



July 10, 2009

Jolie Gines
Department of Technology
One South Van Ness Avenue, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

Protest Regarding RFP #04-2009 Public Access Cable Channel Operator

Dear Ms. Gines, Department of Technology staffers, and Supervisors,

The enclosed is a review of the "Vision for Public Access" submitted by the Bay Area Video Coalition in response to RFP# 04-2009. Before we discuss the text of the proposal; two quick disclaimers:

- 1) We hope the City of San Francisco will consider our comments as long-time residents of San Francisco from 1976-2005 and as advocates for regional public access and community-based media, despite our current location in Downtown Oakland.
- 2) We want to convey our respect for BAVC's accomplishments and suggest the critiques in this document will be most useful for defining terms in the contract that uphold the spirit and intention of public access television;

These statements are based in the following **core values**

- **Public access content is supposed to originate in and meet the needs of local publics as determined by citizen-producers. The role of the public access operator is to provide training and technology resources to enable local content..**
- **Cable franchise owners derive massive benefit from using a public utility. Switching the public access funding model largely to user fees and philanthropy shifts the funding base from one of guaranteed corporate responsibility onto access users and public philanthropy.**

To address specific points in the proposal and possible avenues of redress:

P.3 The proposal says “communities will lead the development” and the facility will “give voice to diverse sectors” while stating on pages 5, 7, and 18 that BAVC administrators and members will determine, control and censor all policies and community input.

- **Problem:** If diverse communities are to lead the development of the facility and have a voice, how are they going to be included in the set-up and development of the facility?
- **Redress:** If communities lead the development, then they must play a role in determining the policies and have meaningful channels of input and the ability to affect outcomes.

P.5 The proposal says that to meet the vision of “hyper-local relevance” and “city information”, the following is envisioned: using trusted channel feeds and establishing Channel 2 for national and international content.

P12 The proposal says that community trainings may occur as infrequently as 3 times a year, may be invitation-only and walk-in studio access may no longer be available.

- **Problem:** Public access’s role is as redress for citizen-producers from the local community who feel local needs are not being met by trusted channel feeds, namely the existing public/commercial broadcasting structure. Training and technology resources are provided by the facility operator to enable that local content, not to replace it.
- **Redress:** Training for potential producers from the local community must be held no less than monthly, open to all, and walk-in studio access must be provided on a consistent schedule
- **Problem:** While there is no doubt that more distribution channels are needed for national and international content produced by public broadcasters and independent filmmakers, such content does not meet the localism standard for public access television services.
- **Redress:** National and international content must remain a sizable minority (no more than 20%) of the total programming delivered by the public access facility.

P.10 The proposal says that audiences using Miro Local TV players will determine which content moves from on-line streaming to Channel 1 broadcast and which content gets to stay or go - based on popularity metrics.

- **Problem:** Due to digital divide issues, it is likely that such an approach will result in skewed data. Studies show that it is younger and more affluent individuals who adapt to new technology more quickly and easily.
- **Redress:** Assessing programming should use a balanced approach with data from multiple sources that does not privilege technology access and comfort.

P.17-19 The proposal says that membership fees will be assessed, existing memberships at AccessSF will not automatically transfer, BAVC will not operate a public open-access facility and will not offer free in-studio production support or equipment rentals

- **Problem:** BAVC memberships range from \$55 to \$190 annually and only discounted access to production facilities - and not for short-term projects.
- **Redress:** All existing Access-SF members should retain BAVC membership without having to pay additional fees.