

COLUMBUS CABLE CHANNELS 980 & 981

Policies and Procedures Manual 2024

OVERVIEW

The Columbus Cable Channels 980 and 981 (referred to as 980, 981, and/or cable channel(s)) and associated equipment are not funded by general fund tax dollars, but are funded by a cable franchise fee paid by holders of video service franchises within the city limits as defined by State Statutes (Grantees). Grantee(s) as defined in Sec. 26-31 (c) of City Ordinances pay a cable franchise fee of 5% within the city limits of Columbus, WI which may be passed onto the Grantee(s) customers. The State passed legislation to decrease the franchise fee by 1%; however, a State aid payment is received annually to make up for the 1% decrease in franchise fee revenue.

The five (5) member Columbus Cable Commission as formed under Sec. 26-1 of the City Ordinances is charged with oversight of the cable channels, along with any associated resources and revenues. Members of this commission comprise of one (1) Council representative and four (4) Residents of the City of Columbus, WI. All member are appointed and confirmed as stated in Sec. 26-1 (c) of the City Ordinances.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Columbus Cable Channels 980 and 981 is to provide information and entertainment to residential cable TV viewers by highlighting the local community, government, and school district.

POLICIES OF CABLE CHANNELS 980, 981, AND ASSOCIATED RESOURCES

The Columbus Cable Commission has adopted the following policies and procedures as guidelines for utilizing resources and broadcasting programs on Columbus cable channels 980 and 981.

Cable Channel 980 Programming Policy

- 1) Channel 980 is designated as a community public access channel for the purpose of informing and entertaining residents of Columbus with programming intended to highlight the community, school district, and municipal government.
- 2) Programs may be produced by City staff or submitted to staff for broadcast.
- 3) City staff is responsible for adding and scheduling programs for broadcast.
- 4) The channel is limited to broadcasting live and/or recorded programs in the following priority:
 1. Gavel-to-gavel regular and special publicly noticed meetings of City government.
 2. Public programs sponsored by municipal commissions, boards, committees, and departments.

3. Public Service Announcements for municipal departments, commissions, boards, and committees.
 4. Gavel-to-gavel regular and special publicly noticed meetings of the school district.
 5. Public programs sponsored by school district's commissions, boards, committees, and departments.
 6. Public Service Announcements for school district departments, commissions, boards, and committees.
 7. Informative bulletin board highlighting community events and services, municipal information, school district information, etc.
 8. Public Service Announcements for local non-profits, fundraisers, events, and services.
 9. Local news programming.
 10. Athletic competitions.
 11. Musical performances. *
 12. Theatrical performances. **
 13. Programs highlighting local non-profits, businesses, civic organizations, history, etc.
 14. Programs produced by local non-profits, civic organizations, businesses, or individuals.
 15. Candidate forums and debates as stated by the Political Programming Policy.
 16. Worship programming.
 17. Informational or general interest programs of county, state, or national topics.
 18. Non-sales ads for local businesses as stated by the Advertising Policy.
 19. Programming that does not adhere to the previous categories.
- 5) Programs will not be subject to editorial oversight by the Cable Commission, the City, or City staff. However, programs can be removed from broadcast or not aired at all if:
- a. They contain obscenity, indecency, profanity, or violence as regulated by the FCC.
 - i. Obscene material is not protected by the First Amendment and cannot be broadcast at any time. To be obscene, the material must have all of the following three characteristics:
 1. An average person, applying contemporary community standards, must find that the material, as a whole, appeals to having or encouraging an excessive interest in sexual matters;
 2. The material must depict or describe, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by applicable law; and
 3. The material, taken as a whole, must lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.
 - ii. Indecent material is protected by the First Amendment, so its broadcast cannot constitutionally be prohibited at all times. However, the courts have upheld Congress' prohibition of the broadcast of indecent material during times of the day when there is a reasonable risk that children may be in the audience, which the Commission has determined to be between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. Indecent programming is defined as "language or material that, in context, depicts or describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards for the broadcast medium, sexual or excretory organs or activities." Broadcasts that fall within this definition and are aired between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. may be subject to enforcement action by the FCC.

