



Cities of
Neenah & Menasha, Wisconsin

Cable Television Needs Assessment Report

September 17, 2004

*Neenah-Menasha Joint Cable Television Committee
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Cable Television Needs Assessment for Neenah & Menasha, Wisconsin

Executive Summary

Overview. This report summarizes the results of a needs assessment study begun in November 2001 and completed in July 2002 generated for the City of Appleton as part of the franchise renewal process with Time Warner Cable. Early on in the same renewal process for the Cities of Neenah and Menasha, the joint Cable Television Committee of the Cities of Neenah and Menasha reviewed that study and determined that many of its findings were applicable to the Cities of Neenah & Menasha, supplemented by interviews conducted with Neenah & Menasha city departments, community institutions and local businesses (Appendix 1) and a user survey conducted in the spring of 2003 (Appendix 2). As federal law suggests, the study identifies the future cable-related needs and interests of the community and of key public and private institutions. The Cities will use the results of this study and public hearings to ascertain what needs and interests are to be reflected in the new franchise agreement to be negotiated with Time Warner Cable.

This Executive Summary will outline the participants in the study and the community challenges identified, discuss a regional approach to meeting these challenges, describe the cable-related priorities of the community to meet these challenges, and finally, dedicate a section to the PEG cable-related priority. Attached is a complete cable-related priority ranking.

Participants. In the City of Appleton study, a total of 34 major interviews and an additional nine informal contacts were made to elicit feedback from City departments, the County, the School District, private schools, non-profit organizations, access program producers, and citizens. An additional 15 interviews were conducted in the Cities of Neenah and Menasha with City, School, Business and Community leaders to elicit the same information for Neenah and Menasha.

Community challenges. The needs assessment found six key community challenges; they are:

- Managing regional growth,
- Developing regional solutions to service provision,
- Maintaining a stable local economy,
- Encouraging interest and involvement in community affairs,
- Fostering awareness and access to social services, and
- Integrating the new racial diversity into community life.

The L.I.F.E. (Local Indicators for Excellence) Community Assessment conducted by local organizations for the Fox Cities area supported these findings and provided additional information that was incorporated into this report.

Regional approach needed. The Fox Cities area is home to 29 local jurisdictions plus several counties. The Cities of Neenah and Menasha face many of the same issues as these other area communities, as borne out by the LIFE Study, and they are interested in fostering a regional vision

for the area. The State of Wisconsin is encouraging a regional approach and wants local jurisdictions to consolidate services to gain efficiencies and improve services. The State recently mandated (SS 66.0317) that each Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) inventory existing intergovernmental agreements with the aim to develop ideas for further agreements and cooperative efforts. The impetus to move on cooperative ventures is being supplied by the actual and anticipation of State cutbacks in revenue sharing recently and over the next several years. Local jurisdictions have been working to smooth the way for more extensive cooperation by entering into border agreements with each other that provide the level of security needed to regionalize services without the fear of involuntary annexation.¹

All of the cable television-related needs identified in the assessment have strong connections to regional communication and cooperation. Specifically, meeting these cable-related needs would:

- Enhance communication between Fox Cities jurisdictions and organizations cooperating to offer services and resolve regional issues thereby making it easier to discover ways to share resources, increase efficiencies, and eliminate redundancies,
- Provide regional service organizations with a means to promote themselves to its client base and encourage use of available services,
- Increase understanding regionally of the needs and interests of individual jurisdictions, organizations, and residents,
- Assist in filling the community news void left when the Fox Cities newspapers closed.

