

The History of Newington Community Television, Inc.

Since the inception of the cable industry in Connecticut, the state has been divided into 24 cable franchise areas and, prior to 2007, cable companies were authorized to distribute their services in those areas pursuant to franchise agreements approved by the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC). In 2007, this system was dramatically changed by Public Act 07-253, which was designed to encourage competition by eliminating franchise agreements and many of the requirements necessary for their approval and substituting certificates of authorization that could be issued with minimal red tape. The DPUC has now been replaced by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA).

Newington is one of the six towns included in the Cox Communications Manchester franchise area, the other five being Glastonbury, Manchester, Rocky Hill, South Windsor and Wethersfield. In 1984, Cox provided one local community access channel (Channel 32) to serve the Towns of Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield and the three Towns entered into an interlocal agreement to share the operation of this channel. The interlocal agreement was approved by the Newington Town Council at its meeting on April 24, 1984 and the agreement was signed by the three Towns on May 15, 1984. The agreement established a nine-member interlocal commission called the Tri-Town Community Cable Access Committee, composed of three representatives appointed by each Town. The community access programming on this channel could be viewed in all three Towns and each of the Towns was authorized to operate the channel for two days during each week, with all three participating on the seventh day. At that time (1984), there were active local operating groups in Rocky Hill and Wethersfield, but not in Newington.

In 1986, Everett Weaver and Edward Pizzella were appointed as two of Newington's representatives on this Committee and became active participants in its functions. Their work on the Committee aroused in them a profound interest in community access telecasting and on June 23, 1986 Pizzella and Weaver joined with former Newington Mayor Joseph P. Doyle, to form the nonprofit corporation known as Newington Community Television, Inc. (NCTV). The legal work was donated by Pizzella, a local attorney, and the first meeting of incorporators was held in Weaver's living room on that date. The original officers and directors were: President and Director, Everett I. Weaver; Vice President and Director, David Dumeer; Treasurer and Director, Joseph P. Doyle; Secretary and Director, Edward G. Pizzella; and two additional Directors, Lawrence Hughes and Judith A. Strong. The following additional Directors were later added: Marge Clauson, Daniel P. Coyle, Mikki and Matthew Zadrowski, John Oman and Robert Andersen. Not long after its formation, NCTV applied for and received its federal tax exempt status.

NCTV was now in need of studio facilities. When the new High School was constructed on Willard Avenue and the old structure on Cedar Street was converted to the present Town Hall, the Board of Education moved its administrative offices from their prior location at 90 Welles Drive North to the newly renovated Town Hall and for many years the Welles Drive building was used for dead storage. Pizzella and Weaver discovered this forgotten treasure and prevailed upon the Board of Education to permit NCTV to use one-half of this facility as its studio. A team

of volunteers was assembled to perform the necessary renovations and NCTV was in business. Control of the building was subsequently relinquished by the Board of Education to the Town government and the Town Council continued to allow this use.

In 1990, Cox revamped its channel lineup and Channel 32 was replaced by town specific community access Channel 14 (“town-specific” meaning that programming on this channel can only be viewed in the town of origin, Newington). NCTV then assumed 24/7 operation of this channel. It was not until the year 2000 that Channel 16 was added. NCTV operates somewhat differently from the franchise area’s other two local community access groups, in that it operates both local access channels, televising governmental and educational access programming, as well as public access, while Rocky Hill Community Television, Inc. and Wethersfield Community Television, Inc. only operate their local Channel 14, which airs public access programming. In those two towns, governmental and educational access programs are aired on Channel 16, which is operated by the Town government.

In November of 2009, because of the need to construct elderly housing in the area where its studio was located, NCTV, with the help of a state grant, moved its facilities to the lower level of the Newington Town Hall at 131 Cedar Street in the area previously occupied by the Police Department. In 2011, NCTV entered into an agreement with AT&T U-Verse, under which its programming can now be viewed on that system’s Channel 99. Its programming can also be viewed on the internet at www.nctv.org. NCTV is a non-political organization composed of volunteers, dedicated to keeping the residents of Newington informed about local events, and produces and airs programming, which cannot be viewed on commercial channels. These include Town Council, Board of Education and Town Planning and Zoning Commission meetings, budget meetings, public service announcements, the community calendar, the Mayor’s monthly call-in show, meetings of local civic and social organizations, the annual Memorial Day Parade, veteran’s memorial ceremonies, local election programs and debates, and a host of other programs focusing on local issues and events. NCTV has received a number of commendations issued by the town government and recently celebrated its twenty seventh anniversary.

Weaver served as President of NCTV until the early 2000's, when he was succeeded by Michael Phelps. Michael Rosenkrantz served from 2007 to 2016. Weaver served as Membership chair through 2016 and Pizzella, who had served as secretary and then legal advisor through 2016. The current President is John Donahue. Other current officers are Vice-Presidents, Scott Allo and Brendon LaChance; Secretary, Sandy Austin-Goldstein; and Treasurer, Paul Glotzer. Patty Foley serves as the Membership Chair and Michelle Patnode serves as Public Relations.

In 2016, NCTV celebrated their 30th anniversary with a celebration and the naming of the Studio for Edward Pizzella and the Control Room for Everett Weaver.

NCTV holds regular meetings at its studio at 7 pm on the last Thursday of each month and the public is invited to attend. Volunteers are needed for a variety of functions, many of which are not of a technical nature. For those which are technical, training is provided at no cost. NCTV, without charge, will air meetings and events sponsored by local nonprofit civic and social groups and will provide the equipment necessary to record such events. For further information call 860-667-5814.