



Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation District
Virtual Public Work Session
February 17th, 2021

Directors Present (by phone): Dave Clayton, Cassia Cadenhead, Ian Billick, Loren Ahonen and Derrick Nehrenberg.

Staff Present (by phone): Hedda Peterson

Location: Meeting held telephonically with public call-in access via Zoom

Call to Order

Work Session called to order at 4:32 PM.

Hedda began with an overview of Zoom meeting details. She acknowledged that Director Loren Ahonen would be monitoring the chat box which participants are welcome to use to submit comments or questions. Hedda reminded participants that the meeting is being recorded.

Report on Recent Television Outage-

Hedda provided a brief overview on the recent television outage, explaining that the first report of the outage was made in the afternoon on Sunday, February 14th. Shortly thereafter, Met Rec's Broadcast Engineer was troubleshooting equipment remotely. Additional remote troubleshooting was done on Monday, February 15th and on Tuesday, February 16th the Engineer was on site and identified a down microwave link from the Studio to W Mountain. The switch on W Mountain was repaired and the service was restored that same day around 4:00 PM.

Work Session Agenda-

An overview of the Work Session agenda was provided, including:

- Planning & Public Outreach Process Goals & Overview
- Background Information
- Review of Translator System Information
- Public & Board Questions & Discussion
- Next Steps in Planning & Outreach Process

Planning & Outreach Process Goals-

The goals of the process include:

- To share information about the television translator system with constituents.
- To collect public input to inform a strategy for the near and long-term operation of the television translator system.

Planning Process Overview-

Hedda shared the current timeline for the planning process, including:

- 2/17 Public Work Session I
 - Share information about translator system with public
- TV Operations Input Survey (2/22 – 4/9)
 - Collect input from as many constituents as possible
- 4/21 Public Work Session II
 - Review Public input
 - Survey response data
 - Written comments
 - Review of draft operations strategies
 - Collect additional public input on draft operations strategies
- 5/19 Public Work Session III
 - Review operations strategy and plan

How the Translator System Works-

Hedda provided a brief overview of how the over-the-air television signal is delivered via the translator system.

Background Information-

Hedda explained that Met Rec completed an Operations Strategic Plan in 2020, which was a 3-month long process in which input was collected at Public Work Sessions. The final plan outlines five focus areas, including the need to plan for long-term signal delivery, and in particular, the need to prepare for the roll-out of the new ATSC 3.0 video transmission standard.

Hedda noted that given the new transmission standard and the cost associated with it from a capital outlay perspective, as well as the need to address deferred maintenance at many of the translator sites and the need to continue to build out a more robust and reliable system, there's a lot for Met Rec to consider.

She added that it's important to note that Met Rec has never been able to serve everyone in its Service Area, and the areas that it does serve were established a long time ago. Since then, much has changed with regards to population as well as access to cell and internet services. At this point, Met Rec wishes to take a close look at who it is being serving and who it is not being serving and why. Hedda added that this outreach process is being launched to ensure Met Rec is maintaining a system that provides continued value and is also relevant to the community as a whole. To inform the outreach process, the Board requested that comprehensive information about the translator system be developed and made available to the public.

Translator System Information-

Hedda provided a brief description of the translator system attributes outlined in the Translator System Information spreadsheet, included in the Work Session packet and available on the Met Rec website:

- Capital Outlay Costs: Estimated cost for needed equipment (with 10-year lifespan) for each translator site.
- Site Lease Cost: Cost of annual translator site leases. Sites located on publicly administered land, municipal owned land and private land. Lease costs vary depending on ownership.
- Contract Labor: Costs associated with contract labor to maintain and operate the system.
- Site Re-Build Needs: Re-build needs at each translator site. More complex and costly re-build needs at major sites, including the Gunnison Studio and W Mountain.
- # of Household Respondents to TV Viewership Survey (2005, 2016 and 2020): Number of household respondents to Met Rec TV Viewership Surveys.
- Telecommunication Services Available in Areas: Overview of available cell and internet services available in areas served.
- Optimization Opportunities: Potential for optimization of over-the-air television signal at existing translator sites via increased power and or antenna additions.
- Multi-Users: Accommodation of other service providers at each translator site.

Question & Discussion-

Hedda explained that in addition to general questions from the public, they're also seeking input on:

- Clarifying questions about the translator system information and/or outreach process.
- What should be considered in the public outreach process?

She shared a list of considerations that could influence the operations strategy and asked meeting participants if they have additional considerations to be included:

- Prioritization of TV service to largest, collective geographic area within Service Area?
- Prioritization of serving areas with greatest number of residents?
- Prioritize serving areas historically served?
- Prioritize serving new areas?
- Prioritize serving areas that lack access to alternative telecommunication services?
- Prioritize ability to accommodate multi-users at translator sites?
- Prioritize cost effectiveness to accommodate meeting additional community recreation needs?

