

**STATE FAIR** GIANTS STADIUM FAIRGROUNDS  
**JUNE 25 - JULY 12**  
 DAILY PROMOTIONS

**Atlanticville**  
 Eatontown • Long Branch • Monmouth Beach • Ocean Township • West Long Branch

Streaming Radio  
 WCAT 95.9  
 MAGIC 98.7  
 WCTC 1450

Get News Updates Real Estate Mortgage Automotive Employment Services Classifieds Market Place Media Kit Forms

News

July 9, 2009

Search Archives:

Go

**HOME**

- Front Page
- GMN Photo Galleries
- Bulletin Board
- Letters
- Greg Bean's Column
- Arts / Zest
- Obituaries
- Sports

**Council meeting broadcasts debated**  
 Mayor says benefits of televising sessions unclear  
**BY KENNY WALTER Staff Writer**

**LONG BRANCH** — With talks underway for a new cable contract between Long Branch and Comcast, one Long Branch councilman wants the negotiations to include an agreement to broadcast City Council meetings.

Councilman Brian Unger last week sent a letter to the mayor, city administrator, city attorney and fellow council members urging them to include this provision in the negotiations with Comcast.

Unger has been pushing for this since at least May 2008. Since that time, Unger said he has done some research and found out that the cost to run the fiber optics from the municipal building to the channel 20 studio at Monmouth University would be a onetime fee of \$15,000, which he said is an estimate from a Comcast representative.

Also, according to Unger, the fees for the broadcasts would be nominal and there is a proposal in place to have the meetings taped for free.



"The [school] superintendent [Joseph Ferraina] said he can make it a school civics project," Unger said. "At least nine months a year they can tape the meetings for free."

For Unger the benefits of taping the meetings go beyond the initial costs.

"It's about the ability for the taxpayers to see the government at work," Unger said. "It will increase public participation in government."

Unger is looking at other municipalities and governing bodies as examples of how this could work.

"Television is a hot medium," Unger said. "Other municipalities, such as Newark, are broadcasting their meetings."

"The U.S. House of Representatives even broadcasts their meetings," he added.

However, Long Branch Mayor Adam Schneider isn't so sure it would be a good idea to broadcast the meetings.

"I have mixed feelings about it," Schneider said.

According to Schneider, most of the debate and work done by the council is done at the workshop meeting, which is held prior to the council meeting.

"Most of the work goes on in the workshop meeting," Schneider said. "That is where most of the debate [within the administration] goes on."

"That is where we decide whether or not to proceed with certain issues," he added.

Schneider also cited costs as a concern, especially during this economic downturn.

"I really don't know how much money it will cost or where it will come from," Schneider said.

According to Schneider, there is no money in the budget allocated to broadcasting meetings and it is not



Click here to enlarge

**EAT THIS NOT THAT!**  
 Eat This, Not That! Thousands of Sim...  
 David Zincenko, M...  
 Best Price \$7.25  
 or Buy New \$11.97  
 Buy amazon.com from  
 Privacy Information

**A great gift for any occasion...**

Search Amazon:  
 Search Now and Used amazon.com.



Online Obituary Submission

Featured Special Sections



About Us

Archive

Contact Us

Services

Advertiser Index

amazon.com

Shop Online

Copyright © 2000 - 2009 GMN All Rights Reserved Terms of Use

Newspaper web site content management software and services  
 OMCA Notices

possible to allocate funds to cover the costs until at least November.

In addition to concerns about where the funding will come from, according to Schneider, Long Branch is poorly equipped to start broadcasting meetings.

"We don't know who is going to tape the meetings," Schneider said. "We also don't own the cameras or any of the equipment needed."

However, Unger stated in a letter sent to the administration last week that the school district may be equipped to handle the broadcasts.

"The superintendent ... has offered to utilize school system cameras they have already purchased and senior TV production students to videotape our meetings at no additional cost to the city," Unger stated in the letter.

"My understanding is that the students could receive course credit for their work experience in producing real television news."

Public behavior at the meetings is also a concern for Schneider, who cited some offensive comments made by some members of the public throughout the years.

"Many statements made during these meetings are absurd," Schneider said.

While Schneider has some concerns, he said that does not prevent anyone from taping the meetings on their own.

"If volunteers want to tape the meetings they can do that now," Schneider said.

However, Schneider acknowledged that in the end it is not really up to him.

"But my little cop-out is that it is not my decision," Schneider said. "It is not my meeting, it's the council's meeting."

Long Branch has had a contract with Comcast for the past 15 years. The existing contract will be up Sept. 19, and negotiations with the city are expected to start soon, according to a Comcast spokesman.

In March the council held a special meeting to discuss the cable contract renewal. During the meeting and in subsequent council meetings, members of the public have spoken in favor of broadcasting the meetings.

Unger said he does not see competition between Comcast and Verizon, which is installing fiber optics all across the state, as much of a problem.

"I don't think there is much of a chance that a contract with Comcast won't be done," Unger said.

While he expects the city to sign on with Comcast, residents still have the opportunity to choose Verizon. However, Unger said he has been assured that if the council meetings are ever on Comcast, they will also be broadcast on Verizon.

"Verizon has said that they would broadcast the network," Unger said. "So both companies would air city council meetings."

One benefit to broadcasting the council meetings for Unger would be the opportunity to put the meetings on the Internet as well as on TV.

"Also the meetings can be put on the Internet within 24 hours," Unger said. "We can archive all the meetings."

"You can even order copies," he added.

Another idea Unger mentioned was that the public could email questions for the administration to answer during the meetings.

"Residents can email questions to the council during the meetings," Unger said. "It doesn't have to be unregulated. The council president or maybe the city clerk can pick which questions to address."

For Unger, this is something that is bound to happen at some point in the near future.

"It may not happen this year," Unger said. "It may not happen the next year, but it will happen eventually."

"This is inevitable," he said. "There is no way we can hold this back."

Contact Kenny Walter at

[kwalter@gmnews.com](mailto:kwalter@gmnews.com)