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OLD FORGE BOROUGH COUNCIL  
OLD FORGE, PENNSYLVANIA

IN RE: PUBLIC MEETING

FEBRUARY 6, 2024

7:00 P.M.

OLD FORGE MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
314 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
OLD FORGE, PENNSYLVANIA

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- RUSSELL RINALDI, PRESIDENT
- JAMES HOOVER
- ANDREW BUTLER
- MICHAEL KOMENSKI
- JENNA JONES-SHOTWELL
- WILLIAM RINALDI, ESQUIRE, SOLICITOR

Mark Wozniak  
Official Court Reporter

1 (The Pledge of Allegiance was  
2 recited.)

3 MR. RUSSELL RINALDI: Good evening,  
4 everyone. I'd like to call the public  
5 hearing to order. At this time the chair is  
6 going to entertain a motion to open up the  
7 public hearing.

8 MR. KOMENSKI: I'll make that  
9 motion.

10 MR. RUSSELL RINALDI: By Councilman  
11 Komenski. All in favor?

12 (Unanimous.)

13 MR. RUSSELL RINALDI: Roll call,  
14 please, Marylynn.

15 MS. BARTOLETTI: Councilwoman  
16 Shotwell?

17 MS. SHOTWELL: Yes.

18 MS. BARTOLETTI: Councilman  
19 Komenski?

20 MR. KOMENSKY: Yes.

21 MS. BARTOLETTI: Councilman Notari  
22 is absent. Councilman Butler?

23 MR. BUTLER: Yes.

24 MS. BARTOLETTI: Councilwoman  
25 Avvisato is absent. Councilman Hoover?

1 MR. HOOVER: Yes.

2 MS. BARTOLETTI: Councilman Rinaldi?

3 MR. RUSSELL RINALDI: Yes. Once  
4 again, good evening, ladies and gentlemen.  
5 Welcome to the Old Forge public hearing.  
6 Tonight is Tuesday, February 6, 2024. The  
7 purpose of the public hearing is to hear a  
8 request from a cable franchise company  
9 called Astound. I'm going to read you a  
10 section of passage so you have a little bit  
11 of understanding of what the public hearing  
12 is about. After the passage, anyone from  
13 the public, if you have any questions for us  
14 about the new company you'll be able to ask.

15 "A public hearing of the Old Forge  
16 Borough with regards to a cable franchise  
17 request with RCN Telecom Services of Lehigh,  
18 LLC, Astound, which is being held pursuant  
19 to section 626 of the Federal Cable Act  
20 which sets forth the process for cable  
21 franchise renewal. Astound is requesting a  
22 cable franchise agreement with the Old Forge  
23 Borough.

24 The public hearing is to inform the  
25 public. As such, we invite comments from

1 citizens who would speak regarding either or  
2 both of these subjects."

3 If there are any Astound  
4 representatives in attendance, which there  
5 are not, we'll introduce them to say they're  
6 available to answer any questions. If you  
7 guys have any questions we'll answer it or  
8 our solicitor will answer it for you.

9 "These benefits include, but are not  
10 limited to the following: State of the art  
11 cable systems, strong customer service  
12 standards, service to community facilities,  
13 better reporting from cable operators,  
14 privacy of personal information under  
15 federal law, franchise fees for the use of  
16 public right-of-ways, franchise fee  
17 accountability, legal protections of the  
18 right-of-way, educational and governmental  
19 channels, and better mechanisms to enforce  
20 the franchise agreement. These are just  
21 some of the potential benefits available  
22 through the agreement."

23 At this time if anyone from the  
24 public has any questions for us about the  
25 new cable company or for us to listen to

1 we'll take them.

2 Bill, before we go down the table  
3 for a motion --

4 ATTY. RINALDI: This is a public  
5 hearing.

6 MR. RUSSELL RINALDI: Before we go  
7 down the table -- I know we'll adjourn the  
8 public hearing first. Is there anything  
9 else we would need from Astound? We have  
10 their agreement. I know there's no  
11 representatives from them here.

12 ATTY. RINALDI: They initially came  
13 and they presented us -- the idea is their  
14 rates -- it's going to create competition  
15 with Comcast, so hopefully even the Comcast  
16 rates will come down because Astound is  
17 offering it at a lower rate. We had our law  
18 firm that reviews our cable contract every  
19 five years -- I think it's up in two  
20 years -- review it to make sure it was  
21 consistent with what we have with Comcast in  
22 terms of service and reporting and quality  
23 of work when they do the work, the ability  
24 to communicate with council, and that we get  
25 certain items from them like a station for

1 the borough, web service, things like that.  
2 Financially they don't pay as much as  
3 Comcast because they're not as big of a  
4 company, but they do give us an initial fee  
5 to sign up.

6 So with that being said, after back  
7 and forth between Astound and the borough's  
8 attorneys we came to an agreement, and we  
9 got everything that the borough wanted that  
10 benefits the borough and the citizens of the  
11 borough, more importantly, and protects the  
12 borough so that we can make sure the  
13 residents are getting charged a reasonable  
14 amount. We're getting the franchise fee,  
15 they're protecting us for using our  
16 right-of-ways after we give them permission,  
17 and I think that's pretty much all involved.

18 MS. NASE: Miranda Nase. How long  
19 is the agreement for?

20 ATTY. RINALDI: It is for ten years,  
21 which is the same as Comcast because they're  
22 wiring the whole borough.

23 MS. NASE: Comcast is up in two  
24 years?

25 ATTY. RINALDI: Comcast, I believe,

1 is up in two years, 2025. The borough is  
2 part of -- it's called the Abington COG,  
3 Council of Governments, and it's us,  
4 Waverly, Clarks Summit, Clarks Green, Newton  
5 Ransom. So that's a group negotiation for  
6 everybody and they split the legal fees,  
7 whereas Astound doesn't operate in those  
8 areas. So we had to rely on our own  
9 council, which is the same council that does  
10 the COG.

11 So that will be coming up, it's two  
12 years. So the same thing. A public  
13 hearing, negotiation to make sure the  
14 borough gets everything protected. And it's  
15 all in accordance with federal law, FCC  
16 laws, for the most part, the requirements  
17 that they have to follow.

18 MR. RUSSELL RINALDI: Any other  
19 questions? Bill, anything else for us?

20 ATTY. RINALDI: No, that's it.

21 MR. RUSSELL RINALDI: Anyone at the  
22 table have any questions? At this time the  
23 chair is going to entertain a motion to  
24 close the public hearing.

25 MS. SHOTWELL: I'll make that

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motion.

MR. RUSSELL RINALDI: Motion by  
Councilwoman Jones-Shotwell. All in favor?

(Unanimous. Hearing adjourned.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that I attended the foregoing proceeding, took stenographic notes of the same, that the foregoing, consisting of 8 pages, is a true and correct copy, done to the best of my ability, of same and the whole thereof.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Wozniak  
Official Court Reporter