- iii. Profane material also is protected by the First Amendment so its broadcast cannot be outlawed entirely. The Commission has defined this program matter to include language that is both “so grossly offensive to members of the public who actually hear it as to amount to a nuisance” and is sexual or excretory in nature or derived from such terms. This material may be the subject of possible Commission enforcement action if it is broadcast within the same time period applicable to indecent programming: between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.
- iv. Due to the negative impact violent broadcast material may have on children, at the request of 39 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, the FCC conducted a proceeding asking the public’s comment on violent programming. In April 2007, the Commission delivered a Report to Congress recommending that the industry voluntarily commit to reducing the amount violent programming viewed by children.
- b. They are of such low technical quality or suffer from technical issues as to being difficult to watch or hear or are missing audio or visual components.
- c. They are exclusively sales ads for any business – See Advertising Policy.
- d. They promote lottery and/or gambling.
- e. They violate any of the Policies in this document.

* (Can be broadcast on cable TV only via ASCAP license unless other appropriate licenses are obtained or if performances are of original/public domain works with appropriate written permission)

** (Must have appropriate license(s) to broadcast on cable TV and/or elsewhere or if performances are of original/public domain works with appropriate written permission)

Cable Channel 981 Programming Policy

- 1) Channel 981 is designated as a 24/7 informative bulletin board highlighting community events and services, municipal programs, etc.
- 2) City staff is responsible for adding items the bulletin board.

Program Editing Policy

- 1) Publicly noticed meetings of municipal government and school board, including public meetings held by municipal or district departments if broadcasted, shall be broadcast in their entirety from gavel-to-gavel without any editing of their content, subject to only the following exceptions:
 - a. When such meetings are in closed session or standing at recess.
 - b. When the orderly procedure of the meeting is interrupted by some unexpected event or incident.
 - c. When technical failures of equipment prevent coverage.
 - d. Graphics may be added during production or post production as long as they don’t interfere with the meeting and used only to
 - i. Identify the meeting and/or content of the meeting;

- ii. Identify the channel the meeting is broadcast on;
 - iii. Identify the City or School District;
 - iv. And/or title, credits, and/or standby graphics/video added to the meetings.
- e. Captions may be added during production or post production as available to assist with American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance.
- f. When clips of the meeting are used for a separate program.
- 2) All submitted recordings or finished edited programs should not require additional editing before broadcast, subject to the following exceptions:
 - a. Gain the audio up or down for submitted recordings of publicly noticed municipal or school district meetings to reach minimum broadcast requirements.
 - b. Convert a submitted file to a format the broadcast unit can playback if possible.

Program Retention Policy

- 1) Retention of any recordings of publicly noticed meetings of municipal government including any publicly noticed meetings held by municipal departments is the responsibility of the City and shall follow the retention policy as set forth by the City or State Statutes regarding public records retention.
- 2) Retention of any publicly noticed meetings of school district government including any publicly noticed meetings held by school district departments is the responsibility of the School District and shall follow the retention policy as set forth by the District or State Statutes regarding public records retention. They may not be retained by the City or the Cable Commission.
- 3) Programs produced by City staff or independent contractor(s) contracted by the City shall follow the retention policy as set forth by the City or State Statutes regarding public records retention.
- 4) Submitted programs will not be subject to retention unless intended for future programming.
- 5) Online availability of programs broadcast on the Cable Channels 980 and 981 are entirely subject to availability policies or agreements of the respective program producers or as required by law.

Advertisements Policy

- 1) The cable channels shall follow Sec. 73.1212 [47 CFR §73.1212] of FCC policy for transmitting any matter for which money, service, or other valuable consideration is either directly or indirectly paid or promised to, or charged or accepted by the station.
- 2) Non-Sales Commercial Ads, programs, underwriting, and program sponsorship by for-profit businesses are allowed to air separately or as part of a program except in cases where:
 - a. The product or service is advertised along with pricing;
 - b. The business is advertising a sale;
 - c. Product or service require a minimum age to participate;
 - d. Business, product, or service is of or promoting dangerous or illegal acts or items.

