

**Rules Committee  
Town Hall Council Chambers  
October 2, 2023, 7:00 p.m.**

Present: Pasquale Burga, Chairperson  
Michael Molisse, Vice-Chairperson  
Kenneth DiFazio  
Arthur Mathews  
Christopher Heffernan

Also Present: Mary Heinrichs-WETC  
Jeff Cummings-WETC

Recording Secretary: Janet P. Murray

**Instituting ZOOM/WETC Filming of Town Council Committee meetings**

Chair Burga called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She stated that a measure was submitted to the Mayor's Office for additional funding for technology and costs associated with laptops or video conferencing technology; however, the committee has not heard back on that as of yet.

President Mathews stated that in preparation of last year's budget season, he had submitted to the Mayor a request to obtain laptops for the Councilors. He pointed out that he had submitted the request because if Councilors wanted to participate in Zoom Town Council meetings, they will need that additional technology.

Chair Burga stated that this would be an important part of Councilors being able to hold Zoom or similar type broadcasts, as it would provide the technology that would be needed for committee chairs to moderate their meetings. Without that technology, she stated being able to broadcast, webcast or stream the meetings is not possible.

Chair Burga stated that there has been conversations in the past with WETC and they are present tonight to speak to the committee about the technology that is used and their obligations under the contract with the town.

Jeff Cummings and Mary Heinrichs from WETC appeared before the committee.

Mr. Cummings summarized WETC's obligation and the contract with the town. With the current contract, WETC only covers Town Council and School Committee meetings. However, he pointed out that for approximately the past 10-15 years they have been covering Board of Licensing Commissioner Meetings. He added that during Mayor Hedlund's administration, coverage has increased to include the Board of Zoning Appeals, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and many of the neighborhood

type meetings. He noted that WETC is not actually contracted to cover those meetings but through the Mayor, who is the requesting authority, WETC covers these meetings but added that the coverage is subject to the availability of WETC staff.

Mr. Cummings noted that WETC receives a percentage of subscribers cable subscriptions to fund WETC. He stated that many people no longer subscribe to cable. He continued that their staff has been reduced from seven to four full-time employees to run both TV stations. He expressed concern that if WETC begins covering committee meetings, they will run into staffing problems. He noted that in order not to set a precedent they are only taking requests from the Mayor who is the requesting authority, as per the contract.

President Mathews clarified that it is Comcast whose subscriptions are down; WETC is a separate nonprofit entity with funding tied directly to Comcast through the town's cable contract.

Ms. Heinrichs stated that they are a nonprofit, with a Board of Directors and do not have a relationship with Comcast other than the quarterly funding that is received. She pointed out that WETC staffs all of Weymouth's covered meetings. She noted that other towns do not have this. She added that WETC is very proud of their reliability, and technology.

President Mathews stated that the proponent of this request, Councilor Belmarsh, is unavailable this evening due to a work commitment.

Chair Burga stated that WETC does a phenomenal job with the programming and the quality of the recordings. She questioned who owns the equipment in the Council Chambers: the microphones and cameras.

Mr. Cummings stated that WETC owns all of the equipment. As a courtesy, the town is allowed to use the equipment when WETC is not also recording meetings.

Chair Burga clarified that the town is not allowed to use the streaming equipment to do live broadcasting.

Mr. Cummings stated that this is correct. The town can only broadcast if there is a WETC staff member present. They have given access to the Town Council to use the microphones in the room; that is completely separate from recording, broadcasting, and streaming.

Councilor Molisse stated that when President Matthews submitted the request to the Mayor's office for funding for laptops and additional technology, it did not come through because there were questions about the recording and manpower costs.

Chair Burga questioned how many people virtually attend Town Council meetings and other meetings.

Mr. Cummings stated that there are four ways for people to watch on WETC: on Zoom, on television, on the website live-stream, or on demand after the meeting. He agreed that the number of people present on the Zoom meetings has gone down drastically.

Chair Burga stated that contrary to popular belief, other communities do not broadcast all of their committee meetings. Most towns do many of them, but not all of them, and many of the recordings are of poor quality; it might be a person holding a phone or a camera set up-- but is unattended.

Chair Burga pointed out that Weymouth's Town Hall is handicap accessible with an elevator so individuals with handicap issues are able to attend the meetings in person.

Chair Burga asked about community members becoming certified and if they could then be able to record a meeting and put it on the web.

Mr. Cummings stated that Weymouth's public access station, Channel 9, trains community members to use equipment such as video cameras and recording microphones. The training is free if you are a resident of Weymouth or part of a nonprofit organization. He stated that this is an option for meeting coverage.

Chair Burga thanked Mr. Cummings and Ms. Heinrichs for appearing before the Rules Committee and explaining what their role is for the town.

Chair Burga stated that it does not seem feasible to have virtual meetings based on the lack of technology and requiring Councilors to moderate these meetings. She added that there could be discussion in the future.

President Mathews suggested that this remains in committee as the proponent was not available tonight and may want to bring it up at a future meeting.

Councilor Burga agreed that this was a good point; however, she noted her only reservation was that, seeing the obstacles, she did not see other options.

President Mathews stated that leaving this in committee would give the proponent the chance if she would like to speak; then the discussion would be in the Rules Committee.

Chair Burga noted that as per rule 57, the Town Council Rules are to be reviewed and adopted within 120 days after the first Council meeting of next year.

At 7:30 p.m., there being no further business, President Mathews made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Councilor DiFazio. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Janet P. Murray as Recording Secretary

Approved by Pascale Burga as Chair of the Rules Committee  
Voted favorably on 13 November 2023