislature to preserve the existing channel locations for the Public, Educational, and Governmental Access channels, commonly referred to as the PEG Channels.

Comcast notified the City of Ann Arbor, and Comcast subscribers, of a major change in the delivery of the City of Ann Arbor's PEG Channels to take effect by January 15, 2008. At that time, Basic Cable subscribers will no longer be able to view the PEG Channels without a digital converter set-top box. They will have to contact Comcast and request a digital converter box and remote control for which they will eventually have to pay a monthly fee. Additionally, if they are unable to install this box themselves, they will have to request Comcast to make the installation. Subscribers who wish to view the PEG channels on more than one television in their household will need to acquire a digital converter box and remote for each TV at a per unit monthly charge.

With the authorization of legislation enabling delivery of cable services in the early 1980's, Congress recognized the importance of assuring ready access by cable subscribers to information about their communities. The PEG Channels were established to assure that local, public institutions serving the community would have the direct means of sharing information with their constituents. As cable service has evolved, the access to these channels has been available to anyone who subscribed to cable, and, in fact, there has historically been a class of cable service for those who want access to the PEG channels only.

With this recently announced change it is likely that our residents will have difficulty finding our channels, that some of our residents could be disenfranchised from PEG access and we will not be able to reach our current viewers with our programming, City Council and Board meetings, Emergency Notices, School Board meetings, County meetings, and community information.

Community Television Network has received hundreds of comments from citizens expressing opposition to Comcast's planned action, and as a result the Ann Arbor Cable Communications Commission unanimously recommends that the attached resolution be adopted and sent to Comcast, the Governor, the MPSC and the State Legislature.

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Higgins and Suarez

Prepared by: Ralph Salmeron, Manager, CTN

Approved by: Roger Fraser, City Administrator

Whereas, Comcast is primary among the companies that furnish cable television/video subscriptions to Ann Arbor residential customers;

Whereas, The City of Ann Arbor and other governmental entities have committed substantial resources to deliver programming on governmental, educational and public access channels, also

known as PEG;

Whereas, Early legislation authorizing the creation of nationwide cable systems mandated the preservation of local access channels for ready use by community service institutions;

Whereas, Comcast has indicated that it intends to change the channel lineup and location of the public, educational and government access channels (PEG) from their present locations, where they have been situated for 34 years, to the channel lineup in the 900's, which will require customers to pay additional fees to have a digital converter box or to have such a box installed;

Whereas, The result, with respect to cable subscribers who view educational, public and governmental access channels, is added costs, inconvenience, confusion and/or the inability to receive said channels;

Whereas, Since Comcast's announcement, several hundred concerned residents have contacted the City in opposition to the news that Comcast intends to change the location of PEG channels and require customers to have a digital converter box to receive the channels;

RESOLVED, That Comcast is requested to preserve the channel locations for public, educational, and governmental access channels (PEG), and agree that they will not be changed in the future without the written consent of the City of Ann Arbor and/or government entities which provide programming on such channels: and

RESOLVED, That the City of Ann Arbor requests that Public Act 480 of 2006 be immediately amended to require that public, educational and government access channels remain at their current locations and that they not be subject to change unless the written consent of the affected governmental entity providing the programming is obtained and that the ACT be further modified in order to require that new providers of cable and video services furnish public, educational and governmental access channel lineups and selections that are consistent with existing providers, as of January 1, 2007, with respect to channel locations, ease of access, availability of features, quality parameters, and similarity of surrounding channels.

RESOLVED, That is sent to the Governor, State Senator Liz Brater, State Representative Rebekah Warren, the MPSC and Comcast.