

April 10, 2019, 8:00

Testimony: LD 1371 by Leif Erik Dahlin, Director of Community services, City of Augusta

Good morning members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee. I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support on LD 1371 "An Act To Ensure Nondiscriminatory Treatment of Public"

My name is Leif Dahlin. I am the Director of Community Services for the City of Augusta. For the past 18 years I am responsible for oversight of the City's Cable TV Franchise. I am also responsible for contract management and operation of our PEG channel CTV-7 that used to be on Channel 7. As compared to the two previous cable providers that I had the pleasure to work with, it is tragic what has happened to the working relationship with the current cable TV provider Spectrum.

One of Augusta's goals is to ensure Government Transparency. To that end, the City of Augusta invested in upgrading our cablecast facilities including HD. We televise all City Council, School Board, Planning Board and the Greater Augusta Utility District meetings along with a host of other community based programs. The City continues to expand our capability to do much more with meetings and governmental transparency.

Moving CTV-7 from Channel 7 to 1301 on the dial is a MAJOR threat to maintaining our transparency. Channel 1301 is hard for folks to find or not available for a lot of folks without additional expense. I have heard from folks who oppose what Spectrum has done. When the dictated shift from Channel 7 to Channel 1301 was made, the rationale and justification that was explained to the PEG community by Spectrum quite simply made no sense and discriminates against PEG channels. That I am aware of, PEG channels are the only stations affected by this unilateral decision. Spectrum's action and decision made by an out of state company is at the expense of; community, transparency and customer service.

The City of Augusta has worked diligently with some incredible professionals to provide a great local PEG channel. Spectrum is taking this away from us and has relegated our CTV-7 to a place on the dial folks struggle to find. We are CTV-7, NOT CTV-1301. As the saying goes "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". With the discriminatory move by Spectrum, it is now broken. Please help us fix it

With near 18 years of experience working with three cable TV companies, I am so very disappointed with the direction Spectrum has taken. If allowed to continue down this path I fear for the future of OUR local PEG channels. I urge you to bring LD 1371 out of committee and move forward with recommendation for passage. Thank you