

Cable contract talks set for March 15

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LONG BRANCH — A special meeting is scheduled to be held next month on issues the city plans to discuss during negotiations on a contract renewal with Comcast.

The meeting is set to be held at city hall on Broadway on March 18 and the hope is to have negotiations wrapped up by the summer, as the current contract expires in September.

The Long Branch Cable Commission, which held a meeting on Jan. 28, is expected to present council with a list of the issues it feels the city should address during negotiations with Comcast.

"We are strictly here as an advisory committee," said Kevin Cieri, the city's cable commissioner. "Some of the issues [that need to be addressed during negotiations] are broadcasting municipal meetings, establishing an education channel [and] shows for public officials."

Having live broadcasts of City Council and Planning Board meetings is one issue that at least

one councilman is pushing for in the new contract with Comcast.

"Live broadcasts of City Council and Planning Board meetings [are] inevitable given current 21st-century technology," Councilman Brian Unger said. "A cable commission in a diverse city like ours, the largest in the coastal region, should reach every citizen with a television set."

"Every citizen should have unfettered live cable access to city hall meetings and access through Internet media files and e-mails directly into the City Council chamber," he said.

Although unable to attend the Cable Commission meeting last week, Unger had a prepared statement read on his behalf.

"I hope that the City Council and the Long Branch Cable Commission thinks boldly as we enter this contract year with Comcast," Unger said in the prepared statement.

He explained that that Long Branch City Hall is already wired with high-speed fiber able to carry a full-motion video signal live throughout the city to

every Comcast customer.

"The only thing we need to do is connect up with the Head End at Monmouth University so that live broadcasts are possible," Unger said. If this current administration does not want to permit broadcast of City Council meetings, so be it.

"At least we have the infrastructure in place when that decision changes, or in the next administration," he said, adding, "Let's at least get the infrastructure paid for and installed now as part of this new contract with Comcast."

The city last negotiated a contract with Comcast in 1994, which was a 15-year contract that expires this September, according to City Attorney James Aaron.

"The last time we did this was in 1994," Aaron said. "I would expect there will be a lot more issues."

"Perhaps giving it your full attention at one meeting would be best," he told council, adding, "You are going to need to get information from the Cable Commission first."

City health center receives \$200K grant

LONG BRANCH — The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey has awarded over \$2 million in grants to hospitals throughout the state, including the Monmouth Family Health Center in Long Branch.

The funds were awarded as part of the foundation's \$5 million, five-year grant initiative created to expand access to health care for thousands of uninsured and underinsured individuals throughout New Jersey, according to a press release from Horizon.

"Health centers in New Jersey provide comprehensive, community-based primary and preventive health care services to anyone needing care, regardless of their ability to pay," said William J. Marino, chairman of the board of The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey.

"These health centers provide a vital safety net for uninsured and underinsured individuals and families throughout the state who otherwise would go without even the most basic health care," Marino added.

Horizon awarded a total of \$2,457,600 in grants to support 18 federally qualified health centers and in-

dependent health centers throughout the state. Among the 18 hospitals was Monmouth Family Health Center in Long Branch, which will be receiving \$200,000 over the course of three years.

The grants represent the Horizon Foundation's second round of grants from its initiative. In December 2006, the foundation awarded more than \$2.3 million to 16 health centers in its first round of Health Center Initiative grants.

Funding recommendations to the foundation's board of directors are made by a 10-member Review Committee comprising individuals from across the state who are knowledgeable about the health care issues facing New Jersey's communities.

The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey began operations in 2004 and seeks to promote health and the arts by supporting charitable organizations making a positive impact in the lives of people in communities throughout New Jersey.

For more information about the foundation visit www.Horizon-Blue.com/Foundation.



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