

Talk with John Gibbons about public access. 1/17/07  
Interviewed by Lois Romanoff

Law Director of Cleve. Hts., John Gibbons is acting like he's not about to have big corporations push him or the City of Cleve. Hts., around.

Although the FCC, Federal Communications Commission, passed a Video Franchising order this past December, by a 3 to 2 vote (the majority vote, all Republicans) taking local control away from communities of PEG, public access cable TV and decreasing the franchise fees to cities, he's not worried. He said "the order" has not come out yet, but when it does NATOA, National Association of Telecommunications Officers & Advisors, will bring an injunction against the FCC. He also believes Congress will hold investigations on the issue.

AT&T recently met with Gibbons & Cleveland Heights (CH) City officials hoping to get some of the cable TV business, but was turned down because, "they wanted to cherry-pick", said Gibbons, rather than offering universal service, which would cover all residence, they wanted to offer services only in certain areas.

He said the first contract has been offered by Time-Warner to the City of CH, for cable TV services, "wasn't worth the paper it was written on", he added, "but we expected that in the first contract." He & the City will look for a fairer contract in return for their franchise agreement.

Gibbons was quoted in a front page article of the PD, 1/15/07, "AT&T planting tree-lawn boxes, irking residents:". Residents in Willowick were upset to come back from a vacation find that AT&T had built a concrete pad on their tree lawn with a cream-colored metal cabinet the size of an armoire or home-entertainment center on it. Large & small, often two & three cabinets have been built in many communities in Cleveland & elsewhere. AT&T says the cabinets will extend fiber-optic cable into neighborhoods & add video services to telephone & high-speed Internet options. On the phone Gibbons said, "We won't let boxes be put on peoples tree-lawns in Cleve. Hts.". He explains in the article, "the City can use a new right-of-way law to reject sites for cabinets. The City will need to cite reasons, such as concern about appearance or safety".

Continuing our activism to maintain local control of community media, he suggested that we be in touch with Sue Caves, Dir. Of the OH Municipal League, who also wants to maintain local control.

---