



## THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

*HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME*

February 23, 2021

Re: Comcast Cable TV Franchise License Renewal

The City of Springfield is holding this virtual public hearing to accept public comments to review the performance of the current cable television operator – Comcast – during its license term, which ends in December 2021, and to hear testimony on future cable-related needs and interests of the Springfield community for the next 10 years.

As Mayor, I serve as the statutory issuing authority for the Comcast Cable TV Franchise License Renewal for the City of Springfield. This letter serves as my public comments and testimony on these cable television-related matters.

Since taking office, one of my administrations priorities has been maintaining a senior citizens discount for cable television service. I want to thank Comcast for establishing this item and it is my hope that this much needed discount will continue into the next franchise license agreement.

My administration has also been a strong proponent of public access television on the Public, Educational and Government channels operated by Focus Springfield. Focus Springfield continues to serve the public access needs of our community and I would strongly encourage that this vital and important service continues and that appropriate funding for Focus Springfield is maintained and secured in order to keep this quality program in operation and in service.

As the City of Springfield has adapted to holding virtual meetings during this COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, it is important for the City to continue to meet the growing needs to continue to broadcast these remote city meetings such as my weekly COVID-19 Situational Updates, City Council meetings, School Committee meetings, and the various meetings by our Boards and Commissions.

Comcast has been a good corporate citizen by maintaining their Customer Service office here in Springfield. I would like to keep this operation located here in the city. In addition, I recognize

that good customer service is important for our residents and businesses. I want Comcast to maintain good quality standards for assisting customers, specifically when it comes to wait times on the phone, professional resolution to issues, and refunds for days when service is down, just to name a few.

I would also like to suggest that Comcast reviews their tier choices for cable television service, especially as it relates to the lower tier options, which could provide much-needed price relief to consumers. Many residents in our community would benefit from lower tier options that are affordable for their budget while also offering them quality television options or 'a la carte' choices.


Although, I am aware that this conversation is only concerning Comcast cable television license and that the City, as Issuing Authority, has no authority over other Comcast-related services such as internet service, phone service, and cable television rates, which are regulated by state and federal agencies – there are a few items that I feel are important to bring attention to.

First, it is important to maintain good and affordable WiFi services for our Springfield Public Schools students, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic and remote learning aspects. WiFi has become a vital component for our residents and businesses and it is important that it remains affordable and without any potential measures which might limit its accessibility.

My Office has heard concerns from our residents regarding data cap limits and potential proposed fees on internet usage over these data cap limits. This is concerning, especially during this pandemic where families are either working from home and students are remote learning. I commend Comcast for announcing that they will be holding off on implementing any data caps until 2022 but I do want these concerns on record on how they might adversely affect our residents and businesses. It is my hope that this matter can be addressed for the benefit of all parties.

I want to thank City Solicitor Kathleen Breck for acting as the Hearing Officer for this public hearing. I am looking forward to reviewing all of the comments and testimony submitted regarding the performance of Comcast under its current cable television license. This input will help the City inform Comcast of the kinds of service and facilities that the City expects will be provided during any possible renewal terms.

Respectfully,

  
Domenic J. Sarno  
Mayor