Cable-related priorities of the community. The following cable-related priorities were determined through the Appleton ascertainees, who were asked to prioritize their requests from the point of view of their organization. These responses were given a numeric value and totaled to develop a community-wide priority list. These priorities were confirmed by the Neenah-Menasha interviews and community survey. Survey respondents identified the following cable-related needs:

- Increase capital and operating support for public, education, and government (PEG) access television²
 - Capital grant request:** \$1,000,000 over 15 years for a regional PEG production facility.
 - Operating grant request:** \$55,000/year.
 - NJSD & MJSD grant request:** \$4,000/year for video production equipment for the three high schools

¹ The Cities of Neenah and Menasha successfully created the Neenah Menasha Sewerage Commission, the Menasha Neenah Municipal Court, the Neenah Menasha Fire Rescue and are continuing discussions about the possibility of consolidating their police departments. The City of Appleton has successfully entered into intergovernmental agreements with Grand Chute and the Waverly Sanitary District to supply water, is part of a centralized emergency response system at the County level, and has created Valley Transit to supply bus service to the Cities of Kaukauna, Kimberly, Little Chute, Menasha, and Neenah, the Towns of Buchanan, Combined Locks, and Grand Chute, plus portions of the Towns of Kaukauna, and Menasha. The three cities have agreed to jointly negotiate the renewal of the cable television franchise with Time Warner and their Parks and Recreation Departments make their programs available to residents of the other communities at resident rates.

² The capital grant request for PEG was derived from the video production capabilities requested by survey participants.

- Assign one channel to each type of access (3 total) with two (2) in reserve.
Channels would serve the Fox Cities area and could include the imported program services Annenberg/CPB Channel, WisconsinEye, SCOLA, BBC News, and Deutsche Welle.

The government access channel would be programmed with community announcements, PSA's, features, real time traffic monitoring images, real time bus information, emergency announcements, and locally produced call-in shows and imported features (the last two not allowed on the Time Warner channel). A regional government channel (open to all Fox Cities jurisdictions) would encourage broad-based thinking about regional issues. A dedicated WisconsinEye channel may be needed.

All educational institutions requested a shared channel except Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC), which is interested in programming its own. One shared educational channel is recommended at this time with one held in reserve for future use.

- Provide live origination capability from a public studio and from rooms used for public meetings.
Grant request: In addition to Appleton's request of \$30,000 for modulators (15 modulators to serve 22 sites), Neenah and Menasha would require an additional \$12,000 for 6 modulators at 6 sites. Nearly all survey participants thought utilizing cable to cablecast City and County meetings live was a great idea and many felt it was important to have live capability in other public meeting rooms and emergency operations centers.
- Fund additional videoconferencing facilities for the Cities, and NJSD and MJSD (two high school distance learning classrooms) to be used in conjunction with WINFOX.
Grant request: \$305,000. Cities' share: \$15,000/year; NJSD & MJSD: \$80,000.
- Improve the emergency audio/video override system to include the digital tier.

PEG Support

Two options were considered for providing the top rated PEG services: separate stand-alone facilities or a regional non-profit PEG production facility. The second option is recommended.

Separate facilities option. Nearly all participants requested greater capital or operating support for one or more types of access, often depending upon the type of access appropriate to the organization represented.

Educational access. In this scenario, capital (\$50,000 in year I; \$20,000 in succeeding years) and operating support (\$45,000/year) would be provided to FVTC to program part or all of an educational access channel. An agreement would be struck between FVTC and Lawrence University to have FVTG cover some of its events with the funding. UW-Fox Valley would use its own equipment to cover its events from time to time for play on an educational access channel. AASD would be granted funding assistance for its high school video production curriculum (\$6,000/year) and use it to originate programming on its own channel or on a shared educational access channel.

The parochial schools would utilize the public access facility.

Government access. A City department would be funded and equipped to serve the needs of City departments. A room would be found in a city building for a studio and channel programming playback area. The Appleton Public Library, the Fire Department, and the Information Services Department have each offered to manage some aspect of a government access facility and channel. The Fire Department offered to house a government access studio at Station #6.

An agreement with the County would enable the County to use the City's government access production facility and equipment to cover meetings and other productions on a limited basis.

Public access. Two options:

- 1) A cable company-managed regional access facility would remain, with the requirement of adding more staff and equipment and providing additional space for users. The company would have a stronger requirement to promote the channel and do outreach to the community.
OR
- 2) A non-profit public access facility would be established to serve the needs of local or Fox Cities area residents, non-profits, and parochial schools.

