



David Fried, Mayor
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January 4, 2010

VIA FAX

Jeanne Fox, President
Board of Public Utilities
2 Gateway Center, 8th Floor
Newark, NJ 07102

Dear President Fox:

Like many others in Robbinsville and beyond, I was surprised to learn on New Year's Day that Cablevision had interrupted service on two popular channels, HGTV and The Food Network. I was especially disturbed after learning there had been no advance notice, either to Cablevision's subscribers or to the Township, as the grantor of the local franchise.

Instead, our residents and others in Cablevision's service area awoke to a public information message that sought to blame Scripps Networks for the interruption in service, over what is apparently a financial dispute between the two companies. I can only presume that the timing and nature of this move, coming as it did on a holiday weekend, is an attempt by Cablevision to use paying customers as leverage in a bid to squeeze Scripps to lower its asking price for these two channels. At the very least, this move was greedy; as a representative of my residents, I must call on the Board of Public Utilities to investigate whether this action violated any laws or regulations. Like most cable subscribers, a high share of our residents look forward to programming on HGTV specials and The Food Network on New Year's Day.

It is clear that Cablevision executed a calculated plan that held no regard for its subscribers and that their strategy was to blame Scripps. Let me be clear - those who promoted this ill-fated plan failed in their mission. My residents are outraged at Cablevision, as I am sure the company will experience today and in the days ahead.

As a consequence of Cablevision's actions, I am requesting that the Board examine three issues:

- (1) Whether Cablevision's actions violated any laws or regulations that require adequate notice for interruption of all or part of a service. If Cablevision was not required to notify individual subscribers, was the company required to notify the Township, as the grantor of the franchise, so that the Township could have provided impartial information on its Web site?

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- (2) Whether Cablevision is required to grant subscribers credit for the loss of these channels, especially if this interruption continues for an extended period.
- (3) Whether Cablevision should have sought mediation, through the Office of Ratepayer Advocate or some other party, before taking such an extreme action as an unannounced service interruption on a holiday weekend. The BPU should immediately order the parties to work through the Ratepayer Advocate to end this impasse.

While competition for television is coming slowly to Robbinsville, technical hurdles will make Cablevision the monopoly in many parts of town for years to come. I trust you share my belief that when a cable company is given the exclusive right to provide service in a community, it has a duty to behave responsibly toward its customers. In my view, Cablevision has not fulfilled that duty and it must be called upon to explain its behavior. More disturbing is the fact that this is part of a pattern of consumer abuse that the Board must address, once and for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this most important matter and I am happy to assist you in any way and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dave Fried
Mayor

CC: Cablevision