

DESOTO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
DISTRICT FOUR LEE CALDWELL, PRESIDING

June 10, 2014

A. CALL TO ORDER

The June 10, 2014 meeting of the DeSoto County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Supervisor Lee Caldwell, Board President.

Sheriff Bill Rasco of the DeSoto County Sheriff's Department was present and opened the DeSoto County Board of Supervisors meeting in a regular session to hear all business before the Board of Supervisors. The following officials were present:

Supervisor Jessie Medlin	District 1
Supervisor Mark Gardner	District 2
Supervisor Bill Russell	District 3
Supervisor Lee Caldwell	District 4
Supervisor Harvey Lee	District 5
Sheriff Bill Rasco	Sheriff
W. E. Sluggo Davis	Chancery Clerk
Vanessa Lynchard	County Administrator
Robert Quimby	Board Attorney

B. INVOCATION

Sheriff Bill Rasco presented the invocation.

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

D. PUBLIC HEARING- Comcast service issues

Supervisor Mark Gardner made the motion and Supervisor Jessie Medlin seconded the motion to open the Public Hearing regarding Comcast service issues.

The motion passed by a vote as follows:

Supervisor Jessie Medlin, First District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Mark Gardner, Second District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Bill Russell, Third District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Lee Caldwell, Fourth District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Harvey Lee, Fifth District	<u>YES</u>

Supervisor Lee Caldwell thanked Comcast for attending the meeting along with the public. Supervisor Caldwell explained to the group each person will have 3 minutes to speak about their issues or concerns. Supervisor Caldwell asked Supervisor Mark Gardner to address the group regarding the purpose of meeting since he requested for the Public Hearing on Comcast to be held.

Supervisor Mark Gardner thanked everyone for coming to this evening's meeting. He said he received calls and emails from residents with complaints regarding Comcast. The Franchise Agreement between the County and Comcast has expired and it's time to renegotiate. Supervisor Gardner said he thought it was a good time to let the citizens express their concerns.

Supervisor Lee Caldwell asked who would like to express their issues regarding Comcast.

Mr. John Blackwell addressed the group. He said he has cable TV which is okay, but has problems with telephone and internet. His phones cut off during calls. His issues started in 2012. When he called to speak to a service representative he couldn't understand them. He was not sure where they were from but they are not from the south. He had to write to Philadelphia then they sent a service technician to fix the problem. Then last April it started again. He would get cut off talking to Comcast. In July, they started sending technicians but issues were never resolved. He started to document his disconnects. He had over 64 disconnects. He wrote to Philadelphia and contacted the Better Business Bureau. He finally was put in touch with a service representative from Huntsville, AL. She helped him get the issue resolved. Then June 5, 2014 it started again. Mr. Blackwell said telephone service needs to be regulated.

Ms. Louise Gardner was next to express her problems with Comcast. On May 19, 2014, she experienced problems with her internet. She called Comcast on the 20th and spoke to a lady in the Philippine Islands. Ms. Gardner could not understand the service representative. She made more calls to Comcast and finally spoke to someone in Nashville. Comcast had a service technician come to house and they fixed the problem. Then a week later the internet went out again. Comcast told her it would be fixed within 3 days. When the technician arrived at her house he was not wearing identification. They laid cable in her yard but the issue is not fixed and cable is still there as of today. She was told she was on the list to be serviced.

Mr. Brian Howorth was next to express his issues with Comcast. He said he had 4 areas. First on the list is billing. His problems started when they changed him from analog to digital. Initially his bill was almost the same then it started to increase. He was told by a service rep he was on a promotional package. Mr. Howorth disagreed. The second complaint is lack of customer service. When he calls Comcast, he has to speak to someone that barely speaks or understands English. He has asked to only speak with US call centers. He was told by Comcast that after 5:00pm no US call centers are available. Mr. Howorth commented on the lack of knowledge service technicians have when trying to fix problems. A technician was at his house for over 3 hours and still could not fix the problem. He finally spoke with someone from Jackson and she got it fixed. His cable has started giving him problems. He couldn't get channel 5 until May of 2014 and now on channel 27 the audio drops out. Mr. Howorth said the last complaint is advertising. Comcast needs to stop advertising 2hr appointment windows. He was told by a foreign service rep that our area isn't in a 2hr window but that we are in an all-day area. Mr. Howorth said on an average it takes a week to have a service technician come to the house.

The next citizen was Mr. Bob Bickley of Southaven. He thanked the Supervisors for having the meeting and said they shouldn't have to have such a meeting. He said he called Comcast to sign up for a Business class plan. He was told he didn't qualify for a Business class plan since his business operated out of his home. Mr. Bickley disagrees with Comcast he should be able to get a business class. Mr. Bickley said Comcast needs to remember the number one person for businesses is your customer. Mr. Bickley said internet service in Mississippi is terrible. Comcast fried his computer and did not pay for repair. The service technicians tried to cut his business line while working on a neighbor's line, so he went out and made them leave it alone. Mr. Bickley said his phone line has so much static at times he is unable to carry on a conversation.

