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December 15, 2008

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Public Utilities and Public Works convened on December 15, 2008, with Chairman John Connolly presiding. President Dennis Sullivan appointed himself as a member of the committee, for this meeting only, to effect a quorum. Also present were Administrative Assistant Jessie Baker, Communications Director Tom Champion, City Solicitor John Gannon, DPW Commissioner Stan Koty and Wendy Blom, Patricia Garrity, Candyce Dostert and Richard Schieferdecker – all from SCAT.

RCN:

Mr. Champion addressed the committee and discussed the preparations taken for negotiating with RCN, including the selection of outside counsel, technical and equipment requirements, and past meetings with RCN. Mr. Champion discussed extending RCN's license for a period of 90 days to allow for further negotiations and input from the Board of Aldermen. The city will not get channel 16 back, but will keep channels 3 and 13. With regard to the city getting Verizon's FIOS anytime soon, Mr. Champion informed the members that the Somerville is too urban and is not in Verizon's short term plan, however, he did not rule out possible negotiations on the subject.

Chairman Connolly spoke about residents' concerns regarding service rates and technical upgrades and reiterated his position that local franchises are important.

Mr. Koty spoke about problems with the low voltage wires in the city and their unsightliness.

Ms. Blom expressed her concern with SCAT's contract renewal with the city and further stated that high definition technology is becoming the standard with SCAT members. Mr. Champion discussed the importance of supporting the digital standard and noted that a large number of the audience has not yet converted to high definition.

Chairman Connolly's motion **that the Board of Aldermen strongly urge the Administration to maintain its positive position of franchising at the local level**, was approved.

Double Poles:

Commissioner Koty informed the members that Verizon has provided the city with a dedicated crew for the removal of double poles and that NSTAR has already taken down 50 poles. During the month of January, the city should see a significant number of poles being removed.

Chairman Connolly requested that Commissioner Koty report back to the committee on February 1st with an update of the double pole situation.

No papers were acted on.

Alderman John M. Connolly, Chairman
Committee on Public Utilities and Public Works

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Public Utilities and
Public Works, December 15, 2008

In Board of Aldermen

Clerk