

MT. HOOD CABLE REGULATORY COMMISSION

Annual Report
2014-15



- CITY OF PORTLAND
- CITY OF FAIRVIEW
- CITY OF GRESHAM
- CITY OF TROUTDALE
- CITY OF WOOD VILLAGE
- MULTNOMAH COUNTY

Who we are

For the past 21 years, the **MT. HOOD CABLE REGULATORY COMMISSION (MHCRC)** has

ensured that communities in Multnomah County and the cities of Fairview, Gresham, Portland, Troutdale and Wood Village are fairly compensated for use of the public rights-of-way by cable companies. These jurisdictions recognize the efficiencies – both for the companies and for taxpayers – of having a single commission regulate companies county-wide as the network infrastructure and services transcend jurisdictional boundaries. In addition, the MHCRC manages and negotiates many public benefits that support schools, public libraries and non-profit organizations, whose services and constituencies crisscross the cities and County. ■ Each City Council and the County Commission appoints representatives to the MHCRC. These eight commissioners, with staff support, commit hundreds of hours annually to deeply understand complex issues in an ever-evolving technology, regulatory and business-model landscape. Although this evolving landscape is disruptive in some respects, many community needs remain unchanged – Needs for local authority over rights-of-way and compensation; a consumer watchdog; platforms for community voices; affordable broadband networks for schools, libraries and local governments; and local solutions for addressing digital equity issues. ■ The MHCRC consistently focuses on community needs as it keeps one foot firmly planted in today's legal landscape to steward existing public benefits, while stepping out to explore possibilities and opportunities on behalf of the cities, County and communities it serves.

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Carol Studenmund
Commission Chair

Mike Bennett

Sue Dicile

Toya Fick

Rich Goheen

Leif Hansen

Scott Harden

Norman Thomas

STAFF

Mary Beth Henry
Staff Director

Julie S. Omelchuck
Program Manager

Rebecca Gibbons
Program Coordinator

Joshua Eddings
Compliance Assistant

Kim Whelan
Assistant Program Specialist

Through MetroEast's Get Reel youth program, Gresham High School students learned media and digital literacy skills by producing an anti-bullying video (right).



THE MHCRC REGULATES AND NEGOTIATES CABLE FRANCHISES WITH FOUR COMPANIES:

- Frontier** Franchise expiration 2018
- Reliance Connects** Franchise expiration 2018
- Comcast** Franchise expiration 2021
- Century Link** Franchise expiration 2021

What We Do

- Advocate for and protect local authority and public benefits in the regulation of cable communications systems.
- Ensure communities are compensated for cable companies' use of the public rights-of-way.
- Help resolve cable subscriber complaints and provide consumer protection.
- Provide technology grants and broadband connectivity for community institutions and non-profits.
- Ensure a local voice through community media.

By the numbers

\$5.1
MILLION

Amount collected to support community grants, I-Net and community media

218

Number of subscriber complaints resolved by MHCRC

1043

local residents trained in media and digital literacy by PCM and MetroEast

2014-15 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



MHCRC commissioners and staff celebrated the launch of the TechSmart Initiative for Student Success in Fall 2015.

MHCRC Keeps Focus on Local Needs

“OUR COMMUNITIES HAVE WITNESSED A TREMENDOUS TRANSFORMATION IN THE WAYS TECHNOLOGY IMPACTS ALL FACETS OF OUR LIVES - FROM EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL PRIVACY. AS APPOINTED COMMISSIONERS, WE STRIVE TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITIES BY LEVERAGING THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT TO BENEFIT OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MHCRC’S WORK OVER FISCAL YEAR 2014-15.”

Carol Studenmund
Chair

Efficient Operations The MHCRC contracts with the City of Portland for staff and other support services through the Office for Community Technology. About 4% of total cable franchise fee revenue collected was spent for MHCRC operations. The MHCRC funded an equivalent of four staff positions plus related materials, services, financial and administrative costs. About half the MHCRC’s operations funding was provided by the member Jurisdictions and half was funded by other MHCRC resources. The MHCRC underspent its operations budget by nearly \$32,000 in FY13-14, which will be credited to the jurisdictions’ budget appropriations in FY15-16.