Mr. Matt Nelson said he wanted to discuss the ideology on web traffic. All web traffic should be treated equally. Comcast is spending \$18 million to overturn that ideology. Mr. Nelson asked Supervisors to consider another provider before locking anything in with Comcast.

Ms. Lula Gaddy wanted to let Comcast know about her lack of service. On a Friday, Comcast was at her neighbor's house to fix a problem. In the process of trying to help her neighbor they disconnected her cable and internet. Ms. Gaddy called Comcast and was told they would test the line. On Saturday she still had no cable or internet. Ms. Gaddy called Comcast again and was told by Comcast they didn't know what the problem was and would send out a technician. Comcast did not restore her cable/internet until Wednesday the following week. Ms. Gaddy contacted Comcast and wanted to know how they plan to compensate her for no service and lost income. She explained she works out of her home and wasn't able to work without the internet. Comcast offered her \$7.00 per day for lack of service. She had a customer service rep hang up on her along with the service technician being rude and unprofessional. Ms. Gaddy said if there was another provider she would sign up with them but unfortunately we have no other

alternatives.

Ms. Donna Slack said it takes days to get a technician to make a service call. Ms. Slack said when you have to call customer service you get someone that you can't understand since they don't speak English and then they are rude. When they fixed an issue with a neighbor they broke her wireless internet.

Supervisor Mark Gardner said "a common theme" has emerged poor service, overseas call centers who don't speak English, faulty connections, rudeness, and when attempts to fix a resident's problem causes a neighbor's service to be affected.

Supervisor Jessie Medlin said Braybourne Subdivision is a large subdivision and they experience several problems with Comcast. Word of mouth breaks or makes a company.

Ms. Tammy Crawford wanted to share her experience. When she relocated here in 2011 from Chicago she was able to transfer her Comcast service. However, in October 2012 when she bought her new home she was told Comcast didn't provide wireless service even though the new home was less than a mile from her former service area. She had her builder make arrangements for internet lines to be installed. When Comcast came to her home the technician wanted to drill new holes in her wall. She tried to explain to the technician that the builder had done that already but the technician wouldn't listen nor would he call his supervisor. She told the Comcast technician to leave and did not sign up for service. She uses Verizon for internet and has Direct TV.

Supervisor Lee Caldwell asked if anyone else would like to comment.

Supervisor Harvey Lee said he would like to read a letter he received from Mr. Bill Witt.

-----Original Message-----

From: William Witt [mailto:williampwitt@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, June 10, 2014 5:39 AM

To: Harvey Lee

Cc: Bill Russell; jmedlin@desotocountymys.gov mgardner@desotocountymys.gov

brussell@desotocountymys.gov vlynchard@desotocountymys.gov; Lee Caldwell; Mark Gardner; Vanessa Lynchard

Subject: COMCAST CUSTOMER GUARANTEE

Importance: Low

Sir: I have the Comcast "bundle", i.e., cable, internet and voice (land-line). I have too many times had problems with Comcast...my latest was in April-May...my system was down for a total of 16 days...requesting credit, I received a credit of \$15.38...my monthly statement averages \$155...and I could go on...please remind Comcast of their customer guarantee:

1. We will give you a 30-day, money back guarantee on our video, voice or high-speed services.
2. We will always be on time within your appointment window or we'll credit you \$20 or give you a free premium channel for three months.
3. We will resolve routine issues in one visit or we'll credit you \$20 or give you a free premium channel for three months.
4. We will treat your home with courtesy and respect.
5. We're here for you, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to answer questions at your convenience.
6. We offer easy-to-understand packages and provide you with a clear bill.
7. We will continually offer the best and most video choices.

Mr. Lee, it's not so much the money, it's the frustration and aggravation one has to deal with when dealing with Comcast...I sympathize with their American employees. This out-sourcing, trying to communicate with someone who's first language is NOT english...

Please do not allow a 10 year contract with Comcast...3 at best...I appreciate you being at the meeting in my behalf...respectfully, your constituent...Bill Witt

Supervisor Harvey Lee said he had 2 jobs and he wouldn't have a job if he treated his customers like Comcast treats their customers.

Mr. Mark Thomas asked the Board of Supervisors why the County doesn't have more to pick from than Comcast. He said a cable was down and it's taken months for Comcast to fix. Mr. Thomas said he wished he could have any other cable company than Comcast.

