

Bedford hires production firm to tape sessions

By LARRY P. VELLEQUETTE
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TEMPERANCE — A private Temperance production firm will begin broadcasting Bedford Township's board meetings next month under a \$6,720 contract approved last week.

The 6-1 decision to pay Triple L Productions to provide a camera and operator for all township board meetings came at the expense of the Bedford Public School's broadcast journalism department, which was supposed to have been doing the work for the last several years. Township trustee Med Barr, who chairs the township's cable committee and who is a teacher at Bedford High School, was the only vote opposed.

"We need to at least try Triple L," because of the cost and their dependability, township clerk Bob Schockman said.

Board members have sought to improve the quality of their meeting broadcasts for several months after receiving comments from interested residents about the low quality of the static camera shot from the township's single stationary, mounted camera. The meetings are broadcast live over the new Buckeye CableSystem fiber-optic network, and taped for later airing on what remains of the Buckeye-owned co-axial cable system.

The board spent \$2,000 on the stationary camera after it became clear that the school's broadcast journalism department was unable to videotape and broadcast the board's meetings regularly. Mike Murphy, who heads the broadcast department at Bedford High School, told the board that he had difficulty enticing students to tape

the meetings because of the length, late starting times, and that they were being asked to do it for free.

The school had submitted three proposals that would have paid students a stipend for working the meetings, but the cheapest of those was still more than \$3,000 more than the Triple L bid, township officials said.

Jon White, assistant superintendent for curriculum at Bedford Public Schools, had been a strong advocate of the township continuing to use students to broadcast its meetings. Mr. White argued that the contract with the schools provided a greater educational benefit to the community than just the sum of what was being broadcast.

The decision by the township board to use the private company was disappointing, Mr. White said.

"It was their decision to make. We think we have an excellent program, and hopefully, they won't cut all of our funding under that franchise agreement with the cable company," Mr. White said.

The agreement with Triple L will not negate the township's obligation to make the annual \$10,000 contribution to the high school's broadcast journalism department that's called for under the original franchise agreement with the former Bedford Cable.

The township will continue to make that contribution at least as long as that franchise agreement remains in existence, township supervisor LaMar Frederick said. However, within approximately two years, that agreement will likely expire as cable customers are moved onto Buckeye Cable's fiber-optic system.

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Triple L to tape Bedford meetings

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BEDFORD TOWNSHIP. — After reviewing potential options, cameras will now roll during regularly scheduled township meetings.

The Township Board voted Tuesday to accept an offer and enter into a one-year contract with Triple L Productions to tape township meetings. The decision was made after reviewing a total of four proposals submitted by the Temperance-based production company and the Bedford High School Broadcast Services (BHSBS).

According to the Triple L proposal, the company will tape and produce 26 meetings at a cost of \$6,720. The bid also includes an option to tape other meetings at a price range of \$280-\$350 each, depending on the amount of advance notice given by the township. BHSBS offered the township three proposals ranging in services and prices from \$10,000 to \$40,000 to tape meetings throughout the year. Proposal 1, the most expensive package presented by BHSBS to the board, was based on an annual budget of \$40,000, or 1 percent of the township's current cable franchise fee collected from Buckeye Cable System, from which the township receives 4 percent annually.

"As I said at the last meeting, I have recommended the middle (\$27,000) proposal from the school," said Trustee Medford Barr, a Bedford Public Schools teacher who cast the only dissenting voice in the 6-1 vote. "I think if we give this contract to either Triple L or the school, I think we would get the tapes and get them in professional way. I know that either one of these would work. I guess I am listening to my board to have you tell me what you want to do."

Jon White, assistant superintendent at Bedford Public Schools, spoke earlier this month about the proposals the school submitted and hoped the township and the program could work out an agreement to keep the school involved in the

process of producing the meetings. At the time, he said paying students a stipend might entice more to become and stay involved.

Despite the three different proposals from the school, trustees said the lower cost in the Triple L proposal and its reputation and reliability in working on other projects in the area outweighed concerns over cutting the school out of the production process and granting the contract to a private business instead of the public access station.

"The reason we went to the static camera in the meeting room was in fact to be able to give our citizens something so they could watch our meetings," said Trustee Arnold Jennings. "The reason we had to do that was because we weren't able to get anybody here to take care of that live with people here to run the cameras. Triple L has put a proposal together that is considerably less money ... I would like to see Triple L awarded this just so we can get back on regular television and do this for our citizens."

According to Supervisor R. LaMar Frederick, Buckeye Cable operates under two franchises, one of which (Comcast Cablevision) still has a contractual obligation to pay money to the school for public access television, although a total has yet to be determined through a township review.

"The only thing I will point out is that we still have some franchises hanging out there," said Mr. Frederick.

"And we will still have some obligations to pay. Simply saying we are going to spend \$6,700 doesn't solve the issue on franchises still outstanding. We still have obligations and have to make payments under those franchise agreements. We still owe the school something under the franchise agreements that this board signed. I just want you to understand that by picking Triple L tonight does not end our obligation to the school."