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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
Public Works and Capital Projects Committee

February 11, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 1:45 p.m. by Committee Chair Barbara Brenner in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

Present:

L. Ward Nelson
Sam Crawford

Absent:

None

Also Present:

Seth Fleetwood

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

1. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED LETTER TO BE SENT TO THE WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE REGARDING RATE INCREASES FOR CABLE SERVICE (AB2003-080)

Brenner stated the letter should not be addressed to the Washington State legislative delegation. It should go to the federal legislators, not the state legislators. She recently read that John McCain is investigating the exorbitant rate increases that the cable companies have been charging.

Brenner moved to amend to send the letters to the Washington federal legislative delegation.

Motion carried unanimously.

Brenner moved to amend language, "...supports cable rates **increases** that reflect...."

Motion carried unanimously.

Nelson moved to strike the word "enormous." He's had cable for some time with no increases. The word is subjective.

Brenner stated she would support the amendment, but the news article reported that the rate increase was forty percent. The cost of living increase was four percent.

Motion to amend carried unanimously.

Nelson moved to add language, "...rate increases for cable service **and their impacts on citizens.**" There are seniors and low-income people that rely on cable for their news information. Those are impacts he hoped they would explore.

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2 ***Motion carried unanimously.***
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4 Fleetwood asked if it is implicit that all concerns about rate increases are
5 about the effects to human beings.
6

7 Brenner stated they want to make sure Congress understands the concerns.
8

9 Desler suggested adding language, "...excessive rate increases for cable
10 service and adverse impacts to citizens."
11

12 ***Brenner moved*** to amend language, "...excessive rate increases for cable
13 service and adverse impacts to citizens."
14

15 ***Motion to amend carried unanimously.***
16

17 Crawford stated it is absurd that they would weigh in on this issue and
18 suggest that the government should somehow control a market-driven service.
19 People can get news from other means than television. If people want to pay for
20 cable, it is up to them. If they don't like what cable charges, they don't have to
21 have it. They don't need television to live. The market should determine the rate.
22

23 Brenner stated there is no market. They are not given choices. They are
24 franchises.
25

26 Nelson stated he understands Councilmember Crawford's concern, but it is
27 not a free market enterprise. It is a franchise.
28

29 Crawford stated the telephone prices should be regulated. It is a life-or-
30 death necessity. Television is a luxury.
31

32 ***Motion to approve carried 2-1 with Crawford opposed.***
33

34 **OTHER BUSINESS**
35

36 There was no other business.
37

38 **ADJOURN**
39

40 The meeting adjourned at 1:53 p.m.
41
42
43

44 _____
45 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription
46

47 ATTEST:
48

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WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barbara Brenner, Committee Chair