Supervisor Mark Gardner said he wanted to discuss a couple of issues he personally experienced with Comcast. He said he has problems with digital pixels, internet intermittent, and telephone line problems. He placed a call to Comcast; was placed on hold then was disconnected. He called back and was told it would take 9 days for a service technician to come look at the house. Supervisor Gardner said he was without internet service for 9 days. When the service technician came he could tell the tech wasn't knowledgeable with troubleshooting. Supervisor Gardner explained to the technician his background in the industry and told the tech he thought it was an underground drop. The service technician tested the underground drop and located the problem and corrected the issue. Supervisor Gardner told Mr. Otha Brandon with Comcast, that he never called or emailed him, as he wanted to see what kind of response he would get from customer service. Nor did Supervisor Gardner mention to anyone at Comcast that he was a government official in order to speed up the process.

Supervisor Gardner explained another problem he had with Comcast. Comcast advertised a pay-per-view Ole Miss game for \$30. He ordered the game, had friends and family over, at game time there was no Ole Miss game. He called twice and was hung up on. Someone from a call center in Memphis called 1 ½ hours into the game and told him "sorry but that game is not being telecasted in your area". He was promised the charge would not appear on his statement. When the bill came in he was charged the \$30.00, then it took 5 hours of calls to get a customer service representative on the phone to credit the charge.

Supervisor Gardner told Otha Brandon and three other Comcast representatives, "There's 650 miles of county roads that this Board is responsible for, and I get more calls about Comcast than I get about potholes." Cable companies went to Washington and asked not to be regulated, they told Washington "we will police ourselves". Supervisor Gardner told Comcast to please wake up; you do have problems, rude customer service, technicians not being knowledgeable, foreign call centers, disrupting service of neighbors when on service calls, and not being able to conduct business due to interruptions in internet service. People are cutting off Comcast and not getting anything or going with different providers.

Supervisor Harvey Lee said Buena Vista has lots of problem with cable. He received a call from a constituent who had a down cable line in their drive way. They called Comcast and reported the incident. After 2 weeks no one from Comcast had been to their home. Supervisor Lee placed a call and Comcast sent someone out to fix the cable. Supervisor Lee said people should get service. Constituents shouldn't have to call a county official to get a Comcast problem corrected.

Robin Lambert said she stopped using Comcast because of a cable line being in her yard and rude customer service when she tried to resolve the issue. She canceled her service with Comcast.

Supervisor Jessie Medlin said his mother-in-law lives with him and his wife. His wife handles all of her mother's cable problems. She will take off work and drive all the way from downtown Memphis to the service center in Southaven. When she gets there the lines are long and people are rude. She will wait over 30 minutes trying to reach someone on the phone. Supervisor Medlin said Comcast really needs to improve their service.

Supervisor Bill Russell said he appreciated Comcast being here and listening to the complaints. He said that he knows that they don't own the company. He has Direct TV and pays too much but has good service. He worked for AT&T and the service they have now is not good. A 9 day window is atrocious. Service has to get better. Supervisor Russell said people are willing to pay for good service and asked Comcast to push this up the line to get results.

Supervisor Lee Caldwell asked if Otha Brandon with Comcast would like to speak to the group. Otha Brandon, area director of governmental relations for Comcast said, after hearing the vocal majority of more than a dozen residents today, "It's not falling on deaf ears." John Gauder, Vice-President for the west area of the Mid-South; Bruce Harris, Construction Supervisor; and

Area Director of Technical Operations Mike Hooker are here tonight representing Comcast. They plan to go back to the executives with the comments and concerns and work on a plan to improve. Mr. Brandon said when we are made aware of an issue we do try to address them as quickly as we can. The last franchise agreement was 1993-2013 and they feel they do have a community investment. Comcast will work to improve their technical ability and invest in the community. They are happy to take names of those that have issues and get them resolved. For those who have other providers, give Comcast a chance to perform. Again, we hear you and we are concerned about the issues. We will take names and addresses if there are problems tonight.

Supervisor Caldwell said the Board appreciates the Comcast representatives coming and listening to the complaints. She said there is much disconnect, but Mr. Brandon always responds to their emails or phone calls.

Supervisor Mark Gardner made the motion and Supervisor Harvey Lee seconded the motion to close the Public Hearing.

The motion passed by a vote as follows:

Supervisor Jessie Medlin, First District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Mark Gardner, Second District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Bill Russell, Third District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Lee Caldwell, Fourth District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Harvey Lee, Fifth District	<u>YES</u>

E. Old Business – None

F. New Business – None

G. Executive Session – None

Supervisor Mark Gardner made the motion to recess the Board meeting until June 16, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Harvey Lee.

The motion passed by a vote as follows:

Supervisor Jessie Medlin, First District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Mark Gardner, Second District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Bill Russell, Third District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Lee Caldwell, Fourth District	<u>YES</u>
Supervisor Harvey Lee, Fifth District	<u>YES</u>

THIS the 10th day of June, 2014, these minutes have been read and approved by the DeSoto County Board of Supervisors.

Lee Caldwell, President
DeSoto County Board of Supervisors