



Timothy C. McDonough
Mayor

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NJ Board of Public Utilities
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June 29, 2020

RE: Docket No. CM20030211-Service Electric/Altice Cable

Dear Board of Public Utilities,

Please accept this letter on behalf of the residents of the Township of Hope regarding the Service Electric/ Altice Cable Television Transaction referenced above.

We know that the Board of Public Utilities is the sole regulator whose consent is required for this transaction and is involved because it concerns cable services. However, any expansion of existing cable lines, in effect, also increases Internet. At present, hundreds of homes in Hope Township have service that fails to meet the federal definition for high speed Internet. Hope Township's numerous attempts to negotiate an extension of Service Electric lines, which would have resulted in more homes having high speed Internet, have been unsuccessful. Even though Service Electric promised to extend lines, not a single line has been extended in Hope Township in over 15 years.

The current petition before the BPU makes assurance of "improved service" to twenty-eight NJ "communities" and promises greater speeds to existing customers. However, this skirts the core problem in rural New Jersey. The issue is not that the homes with current Service Electric service have poor Internet; the issue is that few homes have access to Service Electric at all. The existing cable/Internet lines are few and far between. Before the Altice petition is approved, we must have assurances of improved services in Hope Township. ***Hope Township, therefore ask that the Board of Public Utilities not approve this petition without a specific commitment from Altice to extend cable lines (which also enables Internet service) in our town.***

The Township of Hope has had extensive correspondence with Altice regarding the proposed merger and requesting extensions on specific streets in our Township. They have not provided any response to our letters to date. The need for better Internet and cable service is critical; the closing of schools and businesses during the COVID pandemic exacerbated the existing broadband problem. Many children in Hope Township cannot "Zoom" at the same time from home, necessitating traveling to relatives' homes to attend school virtually. Our farmers are not able to sell their agricultural products direct-to-the-public at an on-farm location or use remote sensing of field and greenhouse conditions, remote control of equipment or facilitate shipping and receiving coordination without better Internet. Realtors continue to cite the poor Internet service as one reason that prospective buyers choose homes outside of our town.

Hope Township, therefore, urges that the BPU withhold approval for this transaction until specific concessions on extensions of cable lines are made. This is Hope Township's only means for effecting change; we have no leverage with which to require expansions of service. Therefore, we strongly urge the BPU to use this opportunity to procure concessions from Altice for residents in rural towns like Hope.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these critical issues.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Timothy C. McDonough', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Mayor