Regional PEG facility option. Long-time cable company management of all three types of access has resulted in very little participation in program production from the community despite a strong need and interest in local communications. Cable company management of PEG facilities rarely results in high usage and it is unlikely that more stringent terms in a franchise contract would create the type of environment needed to encourage use. Community Communications Consulting recommends a regional multi-jurisdictional PEG facility.

1. Funding for the facility would come from several sources:

- a. An up-front capital grant of \$400,000 from the cable company.
- b. On-going capital support beginning in year 4 of \$50,000 from the cable company.
- c. \$55,000 operating grant/year from the cable company to support a technical manager position (would substitute for current staffing and be part of the current rate base).
- d. A 1% point of the 5% point franchise fee from all participating cable franchising authorities to fund a government access coordinator and a public access coordinator and to assist with other operating expenses.
- e. A \$55,000 yearly contribution from area educational institutions to support the cost of an educational access coordinator.

2. The facility would provide the following equipment:

- a. A well-equipped three-camera studio.
- b. A non-linear editing system with related equipment.

- c. A portable three-camera production system.
- d. Single camera field equipment (several packages).
- e. Playback facilities for all three channels.
- f. Message board equipment for all three channels.

3. The facility would provide the following services:

- a. Maintenance of a message board for the channels.
- b. Web site support.
- c. Coordination of production work.
- d. Scheduling of programming on each channel.
- e. Training of users (including children).
- f. Assistance with developing program ideas, including producing, directing, scripting, and editing programs for educational institutions, local governments and to a lesser degree, non-profit organizations.
- g. Management of production assistants.
- h. Promotion and outreach.
- i. Regular hours of service, including nights and weekends.

4. Staffing of the facility:

- a. Public access coordinator.
- b. Educational access coordinator.
- c. Government access coordinator.
- d. Technical manager.
- e. Production assistants.
- f. Volunteers.

These positions could be altered to reflect a division of labor according to task, rather than type of access.

5. Users of the facility would include:

- a. Fox Cities franchising authorities contributing a 1% point of the 5% point franchise fee.

- b. Counties who utilize the facilities (financial contribution to be determined).
 - c. AASD, NJSD, MJSD, UW -Fox Valley (perhaps just for intern experience), FVTC, Lawrence University parochial schools and any other schools located in the Fox Cities area.
 - d. Residents and non-profits of participating local jurisdictions for a small membership fee.
6. **The facility could be located conveniently at UW Fox Valley where a current television production studio exists. This location is central to the three communities of Appleton, Neenah & Menasha.**

A regional multi-jurisdiction PEG facility would fit in with the trend toward regionalism in the Fox Cities area by:

- **Consolidating the provision of a needed service thereby creating efficiencies and opportunities for more cooperation.** Fox Cities residents expect that local jurisdictions will cooperate to find the most cost-effective way to provide services without regard to parochial boundaries. The proposed regional production facility created by pooling resources will be more sophisticated than the alternative, truly offering the kind of communications support needed to serve the vision of local governments, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations.
- **Taking advantage of the resources of a regional cable television franchise to communicate regionally to the Fox Cities area.**³
- **Offering a consistent service to Fox Cities residents.** Providing a regional access facility reduces public confusion about which jurisdictions provide which services and where.
- **Capitalizing on good working relationships already established.** The Cities of Neenah and Menasha have consolidated or created joint services over the past several years, including the Menasha-Neenah Municipal Court, Neenah Menasha Fire Rescue as well as the long-term relationship in the Neenah Menasha Sewerage Commission. The Twin Cities are also exploring, with the Town of Menasha, the consolidation of their police departments. Neenah, Menasha & Appleton have agreed to jointly negotiate the cable franchise renewal. Mutual aid agreements exist between area jurisdictions for fire and police protection, training and resource sharing. The Appleton Public Library manages the community website, Fox Communities on Line (FOCOL) which contains information about Menasha and Neenah.
- **Working within the habits already established by area residents.** Residents of the two cities and surrounding areas are accustomed to crossing jurisdictional boundaries for work, shopping, recreation, services, and cultural activities.
- **Reflecting the regional nature of many organizations.** The service areas of non-profit cultural organizations, social service agencies, institutes of higher education, and health care agencies all extend far beyond Cities of Neenah and Menasha boundaries. Both the NJSD and MJSC jurisdictions extend far beyond the municipal boundaries of the two cities.