“Clean” Audit of the MHCRC Fund Moss Adams, the MHCRC’s auditor, found that the MHCRC’s FY13-14 financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the MHCRC’s fund. In accordance with GAAP, both MetroEast Community Media and Portland Community Media are considered “component units” in the MHCRC’s financial statements. The MHCRC filed its annual audit with the Oregon Secretary of State on time.

Consumer Protection The MHCRC enforces consumer protection and customer service standards under the cable franchises. Regulatory issues included phone answering standards, information on subscriber bills, service installation, line extensions, notice to subscribers of programming changes, use of electronic messaging to subscribers, service rates and fees (i.e. broadcast TV fee, HD technology fee), and other consumer protection issues. In 2014, the MHCRC assisted in the resolution of 218 complaints.

Cable Competition for Portland Residents While the cities surrounding Portland have had cable TV competition since 2008, no cable competition existed for Portland residents. However, in March 2015, the MHCRC concluded negotiations with CenturyLink, a primary phone provider in Portland, for a renewal cable franchise, with a promise of cable TV service launch in 2015. The MHCRC was vigilant in ensuring that the public benefits of the CenturyLink agreement were commensurate to those in Comcast’s franchise.

Protect Local Authority and Compensation As the regulatory and public policy landscape changes, the MHCRC continued its strategic focus on advocacy in the public interest. The MHCRC kept abreast of the uptick in public policy activity on both local and federal levels. The MHCRC tracked or participated in FCC proceedings including the Comcast-Time Warner merger, Net Neutrality, Multi-Channel Video Program Distributors (aka Over the Top video providers that use the broadband connection to the home to deliver video) and Municipal Broadband Authority. The MHCRC has also continued its advocacy for the protection of local community media resources in federal legislation. Locally, the MHCRC worked to protect local authority for use of public right-of-way and taxing authority with Oregon’s Congressional delegation as well as State Legislators.

Affordable Broadband for Schools, Libraries and Local Governments The MHCRC facilitates partnerships and network planning, and distributes funds to provide affordable broadband connections for 293 schools, libraries and public agencies throughout Multnomah County over the Institutional Network (I-Net). In 2014, the

I-Net stakeholder group consisted of: the cities of Portland, Gresham, Troutdale and Wood Village, Multnomah County, State of Oregon, Metro, Housing Authority of Portland, Multnomah County Libraries, Multnomah Educational Service District (including 7 school districts), Portland Public Schools, and Mt Hood Community College.

The MHCRC led two meetings of these public stakeholders during FY14-15. The stakeholder group identified their infrastructure and service needs for use of I-Net funds. More importantly, the group began discussing a planning framework to collectively provide for their bandwidth and connectivity needs in the future. The group recognized that long-term planning is essential to ensure our public institutions, and the people who rely on them, can continue to access affordable bandwidth and technology tools.

Local Voices and Content through MetroEast & PCM The MHCRC manages contracts with MetroEast Community Media and Portland Community Media, non-profit organizations that facilitate use of technology and communications resources by the community in order to promote broad participation in civic and cultural life. These non-profits provide direct services to a diverse group of individuals, non-profits, community organizations and government agencies. The MHCRC ensured that public dollars and dedicated capital funds provided to the centers were spent in accordance with the contracts and with restrictions placed on certain funds in cable franchise agreements. The MHCRC also facilitated provision of franchise-required obligations by cable companies that support local programming, such as listings in program guides and free video-on-demand programs.

By the numbers

\$8.6
MILLION

Amount collected in cable franchise fees for MHCRC member jurisdictions

4%

Percentage of cable franchise fees spent for MHCRC operations

293

Number of public agency sites served by the I-Net

MHCRC COMMUNITY GRANTS



Projects to Advance Education and Community-Based Technology

Teachers at Earl Boyles Elementary School use iPad technology, purchased by a MHCRC grant, to individualize learning to meet each student's needs.

