

How Metrovision is doing in neighboring community

By Marie Chesney
staff writer

In what it called an unprecedented move, MetroVision has asked to raise its fee for cable service in Livonia 6.5 percent.

The proposed rate increase comes before the first cable shows have been aired in the city and while homes are still being wired for the service, which is expected to be in operation in some homes by mid-January.

Citing increased costs from satellite suppliers, MetroVision has asked the city's cable commission to approve a 6.5 percent increase in the basic rate for Tier II subscriber services. The increase would push the service from its present \$7.75 cost to \$8.25 per month.

Tier II services include such satellite services as the entertainment and sports network (ESPN), the Weather Channel, Nickelodeon and Cable News Network.

In a Dec. 8 letter to the commission, MetroVision President Henry Harris outlined the reasons for the company's proposed rate increase.

"You may be aware that most of the basic satellite subscriber services have been and continue to be in serious financial condition," wrote Harris. "A number... have already folded."

"MetroVision does not like to raise rates. Indeed, in its history MetroVision has never changed its subscriber

rates prior to implementing service. However, these are not normal times in the CATV industry."

HARRIS' letter was reviewed by the commission at its Dec. 12 meeting. The commission asked city attorney Harry Taigian to review the city's cable contract with MetroVision to see if the increase is legal, under the city's franchise with MetroVision.

The commission recommended the city keep its present Tier II rate of

\$7.75 while the city talks with MetroVision about the proposed increase.

Taigian said "at first blush it (increase) appears they have the right to do this."

"If MetroVision receives increases from its suppliers they pass it along to the consumer," said Taigian in a telephone interview last Friday. Taigian added that he expects MetroVision to provide some verification for its request.

In his letter, Harris said all applicants for the Livonia cable franchise knew costs were going to go up and made provisions in their contracts to deal with that eventually. In Livonia, Harris said MetroVision has to give a 30-day notice of a rate increase.

Harris called "dramatic" the following satellite service increases: ESPN, from .00 per month to .12 per month; Cable News Network and Headline News, .04 per month to .15; MTV, .00 to .10; C-Span, .01 to .03; Weather Channel, .00 to .05; Nickelodeon, .00 to .10; USA Network, .00 to .07; and ARTS, .00 to .08 per month.

HE SAID the increases added up to a .63 per month collective increase for the above services.

Harris said he wanted subscribers to know now that the increases are coming, rather than wait until the system is operating before telling them.

"We feel the fairest thing to the community, its citizens and the company is to establish a realistic subscriber rate at the start of the service," he wrote. "Then citizens can make their decision accordingly as to whether or not they will be cable subscribers, rather than selling subscribers at one rate and then having to increase rates shortly thereafter."

Medical Society seeks rate increase for drunks

Drinking drivers should expect to be penalized through paying higher insurance rates says the Michigan State Medical Society (MSMS).

"We think it is appropriate to remind Michigan drivers during this holiday

time of the year that drinking and driving are a very dangerous combination," said Dr. Donald K. Crandall, Muskegon, MSMS President.

Crandall notes that the MSMS, at its last house of delegates meeting, adopted

a resolution supporting the current practice of most insurance companies writing automobile insurance in Michigan to charge higher insurance rates for persons arrested and convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol.

"If a company is not charging a higher premium for such drivers, it should be doing so," Crandall said. "As physicians, we too often see the end result of drinking and driving in our hospital emergency rooms and in the pain, suffering and agony of shattered lives."

practice of charging higher premiums for persons convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol and the overwhelming support of our house of delegates for the position confirms that feeling," Crandall said.

The house of delegates is a policy-making body of the MSMS and consists of nearly 25 physicians representing every specialty and geographic area of the State.

The MSMS is sending a letter outlining the policy position to all insurance underwriters writing auto insurance in Michigan.

Public invited to cable meet

Residents in the tri-city cable TV franchise area who would like to be involved in public access channels and programming are invited to attend the first meeting of the newly-organized public access advisory committee at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10.

communities, said Lark Samouelian, executive director of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission.

"The cable access committee is branching out," she added.

The meeting's purpose, Samouelian said, is to allow anyone to serve on the committee as well as to "share programming ideas and resources regarding public access channels and programs."

The meeting will be in conference room A, Farmington City Hall, 23600 Liberty.

The new 12-member committee is a subsidiary of the larger cable access

"Anyone interested in programming is welcome," she said.

Nature scenes are interpreted

Cold, clear January nights provide a perfect opportunity to view winter star constellations.

In case of overcast skies, there will be an indoor slide presentation.

During Stars and Snow, a nature interpretive program at Independence Oaks County Park on Jan. 6, star gazers of all ages should have a good chance to view Orion the Hunter, the Seven Sisters of Pleiades and other winter constellations.

The program is scheduled for 7:30-9 p.m. Pre-registration is required. Participants should dress for the weather and meet at the Boat Rental Building.

A parks naturalist will guide participants through a 45 to 60-minute walk to share the beauty of the glittering starlight cast upon a silent, snow-blanketed forest.

Cost for the program is the park entry fee of 50 cents per car for Oakland County residents, \$4 for non-residents.

Independence Oaks is located on Sashabaw Road, 2 1/2 miles north of Interstate 75 near Clarkston. For more information, call 858-0903.

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