³ Time Warner is currently required by franchise to provide studio services (out of the Kimberly site) to the City of Kaukauna, the City and Town of Menasha, the Towns of Neenah and Grand Chute and the Villages of Kimberly, Combined Locks, Little Chute, and Wrightstown.

Conclusion

The needs assessment identified cable-related needs that will assist the Cities of Neenah and Menasha and the Fox Cities area to meet its challenges in coming years. The emphasis is on utilizing the franchise agreement as a foundation to build a regional communications capability that will serve the needs of the entire area.

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Community cable-related priorities

The following insights were developed from the interviews conducted with key City officials, business and community leaders from the Cities of Neenah and Menasha (See Appendix 1 for full report and interview summaries):

Each of the departments, businesses, and organizations interviewed expressed their current and future needs for cable television services. Several were unaware of the technologies that might be available to them and how to possibly access or implement them. Many noted that they had not had regular contact from Time Warner cable television representatives, and were unaware of the levels of service and technologies offered by their current providers for voice, video, and data services.

Some of the key insights from the interviews include:

- There is a need for all of the public safety departments in both communities (Police, Fire, and Sheriff) to have regular communications and sharing of data and information. Connectivity between these entities was noted as important. Currently, they are part of a regional contract with FoxComm for dispatching, cellular, and wireless access to laptop services. FoxComm is a cooperative venture formed by the Cities of Neenah and Menasha, along with other neighboring municipalities, Winnebago County, and the Winnebago County Sheriff's Department for discounted services.
- The majority of Neenah and Menasha departments and all of the business communities interviewed are interested in video conferencing, virtual meetings, and interactive video staff training. The business communities in Neenah and Menasha are already actively using these technologies as part of their day-to-day operations.
- Many of the departments in Neenah and Menasha cited a need and desire to produce more or to begin producing video programming on cable access.
- Many of the external agencies, such as the schools, also have a desire to provide video programming on cable access.
- Neenah and Menasha have fiber networks that are used to connect locations together.
- There are two locations in Neenah that are not on the fiber network and use Time Warner's Roadrunner service for connectivity to the City network.
- Most of Neenah and Menasha departments interviewed have a free cable connection available from Time Warner, but many do not use it or have a television connected to it.
- The Neenah Police Department would like to develop the ability to have officers give video testimony to the court in Oshkosh.
- Electronic or online commerce (e-commerce) is a vital part of many of the businesses in Neenah and Menasha, and many of Neenah and Menasha's departments are beginning to explore e-commerce.
- Competition does exist for local and long distance telephone services.
- Time Warner faces competition from several providers for Internet access service in Neenah and Menasha.
- The two public libraries, one in Neenah and one in Menasha, do not use the connections to Time Warner cable television, nor is any programming produced to air on the cable access channel at this time.
- A desire was expressed by Neenah and Menasha to begin to televise public meetings and to have more local programming and information on cable access. It was also noted that the possibility of more than one access channel could be explored.
- Menasha would like to see more targeted emergency alert capability on the cable system so that specific areas of the City can be notified.
- The business community also noted that there is an interest in having the public meetings in both Neenah and Menasha on cable access and would also like to see more government information posted online.

- Many of the businesses in Neenah and Menasha are heavily reliant on advanced voice, video, and data products and services. Several of those interviewed, however, are not familiar with Time Warner's products and services.
- Several of those interviewed from Neenah and Menasha's departments also indicated limited contact from Time Warner and unfamiliarity with the products and services.
- The school representatives interviewed are very interested in services that Time Warner could possibly provide, such as interactive classrooms, distance learning, and home schooling capabilities.
- All three school districts interviewed would like more information on the Cable in the Classroom project that Time Warner and other cable companies participate in.
- The Neenah-Menasha YMCA is very interested in exploring video programming for cable access and would consider creating an access center or a community media center to create video programming for public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access.