Political Programming Policy

- 1) The City of Columbus does not air political programming or offer air time to any political candidates on cable TV or any of its other managed media assets, but will allow debates and forums if sponsored by the City, Columbus School District, or local civic groups.
 - a. Local civic groups are non-profit organizations with the purpose to work for the betterment of the Columbus, Wisconsin community.
 - b. Participation in the debate or forum must include at least 2 (two) invited candidates in a contested election. Invites must be sent to all candidates, either declared or officially registered for a contested election at the time the debate or forum takes place. The host of the debate or forum is responsible for verifying all candidates have been invited and are given equal time and access to participate.
 - c. Appropriately sponsored debates and forums may take place at City facilities, but the City of Columbus is not a sponsor and is not responsible for any hosting, coordination, recording, marketing, or any other aspect of producing the event.

Non-Cable TV Broadcasting Policy

Due to evolving technologies and increased convenience, viewers are no longer just watching content on cable television (TV). In order to maximize local viewership, the Columbus Cable Commission is broadcasting programs from Columbus Cable Channels 980 and 981 onto non-cable TV platforms.

- 1) Streaming allows content on 980 and 981 to be viewed as scheduled on cable TV from internet enabled devices.
- 2) Video on Demand (VOD) allows videos to be stored online and viewed when convenient.
- 3) Over the Top Applications (OTT) are applications that allow content to be streamed and/or allow VOD over TV.
- 4) Over the air broadcasting over antenna through either or both Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) standards or Low Power Television (LPTV) will be treated the same as broadcasting over cable TV.

Programs aired on 980 and 981 can be available on these platforms on a case-by-case basis. Non-City business programming may air on the above listed platforms if the producer does not have access to broadcast to them and has authorization or exclusive rights to any copyright that allows for such distribution. Programs aired by streaming, VOD or OTT are also subject to all rules as those on cable TV. Additional distribution licenses may be required in order to use certain copyrighted material on any of these platforms, including cable TV.

Cable Resource Usage Policy

1) Equipment

- a. Any equipment purchased with funds from the Cable TV Fund is intended for producing content that will be broadcast on Cable Channels 980 and/or 981.
- b. Cable equipment is intended for City staff use, but may be loaned at no cost to local non-profits or city residents under the conditions that follow:
 - i. A copy of the recording (or finished content if edited) will be available to broadcast on either or both cable channels.
 - ii. Any damage to loaned equipment or any missing equipment is the responsibility of the party the equipment is loaned to.
 - iii. Any party who requests an equipment loan must first be trained to use the equipment or demonstrate working knowledge of using similar equipment before using any loaned equipment.
 - iv. Any equipment is subject to programming priority as stated both the Channel 980 and 981 Usage Policies. If equipment is needed for higher priority programming, it will not be available for lower priority programming.
- c. For-profit businesses may request an equipment loan at a cost as determined in the annual fee schedule set by the Cable Commission. All rules for equipment use as set above shall apply.
- d. Any facility (production studio, mobile workroom, etc.) either entirely or in part funded by the Cable TV Fund will be subject to all of the same policy regulations as equipment.
 - i. Facilities located on City property may be subject to authorization by City Administration.
- e. Misusing equipment or using equipment for non-cable TV use are prohibited.
 - i. City staff are not subject to the mandatory cable TV broadcast requirement and may utilize cable-owned or purchased equipment or facilities for non-cable TV use in lieu of payment(s) (i.e. rent, etc.) for use of any City facility in which equipment purchased with the Cable TV Fund is housed and maintained. All other Equipment Policy regulations apply. City staff shall in good faith produce content with loaned equipment that may additionally be aired on cable TV, regardless of intended use.
- f. Any unauthorized sales, renting, or subleasing of loaned equipment is prohibited.
 - i. Sales or disposal of equipment are subject to the City's Equipment Disposal Policy and/or applicable State laws.
- g. Independent contractors providing contracted work may use their own equipment if desired. Contractor-provided equipment cannot be loaned out, nor can the contractor charge the City, school district, or those subject of programming for Cable Channels 980 and 981 for use of the equipment.

2) Staff

- a. City staff shall not be a producer of non-City programs. Staff may advise in a production of a non-City program if requested.
- b. Independent contractors hired cannot use their position for business use or use business projects as programming for the cable channels.