Public & Board Questions/Comments:

Mark Schumacher, Three Rivers Resort: Noted that the Almont Cable System was not included on the spreadsheet and asked what the latest plan is with regards to maintaining the Almont Cable System.

Hedda responded that the Cable System was not included in the spreadsheet because it does not operate as a translator site. She added that the Service Agreement between Met Rec and Three Rivers Resort needs to be re-visited to outline what each party is responsible for with regards to

upkeep. It was also noted that Met Rec's Broadcast Engineer will have to make a site visit to the cable system this spring to determine what elements of the system are still functioning and what may need to be repaired. Hedda continued that survey respondents' addresses from the 2020 Television Viewership Survey were ground-truthed to better understand which respondents utilize the cable system and which respondents utilize the Jack's Cabin translator site. She noted that information is included in the 2020 Television Viewership Survey Report, available on Met Rec's website. Further, Hedda explained that she has been in touch with Carollynn Cherry (East River Lane HOA contact) about the potential for the Almont powerlines to be buried. Hedda emphasized that at this point, continued maintenance is being done to the Almont Cable System on an as-needed basis but there are details that still need to be sorted out with regards to the Agreement as well as the potential infrastructure change (i.e., powerline burial).

Mark asked if there is a timeline identified for communicating the discontinuation of service to areas. He referenced the January 20, 2021 Board Minutes. Ahonen noted that there is a distinction between the Almont Cable System and Translator System as a whole.

Hedda clarified that the meeting discussion Mark referred to in January was with regards to this planning process. She noted that should the process lead to a strategy that includes the delivery of the television service that is different from its current set-up, the Board underlined the importance of very clearly and transparently communicating the changes to the public. However, a strategy has not yet been developed. The goal is to develop a strategy informed by this outreach process.

Cadenhead suggested that by staying engaged in the outreach and planning process is one of the best ways to understand the potential outcomes.

Public Comment: Meeting participant suggested Met Rec work to serve areas with greatest number of residents.

Public Comment: What do we mean by collective geographic area? Hedda explained that this would entail making upgrades to the translator system to deliver signal to a greater area. She explained this could be done by making upgrades to existing sites as well as through the addition of new translator sites. She explained that there are areas that currently do not receive the signal due to terrain shielding.

Public Comment: Do multi-users pay Met Rec fees for their use of Met Rec facilities? Hedda explained that it varies for each multi-user. Some multi-users pay fees, such as Colorado Public Radio. Other multi-user agreements outline alternative arrangements, including the cost sharing of utility expenses at sites.

Public Comment: Do any translator sites utilize solar? Hedda explained that Met Rec operates one solar site: the Waunita Translator Site. Last year, new batteries and panels were purchased and installed.

Public Comment: How do Met Rec users contact Met Rec with a TV observation, or does Met Rec know when there is an issue? Hedda explained the different options for contacting Met Rec.

Historically, Met Rec has utilized its tech phone line at the office which is still used and checked Monday through Friday. In the last year, Met Rec has also established an online observation form which guides viewers to submit an observation with relevant information, including location, channel numbers and the type of issue they're observing. Hedda explained why this is helpful given the relay transmission of the signal. Hedda noted that Met Rec recently invested in a monitoring software that allows us to monitor system parameters in real time, providing a proactive response to changing conditions that would interfere with the delivery of the signal.

Public Comment: When we are aware of a mass outage, can Met Rec use an e-mail list to reach television users.

Ryan Romero: Ryan noted that he resides by Neversink and greatly appreciates Met Rec's television service. He acknowledged that he appreciates the support of youth recreation but suggests that television remains a priority.

Public Comment: Do we have a fear of missing service users, in particular second homeowners? Hedda acknowledged this is a concern and provided an overview of the extensive outreach prioritized as part of the 2016 and 2020 TV Viewership surveys.

Public Comment: Can frequency transmission be prioritized to reduce the need to for such large antennas, or, can Met Rec eliminate the need for VHF? Clayton explained that in terms of Met Rec's use of frequencies, we're constrained by the licenses overseen by the FCC. To modify the licenses, Met Rec must wait for an open filing period. Additionally, Met Rec has been constrained by the reduction of bandwidth which has been auctioned off to cellular companies. Met Rec is now down to 35 available channels, which we use all of several times because we have 47 translators throughout the system and 5 UHF STL's between the Studio and W Mountain. With that said, it would be difficult to meet accommodate the concern addressed by the public comment. Additionally, VHF is more tolerant to shielding, where UHF is more like cell service. Therefore, it would be difficult to change.

Cadenhead added that she has an antenna on the side of her home that is approximately 3 feet wide.

