

**City Council Minutes**  
**The City of Cortland**  
January 15, 2013

Council Meeting #1  
January 15, 2013  
Regular Session  
City Hall  
7:00 PM

Present: Mayor Brian Tobin, Aldermen Ken Dye, Julie Bird, Kathryn Silliman, John Bennett, Dan Quail, Carlos Ferrer, Linda Ferguson and Thomas Michales.

Staff Present: Corporation Counsel Kelly Colasurdo, Director of Administration & Finance Mack Cook, and Donna Coye from the City Clerk's Office

Public Hearing – Cable Commission

Mayor Tobin called the Public Hearing to order at 6:30 and Richard Menapace was given the floor to explain what the hearing was about, introducing the Cable Commissioners present:

- Sharon Stevans operating the camera
- James Forshee
- Kevin Williams from Homer
- Lisa Kahle from SUNY Cortland
- Vince Minnella
- Aaron Hubbard from Cortlandville
- Herb Aikman from the Tompkins County Cable Commission

Also in attendance was David Whalen, Director of Government Relations in the Northeastern Region and Central New York divisions of Time Warner.

In 2005 our ten-year franchise agreement with Time Warner Cable expired. Under the terms of that Contract, its provisions would continue until such time as a new Contract was agreed upon. After years of updating, improving its provisions, especially public access and then entering into negotiations with Time Warner only to be told that our new contract was not acceptable and in return being offered their standard contract. We decided to stay with the old contract and devote our time to having Time Warner adhere to the provisions of the old contract, which they have not been doing. Holding annual Public Comment

Hearings is a provision of our contract. I would now like to turn the hearing back over to the Mayor.

Mayor Tobin thanked Mr. Menapace and the entire Commission for the work they are doing, and thanked Mr. Whalen and all the people who turned out for this Hearing. Each speaker will be limited to 2 minutes in order to give everyone a chance to voice their comments. Any additional comments will be heard after the end of the Common Council, by stopping by my office, or contacting my office via phone.

First to speak was Alice Smith concerned with losing the Senior discount on the Time Warner service. She wondered if seniors could forego applying for the discount through the Office of the Aging.

Next to speak was Aaron Hamid, Cable Commissioner for Cortlandville, noting that this Public Hearing was a first step in reviewing options that could be considered and outreach to other services. He wanted to mention that Cortlandville had two complaints. One complaint is from Mr. Testa who attempted to contact Time Warner, was put on hold for 3 hours due to not having access to a local live sporting event that was televised and by the time he got someone on the line, the event was over. The other complaint was from Mr. Slack in regards to changes in channel lineups and regarding the new digital cable boxes. One provision in our contract is that the consumers and Commissioners get notified of cable channel updates and changes.

Robert Bates questioned the channel lineups not being listed together, and trying to get a problem resolved such as the commercial volume spiking, Time Warner's answer was that they had no control over that. By contacting Time Warner investment line on their website, one of two people will solve any problem.

Tom Goble sought clarification from Time Warner in regards to Time Warner being a monopoly in the Cortland area.

Maria DiSanta expressed concern is that there is no consideration for special needs families, disabled veterans, Social Security Disabled people and senior citizens with a very limited income. An affordable plan should be offered for just two services, cable and internet. A reasonable level of plans should be available where a customer could get some additional channels for a fair price, instead of a long list of channels that most people would never watch. The length of time Time Warner puts a customer on hold and the level of customer service when a customer goes in to the office is unacceptable.

Connie Sorrells spoke about the additional \$5.00 modem charge and the article on channel 5 news regarding the law suit against Time Warner's practice, hoping people of Cortland will jump on the bandwagon. Without the modem they cannot

provide us the service we are already paying for. I would like to see more choices of programming instead of paying for about 40 channels of sports which will never be watched. People have to pay the expenses incurred with doing business and Time Warner should do so as well.

Tony Pace stated that his issue was with internet connection and the length of time it takes upload a video is ridiculous. Time Warner checked some things on my modem to make things were working properly, and then they pitch the service to turbo. Mr. Pace hears a lot of complaints from senior citizens in his district can't afford the added expense of the digital cable service and the City's significant Catholic population no longer have access to that channel.

Ruth Grunberg echoed the sentiments of most of the previous speakers. In dealing with Time Warner and being put on hold for such a length of time, the suggestion was to go in to the local office, but I am disabled and have no transportation to do so. Over the years there have been periods when it has been impossible to get a representative on the phone, but the arrogance, indifference and poor service has been worse for several months. Even the Public Service Commission had a difficult time getting someone on the phone.

Joe Covington expressed a different concern. Time Warner changed everyone's account number, which affects any auto-pay accounts. Suddenly Time Warner sent me a bill for \$362.00 because they stopped taking the monthly fee from my bank account. Time Warner is charging me for 13 months for 12 months of service, and if he chose to disconnect service they would still bill him for 3 additional weeks.

Jerry Kalk had a complaint about the customer service and the programming. He has a land line phone through Time Warner and got on the "do not call" list for unsolicited sales, which took Time Warner months to put in place.

Sheila Sanford voiced similar complaints, in particular the fact that customers need to now purchase a modem for each television in the home; Time Warner is now offering a package for \$99.99 and asked why everyone couldn't get the same package for that price.

Sharon Bilideau, Barb Just, Theresa Foster and Edward King also voiced their complaints.

Alderman Dye suggested filing any complaints with the Public Service Commission, which governs Time Warner Cable and gets results quickly.

The Public Hearing was closed but any further concerns can be addressed by phone or email to the Mayor's office. The Mayor thanked the Cable Commission for volunteering to serve.

