

TO: John Szerlag, City Manager

FROM: John Lamerato, Asst. City Manager/Finance & Admin.
Cindy Stewart, Community Affairs Director

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM – Islamic Association of Michigan

DATE: March 30, 2005

We have received a request from the Islamic Association of Michigan asking for City Council to mandate Comcast to place UHF TV Channel 33 on our basic cable lineup for Troy subscribers.

The letter from Salah Aljahimc, President of the Islamic Association, stated that UHF TV-33 is currently included in the Comcast basic cable tier in Detroit and Highland Park. This is not exactly accurate information according to Olivia Visperas, Comcast Area Director for Corporate Affairs (see attached memo). Information received by calling UHF TV-33 is that they are a low power station owned by R. J. Watkins airing on Comcast in Detroit and Hamtramck and on Charter Communications in Highland Park.

Please note, UHF TV-33 is not an “Islamic station.” It is a small low power commercial station in Detroit that sells time slots and use of production facilities to a wide range of clients. All programs must comply with FCC rules and regulations. The majority of programs currently airing on TV-33 deal with religion, politics or local entertainment. The channel has been in existence for approximately 10 years.

Initial conversations with both UHF TV-33 and Comcast indicate that UHF TV-33 isn't equipped with enough power to cablecast to wider audiences, including Troy.

For your information, WideOpenWest now offers the first English language TV channel targeting American Muslims in Southeast Michigan. The channel, **Bridges TV**, focuses on featuring American Muslim lifestyle and culture. It will show newscasts, cartoons, family-friendly sitcoms and movies about Muslim life. The network is the first of its kind in English targeting more than seven million Muslims in the United States, one of the fastest-growing demographics in the nation.

If Council would like us to look further into this matter please advise us and we will talk further with our contacts at Comcast.

CS



ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

4001 Miller Street, Detroit, MI 48211

313-729-7760

Feb 26, 2005

Honorable Council Members
City of Troy, MI

Subject: Asking the Honorable Council to Mandate UHF TV Channel 33 and direct the Comcast to place this channel in their basic cable at No Cost to the Subscribers because of the vital Public Interest.

Honorable Council Members:

The Honorable Council knows that the Islamic Association of Michigan represents a very broad segment of their members throughout Michigan which consists of Pakistani, India, Bosnian, Yemen, Bangladesh, African-American, Somalian, Middle-Eastern, and born American-Muslims.

At present, these communities have no modern communication in place that they can access to integrate themselves in a new and developing American culture and to involve them into the American political system. Each community speaks their own language and carries their own culture. Therefore, there is a need to make modern technology available to reach our citizens and transform American values into their value system to eliminate conflict and misunderstanding. It is only possible when affordable means are available to transform common understanding.

As this Honorable Council is well aware, Troy's diverse community does not have any access to mass media where they can express their opinion and display their cultural programs directly with their communities. The Islamic Association of Michigan has contracted UHF TV-33 and they are willing to provide the access to all communities living in the City of Troy at no cost.

In today's world, electronic media is the most effective and expeditious method to bring all diversified groups together. It presents itself as the most efficient way to promote businesses, culture, religion, and esthetic values of their communities and to bring better understanding and harmony among the many diversified groups.

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February 26, 2005

For your information, UHF TV-33 is currently included in the Comcast basic cable tier with no additional cost to the subscriber. The City of Detroit and Highland Park Councils have placed this channel by passing unanimous resolutions. Recently, the City of Hamtramck has passed a unanimous resolution and ordered Comcast to put this channel on their basic network. (Resolution is attached).

Once the necessary equipment is in place and the cable channel has been assigned, the UHF TV-33 is willing to provide the following services to the citizens of Troy, MI:

- Public Service Announcements (PSA's)
- Programming specific to the Troy community
- Emergency broadcasts (school closings, inclement weather, etc.)
- Spotlight specific school projects and events
- Reports from the Mayor's office
- Provide highlights of the Troy City Council meetings
- Homeland Security announcements
- And other issues of public interest

Keeping in mind the broader interest of different ethnic groups living in the city of Pontiac, we are requesting that our Honorable Council, which is a true representation of this community, may allow us to get direct access to our favorite channel, UHF TV-33. This channel is located at 15851 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI 48203, telephone number 313-868-6612. We are also requesting that the Honorable Council may direct Comcast, Inc. to provide the resolution that will facilitate placement of this channel in their basic cable lines, seven days a week, and 24 hours a day at no cost to the subscriber as it is done in other cities.

The Association, in particular, and the citizens of Troy, in general, will be very grateful to you. If the Honorable Council members have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 313-729-7760.

Yours truly,



Salah Aljahime
President

Cindy – I received the copy of what looks like a form letter sent to the Troy City Council from the Islamic Association of Michigan. I was able to get some information that is in conflict to what is written here. First, we do not service the city of Highland Park, that service area is covered by Charter Communications. Secondly, the Islamic Association is currently paying for part-time carriage on leased access by Comcast in city of Detroit, it is not being carried on the actual Comcast basic channel lineup – in fact, no contract has been signed. Third, while it is true that the city of Hamtramck has passed a resolution to carry this particular channel, there is no agreement by Comcast for carriage at this point, and extensive negotiations would have to take place before that ever became a reality. Comcast officials in Detroit have met with representatives from the Islamic Association of Michigan and will continue to do so. We have asked for a development outline from them, which would have to include their penetration forecasts and address their poor signal issues (which they have said would be cleared up in six months) before any request for carriage could be considered, and also, the potential addition of a new channel would need to involve discussions with our corporate programming office. At this time, we will keep the dialogue open and will wait for them to report back to us.

For your additional information, when we receive requests for carriage of a new channel, many factors are taken into consideration, including:

- FCC regulations, such as requirements to carry all local broadcast channels
- Requirements by local broadcasters to carry their affiliated cable networks
- The number of access channels required by local government
- Customer satisfaction with networks carried in other systems
- Customer satisfaction with similar networks
- Importance of the network to our diverse community
- Level of interest across a percentage of our customer base
- Per-subscriber programming fees charged by the network versus the value added to the lineup

I hope this information will assist you in the formulation of a response by the Troy City Council to the Islamic Association of Michigan regarding their channel carriage request.

Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Olivia J. Visperas

Area Director, Corporate Affairs

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