Public Comment: Does Met Rec currently know how many television users it has? Ahonen noted that we have user information from the TV Viewership surveys and acknowledged that is used to gauge the number of users we have. Clayton added that while we do not know the exact user numbers, the overall percentage of survey respondents in the rural areas and the populated areas (Gunnison through Mt. CB) has remained relatively stable, noting that in 2005, 88% of survey respondents resided in the more heavily populated areas and in 2016 that percentage was 96% and in 2020, 92%.

Public Comment: Is there an opportunity to more thoroughly engage the Almont community members to help them understand how the cable system can and cannot be used? Hedda explained that an Almont site visit needs to be scheduled for this spring to assess what is and is not functioning. She added that how the system is maintained moving forward will also depend

on whether or not the powerlines are buried in the area, which she has been informed is something being considered by the East River Lane HOA.

Public Comment: What is ATSC 3.0? Hedda explained that ATSC stand for, the Advanced Television Systems Committee, which is an international group made up of broadcasters, TV manufacturers and tech companies, tasked with deciding what over-the-air signals should look like. ATSC 3.0 is the new standard for over-the-air channels. It is expected to bring improved viewing experience with higher audio and video quality and transmission for reception on fixed and mobile devices.

Ahonen asked if meeting participants had additional comments about other considerations for what should be prioritized in an operations strategy?

Janice Welborn: Noted greatly appreciating the Almont service and suggested that there is an element of equity that should be considered. For example, if someone cannot afford a new antenna, could Met Rec funding be used to provide community members with antennas through small grant opportunities. Janice noted that she supports the provision of Spanish channels.

Hedda explained that Met Rec used to broadcast a Spanish channel which we were no longer able to re-broadcast. She noted that there are other Spanish channels that could be broadcasted. Further discussion was had on the importance of equity as part of this conversation, both with regards to available services as well as additional support for acquiring antennas and accessing the service.

Mark Schumacher: Mark suggested that the Met Rec consider the fact that a big percentage of recreationists may not be paying property taxes.

Ahonen noted that Mark's comment may imply a split incentive, noting that not everyone who uses over the air TV may pay for it, it may be their landlord; suggesting that it may not be a one-dimensional conversation. Cadenhead added that if the data was available, it would make these decisions so much easier. However, we don't know how many people are using the service, or how many people are recreating and getting those data points is a difficult job. Clayton noted that one thing that drove this planning process is cost-effectiveness. To that point, Clayton explained that the populated areas (Gunnison to Mt. Crested Butte) utilize 20 translators (serving approximately 92% of viewers), the rural areas have 27 translators (serving approximately 8% of viewers). The overall cost outlined in the spreadsheet, for 10 years, is \$1.7 million. This does not include all costs, rather the significant costs. To maintain the Studio, which is required for operating all translators, has an approximate cost of \$316,000. To operate the highly populated areas has an approximate cost of \$630,000, and the rural areas has an approximate cost of \$750,000. We are now trying to understand how to justify costs and to do this, we're looking for input from all constituents- those paying taxes and those that aren't as well as those that use the television service and those that do not.

Mark Schumacher: Asked if Met Rec has considered just surveying the tax payers? Hedda responded that they have not considered surveying property owners only. The details of the 'Every Door Direct Mailing' used as part of 2020 TV Viewership Survey. It included sending a

post card to every mailing address within a specific postal code. The 2020 Survey included the County and Sargents, less the western portion of the County which is not included in the District's Service Area.

Continued discussion was had with regards to ensuring that Met Rec's funding is used responsible in a way to reflect the community's needs at large.

Public Comment: A comment was made suggesting that Met Rec should also, if possible, consider the longevity of viewership. For example, if viewers utilize the service for several hours in a day versus 10 minutes. Hedda noted that a question was included in the 2020 Viewership Survey about viewing time that provided a good sense of this.

Rick Odem: Rick recognized that the Board has a difficult path ahead, especially with regards to allocating funding. He suggested the Board consider utilizing the small amount of funding available to Met Rec to sustain the television service rather than take on new priority areas, such as additional recreation needs. Rick also suggested there are likely more television users than respondents to the Met Rec survey.

Hedda and the Board thanked meeting participants for attending the Work Session and for engaging in the outreach process.

Outline Next Steps-

Hedda reviewed the next steps of the outreach and planning process. By the end of the week, a TV Operations Input Survey will be launched. She explained that it is an online survey but that constituents will have the option to complete the survey over the phone. Physical copies of the survey will also be provided to Elizabeth Gillis at the Senior Center for distribution. Hedda emphasized that efforts will be made to accommodate constituents that do not have access to a computer and/or the internet to complete the survey.

In April, a second Work Session will be hosted to review draft strategies developed by the Tech Committee and staff. At that time, Met Rec will seek additional public feedback. Additionally, a landing page will be made on the District's website with information about the outreach process, including meeting recordings, minutes and meeting material.

The Work Session concluded at 6:00 PM.