THE MHCRC DIRECTS THE COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM, WHICH PROVIDES FUNDS FOR TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THROUGHOUT MULTNOMAH COUNTY. THE MHCRC OVERSAW IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE FOR ABOUT 28 GRANT-FUNDED PROJECTS DURING THE YEAR. IN 2014, THE PROGRAM GRANTED OVER \$2 MILLION FOR 10 NEW COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS THAT WILL LEVERAGE OVER \$4.1 MILLION IN MATCHING RESOURCES. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM INCLUDE THE TECHSMART INITIATIVE AND COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY GRANTS. ■ FUNDS FOR COMMUNITY GRANTS DERIVE FROM THE CABLE FRANCHISES NEGOTIATED BY THE MHCRC. CURRENTLY COMCAST, FRONTIER AND RELIANCE CONNECTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY GRANTS FUND.



2014 Community Technology Grant Awards

Community Technology Grants are available to non-profit organizations, libraries, higher education and public agencies through an annual competitive grant round.

- Rockwood Library** Innovation Station: \$300,404
- Albertina Kerr Centers** Transforming Service Delivery: \$110,863
- Film Action Oregon** Hollywood Theatre Studio at Open Meadow: \$100,000
- Southwest Neighborhoods** Engage, Involve, Inform Southwest Neighbors Project: \$9,500
- Friends of the Children** Media Literacy Project: \$49,540
- NW Documentary** DIY Documentary Project: \$51,743
- Portland YouthBuilders (PYB)** Youth Media Project: \$51,753
- International Foundation for Alternative Research in AIDS (IFARA)** Health Challenge Project: \$77,945

TechSmart Initiative for Student Success – \$19 million over 10 Years

In Fall 2014, the MHCRC was pleased to launch the TechSmart Initiative for Student Success with plans to strategically invest about \$19 million over the next 10 years in local public schools to positively impact academic outcomes for all students in Multnomah County.

The MHCRC TechSmart Initiative provides grants and evaluation resources for Multnomah County school districts to identify effective classroom instruction that uses technology to foster improvement in academic outcomes for all students and to share the successful strategies across the Districts. The TechSmart Initiative is aligned with the collective effort of the broader community engaged in the All Hands Raised Partnership. The MHCRC is partnering

with the Districts to close the achievement gap and make progress on the following academic outcomes key to student success:

- Kindergarten Readiness
- Third Grade Reading
- Eighth Grade Math
- Ninth Grade Credit Attainment
- High School Graduation
- English Language Learners' Annual Progress

The MHCRC has focused about two-thirds of its annual Community Grants fund revenues for the TechSmart Initiative with plans to invest \$8 million in the first three years of the initiative.

DAVID DOUGLAS SCHOOL DISTRICT AND PARKROSE SCHOOL DISTRICT WERE THE FIRST DISTRICTS TO RECEIVE TECHSMART INITIATIVE FUNDING THIS FALL.

■ Earl Boyles Early Learning Technology Integration Project

David Douglas School District: \$939,923

Focused on Kindergarten Readiness and Third Grade Reading, the TechSmart grant provides critical teacher supports towards creating a technology-rich early learning program at Earl Boyles Elementary School. Earl Boyles has one of the highest child poverty rates in the County. The project serves as a learning lab for identifying effective PreK-3rd grade learning and teaching strategies that take full advantage of interactivity and media-rich opportunities.

■ 1 to 1 iPads at Parkrose High School

Parkrose School District: \$363,796

The TechSmart grant investment supports Parkrose School District efforts to improve 9th Grade credit attainment, English Language Learners' progress and High School graduation rates. Parkrose High School began providing iPads to all students this Fall, along with providing extensive teacher training to take advantage of technology to create effective learning environments for all students. A robust wireless network will provide access to the Internet throughout the outside areas of the High School campus so that students without access at home can remain connected after school buildings officially close.

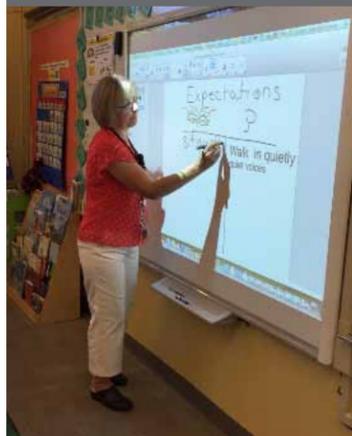
By the numbers

\$2 MILLION

Granted to support new community-based projects

\$4.1 MILLION

Amount leveraged by MHCRC grants in matching resources





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Cover photo, left: Christopher Harley