

# Cable Comments

By LARK L. SAMOUELIAN  
Executive Director,  
SW Oakland Cable Comm.



As the world is changing and we feel more involved, new personal pressures and expecta-

tions arise on the homefront. Without realizing it we are attuned to the moment by moment happenings as result of cable technology. Throughout the next few years we will have increased opportunities to understand and learn about people, places, philosophies and things as never before, just by turning on our t.v.

Locally and throughout the Metropolitan Area of Detroit the Cable Systems are in the process of reinforcing and enhancing the designs to insure that they are able to meet the needs that new technologies place upon them.

The Congress and Federal Communications Commission are gearing up to prepare guidelines as they pertain to Mass Communications. Such discussions are ranging from global expectations to local commitments. Local Cable Contracts will be directly affected by legislation and rules imposed. Subjects which are being discussed are: Technical Standards, definition for Effective Competition, and Standards for Rate Regulation.

Technical Standards have changed so drastically because of the new technologies that each cable company has exceeded the FCC Standards from an Engineering perspective because they need to have a clear and strong signal in order to sell cable.

Effective Competition as it pertains to a cable system currently considers 3 Broadcast Signals in the Cable Viewing Area to be sufficient competition. The new definition considerations require another independently owned multichannel video delivery system available

to fifty percent of the households passed by the existing cable system; six unduplicated over-the-air broadcast television signals are available and penetration rate of the existing cable system is below 50 percent, or that the cable operator offers a basic service tier at a rate comparable to that offered in other communities where competition is readily available and certifies each year that a set of customer service standards have been satisfied. FCC has issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to encourage comments and create a definition which will accurately reflect the nature of competition.

Standards for Rate Regulation will determine under what conditions a franchising authority may regulate rates of a cable system. Some characteristics to be reviewed include, how much of the cable service may be regulated, and which cable systems must be scrutinized.

Once the FCC determines the final definitions and the Congress determines who may play, then all must be assured that the playing field is level so that the business marketplace will thrive.

The local franchise contracts will reflect such judicial changes and legislative changes so that the Consumer will be able to receive the best services at a reasonable price.

This year in the 102nd Congress all Cable Administrators and interested industry parties continue to learn more about one another. Locally, Cable Committees and Commissions are opening up their ears to be sure that they know what telecommunication options would best serve their communities.

In Farmington, Novi and Farmington Hills, Cable Advisory Committees have been active since 1983. A cooperative venture between residents, the Cable System and local govern-

ments has always prevailed. The governing body overseeing the cable franchise is the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission. The citizen committee is appointed by the respective Mayors. Currently serving are Chairman Mark Adler, Carol Bauer, Larry Bohner, Terry Dean, Dr. David Dodge, Pat Isham, Jeanne Lanning, Jim Mitchell and Wayne Wrobel.

Plymouth has just activated their citizen committee on Cable. The City commission representatives are John Vas III and Paul Sincok. Residents newly appointed are Candace MacGillivray and myself Lark Samouelian. The Contract with Omnicom will begin its 36 month renewal process beginning in July 1991.

Canton Township has an active committee which meets weekly to review consumer complaints. The members of this committee are Board of Trustee representative Phil Ladov, residents Jim Konberg, Hal Winter, Bill Simmerer and Dan Baldria. They have just hired Cable Consultant, Muncie of New York to review the franchise contract.

From my perspective, information gathering and conversations between all parties involved within the cable industry, government, and serviced residents are very important to establishing realistic community services via telecommunications. We have all learned that promises and wishes do not always pan out to be realistic for daily needs. Fortunately these communities are taking a progressive approach as everyone comes to the table having made the decision to be an active and not passive player in communications.

Clarification: Lenora K. Jordan P.E., is General Manager of the Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County.