In addition, a survey of citizens was conducted in 2003 to determine public sentiment regarding the current cable system and future cable needs. Appendix 2 contains a full report on the citizen survey.

Cities of Neenah and Menasha Cable Television Needs Assessment

Capital Equipment Summary

Summary. The Cable Television Needs Assessment Report dated September 17, 2004 ("Report") identifies and describes the need for cable company support for cable-related capital equipment and facilities in Neenah and Menasha. The cost of meeting all cable-related capital requests is \$1,447,000 over the life of a fifteen-year franchise agreement.

The capital requests fall into five categories. The chart below lists the categories and the amount requested over the life of a fifteen-year franchise agreement. Amounts requested for years 2- 15 should be adjusted for inflation in some manner.

Totals by category:

• Public, education, and government (PEG) access equipment and facilities	\$1,000,000
• Equipping Council Chambers for Televising Meetings	\$ 220,000
• Neenah & Menasha high school video production support	\$ 60,000
• Live program origination capability (11 modulators)	\$ 22,000
• Videoconferencing facilities and equipment	<u>\$ 365,000</u>
	\$ 1,667,000

Pacing of expenditures by category:

	<u>First Year</u>	<u>Succeeding Years</u>
• PEG access equipment and facilities ⁴	\$400,000	\$50,000
• Televising Council Chambers ⁵	\$100,000	\$ 10,000
• High school video production support	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
• Live program origination capability (11 modulators)	\$ 22,000	0
• Videoconferencing facilities and equipment	<u>\$155,000</u>	<u>\$15,000</u>
	\$681,000	\$79,000

PEG equipment and facilities. The request is for \$400,000 in year 1 and for \$50,000 in succeeding years beginning with year 4. The intent is to establish a regional PEG facility to serve the needs of the public, non-profit organizations, Fox Valley governmental jurisdictions, and parochial schools, and to augment the video production facilities and equipment of area high schools and institutes of higher education. The alternative would be to fund each type of access separately, boosting the capabilities of the public access studio, funding Fox Valley Technical College fully, and providing the Cities of Neenah and Menasha with playback equipment, a small (portable) studio, field equipment, and council chambers equipment. This alternative would result in duplication of capabilities and ignore synergies possible with a non-profit regional facility serving all types of access. (please see the Report at pp. 64-72.)

⁴ Succeeding year funding for this item would not begin until year 4 of the franchise agreement.

⁵ Succeeding year funding for this item would not begin until year 4 of the franchise agreement.

Neenah & Menasha high school video production support. Support is needed for high school video production curriculum whose programs would be cablecast on an educational access channel. The request is for a grant of \$4,000 per year to fund portable camcorders and editing equipment for two high schools.

Live program origination capability. Assessment research suggested 10 locations. Carrying video over a cable company-based analog system using modulators is the alternative to the existing WINFOX fiber optic network. The cost of connecting all sites in this manner is not addressed here. However, modulators are estimated at a cost of \$2,000 each. The 10 sites are likely to use live capability frequently enough to warrant dedicated equipment. One additional modulator is recommended for use in the remaining locations. (For the list of sites suggested, please see the Report pp. 73-75.)

Common Council Chambers Televising. Administration from both communities indicated a strong desire to begin televising their Common Council meetings as well as other meetings that may occur at the Menasha and Neenah City Halls. The most cost-efficient method long-term of accomplishing this goal is to provide for a robotic camera setup. While the initial cost is higher, operational costs are significantly lower. Each council chamber would require \$50,000 in initial setup costs to create the robotic camera setup for televising meetings. Subsequent years would require \$5,000 for each city in succeeding years, beginning in year 4 to provide for replacement equipment. (For a description of this request, see the Report pg. 76.)

Videoconferencing facilities and equipment. The City of Appleton has already invested in videoconferencing equipment. The grant would help expand the number of sites from six (6) to 13 throughout the Neenah and Menasha areas. The Cities estimate units will need to be replaced every five years and requests \$15,000 per year to maintain the system. (Please see the Report at pp. 77-79.)