

CHARTER and By-Laws

Section 1: The Stafford County Telecommunications Commission is an advisory group to the Board of Supervisors. The commission promotes and encourages compliance with the franchise agreements among the cable companies operating within Stafford County, reviews and advises the Board on cable service, telecommunications, broadband (both wireline and wireless) and local infrastructure issues, and promotes local community programming to keep citizens informed.

Section 2: Definitions

Broadband refers to advanced communications systems capable of providing high-speed transmission of services such as data, voice, and video over the Internet and other networks. Transmission is provided by a wide range of technologies, including digital subscriber line and fiber optic cable, coaxial cable, wireless technology, and satellite.

"Cable service" means (A) the one-way transmission to subscribers of (i) video programming, or (ii) other programming service, and (B) subscriber interaction, if any, which is required for the selection or use of such video programming or other programming service.

"Commission" shall mean the Telecommunications Commission.

Telecommunications means the transmission, between or among points specified by the user, of information of the user's choosing (e.g., data, video, and voice), without change in the form or content of the information sent and received.

Section 3: Composition of the Commission

The commission shall consist of seven voting members appointed by the Board of Supervisors representing each of Stafford's seven election districts. In addition, the County school system shall have a non-voting member. The County government shall also have three non-voting members, two from the County Administrator's Office and one from the Information Technology Office. The commission shall have the ability to increase the number of non-voting members as warranted.

Section 4: Terms of Members

Each voting member appointed by the Board of Supervisors shall be appointed to a one-year term that expires on December 31.

Section 5: Officers

The voting members of the commission shall elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson from the voting members each year at the January meeting. One of the County government representatives shall serve as the commission secretary.

Duties of the Officers:

Chairperson – It shall be the responsibility of the chairperson to preside over all meetings of the commission.

1. The chairperson may from time to time make appointments to subcommittees
2. The chairperson may call special meetings of the commission
3. The chairperson may vote on all issues pending before the committee
4. The chairperson may make motions
5. The chairperson shall preserve order and decorum

Vice-Chairperson – the vice-chairperson shall preside over all meetings in the absence of the chairperson. In addition, the vice-chairperson may preside at any time the chairperson requests that he/she preside. The vice-chairperson shall have the same powers as the chairperson when presiding over meetings.

Secretary – The secretary shall be responsible for maintaining attendance records and minutes of the commission’s meetings. The secretary shall ensure that notice of all meetings is sent to commission members.

Section 6: Purposes and Duties of the Commission:

- Advise and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on all telecommunication and cable service issues.
- Review and consider subscriber complaints regarding grantee services and operations; assist in resolving disputes regarding the conduct and performance of the grantee in accordance with all applicable cable service, telecommunications and broadband requirements in the local code and/or licenses, contracts or franchises granted by the County.
- Monitor the activities and operation of franchise grantees to ascertain compliance with the requirements of the franchise; meet with representatives of the grantee as necessary to resolve problems and facilitate cable operations consistent with franchise requirements.
- Advise the Board with regards to proposed rate changes for cable services.
- Assist the Board in the establishment of new cable franchises and cable franchise renewals.
- Provide advice and make recommendations to the Board pertaining to open video systems (as defined in federal law), broadband (wireline or wireless), Wi-Max, Wi-Fi and new telecommunication technologies and opportunities for use by residents and businesses in Stafford County.
- Identify new emerging technologies that merit further review.
- Provide advice and recommendations to the Board, if required, regarding cellular communications tower placement and other telecommunications infrastructure issues.
- Provide advice and recommendations to the County on use of public rights-of-way by communications providers.
- Investigate and support opportunities for expanded public wireless access in County facilities and venues. Provide advice and recommendations to the Board on providing and encouraging Internet and other broadband services to underserved areas of the County.
- Assist the Board by providing the oversight function for the operation of the local PEG channel.
- Recommend ways and means for promoting and utilizing the cable television system to further the objective of increased public participation and awareness of local government activities and events of regional significance.
- Keep the Board apprised of changes in FCC regulations and other statutes affecting the cable ordinance and cable systems.

Section 7: Meetings:

The commission should have regularly scheduled monthly meetings. The chairperson may call special meetings as required. Notice of special meetings shall be provided to all commission members by the secretary. All meetings will be open to the public. The commission may go into closed meeting in accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Sections 2.2-3711 and 3712 Va Code Ann.) upon a majority vote by the members in attendance. All votes will be taken in open session.

The proceedings of the commission shall be governed by Robert’s Rules of Order. At any meeting a majority of the voting members shall constitute a quorum. All questions submitted to the commission for decision shall be determined by voice vote unless the chairperson requests a vote or by a show of hands. Members abstaining shall state their reason(s) for abstaining for the record. Minutes from each meeting shall be submitted to the Board of Supervisors in a timely manner by the Secretary.