



Telecast Services Updates

City Council Budget Meeting | November 5, 2025



In today's presentation

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- Current Telecast Services Model
- Why 2026 Is a Strategic Moment
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- Meeting Resident Expectations for Information
- Proposal: New Community-Powered Telecast Services Model
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How Public Access Works in Saint Paul

- Cable companies don't automatically have the right to run wires under city streets or on poles. Cities grant that right through a **franchise** agreement.
- In Saint Paul, Comcast operates here under that franchise. In return, Comcast must:
 - Pay franchise fees (5% of gross cable revenue).
 - Support "PEG channels" through ongoing infrastructure and capital equipment support.
- SPNN (Saint Paul Neighborhood Network) has historically delivered **Public** and **Educational** access on the City's behalf as the City's "designated entity" for these services.
- OTC delivers **Government** access — including City Council and Ramsey County Board meetings.

What is "PEG"?

PEG ensures that local communities can see and participate in local government and local community discussion — not just watch national programming.

- **Public** access: community-produced content, neighborhood voices.
- **Educational** access: learning, youth media, schools.
- **Government** access: live and replayed coverage of public meetings, information about government services



Current Telecast Services Model

The City Charter requires OTC to ensure that:

- Council meetings air live on the government access channel.
- Meetings are replayed within 2 days on a Council-approved schedule.
- Meetings are streamed live and remain available online afterward.

OTC's Video Team directs and records approximately 200 meetings per year, including:

- Running live broadcasts of Council and other required meetings.
- Switching between cameras so people can see who is speaking.
- Managing audio so people can hear discussion and deliberation.
- Adding on-screen IDs/graphics so viewers understand what issue is being discussed.
- Ensuring the cable and streaming feeds don't fail mid-meeting.
- Publishing the replay and on-demand video quickly, so residents and press can review.

Meet OTC's Video Team

OTC delivers on Charter requirements with a small team:

- 3 Video Production Specialists.
- 1 Media Services Coordinator (team lead).
- All are represented (PEA).
- All are funded by the City's General Fund. PEG does not cover their salaries.





Why 2026 Is a Strategic Moment

Three decision points arrive at the same time in 2026:

- **Franchise renegotiation with Comcast:** The City defines Comcast's obligations for channel capacity, quality standards, and PEG support in exchange for use of the public right-of-way.
- **Renewal of the City-County Telecast Services Agreement:** Saint Paul and Ramsey County define who is responsible for producing and airing City/County meetings and how that work is cost-shared.
- **Planned staffing vacancy in OTC:** One of the four broadcast-specialist roles is expected to retire in 2026 after more than 30 years of service.

Opportunity

- Protect uninterrupted Council and County meeting access for residents.
- Strengthen SPNN's role as a civic media partner.
- Reposition an upcoming vacancy to better serve resident communication needs.
- Do so without requesting new General Fund spending.

Why 2026 is Pivotal Year

- The Comcast franchise and PEG obligations must be renegotiated.
- The Telecast Services Agreement must be renewed.
- A staffing handoff is already expected.

Addressing all three together allows Council to set a durable model for the next decade of public access.

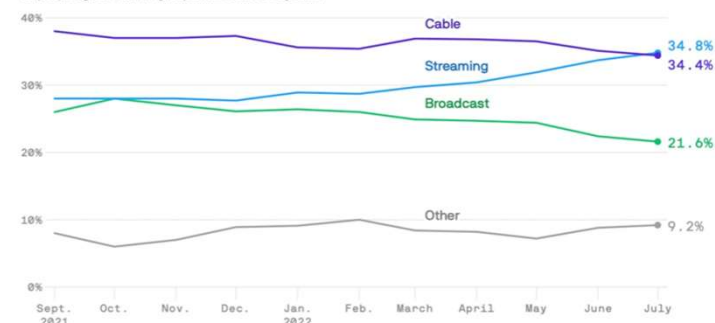


Community Media Model Is Under Pressure Nationally

- The traditional model for local community media is under stress everywhere, not just in Saint Paul due to fewer households pay for traditional cable television; most now get video over broadband/streaming. Only traditional cable is subject to the franchise and PEG fee; other services offered by the operator (phone, internet, etc.) are not.
- Public access providers like OTC and SPNN are expected to keep producing civic content and local storytelling with less revenue from the cable franchise.
- Rather than operate community media capacity in parallel “silos” (City doing Government Access, SPNN doing Public/Educational Access), we can begin to align operations.
- A single community access provider delivering day-to-day production for government meetings — under OTC oversight — creates operational efficiency, protection for public access as a unified civic service, and stability for SPNN as a long-standing access institution.

Share of total TV consumption, by type

For people ages 2+; Monthly, September 2021 to July 2022



Data: Nielsen; Chart: Axios Visuals | Fischer, Sara. "Streaming Surpasses Cable as Top Way to Consume TV." Axios, 18 Aug. 2022



Saint Paul Neighborhood Network's Role

- ✓ Franchise agreement requires a nonprofit to manage Public/Educational channels.
- ✓ For over 40 years, SPNN has overseen operations, management, and funding of public and educational access channels in Saint Paul.
- ✓ PEG channels are non-commercial, meaning traditional viewership ratings are not available. A 2013 survey showed that 40% of Saint Paul cable subscribers watched SPNN.
- ✓ The rise of streaming has led to a steep decline in cable franchise revenue. SPNN, which previously received about \$1M in PEG funds annually now receives around \$550,000, is adjusting through diversified funding like grants, earned revenue, and donations. With this new franchise agreement the PEG fee SPNN receives moves from general operating to restricted for capital.
- ✓ SPNN continues to engage the community by offering media-making opportunities and providing local programming on four Comcast channels in Saint Paul, despite financial challenges seen by other PEG operators in the region.
- ✓ **CTEP Program:** AmeriCorps program that partners with local nonprofits and Ramsey County libraries to offer digital literacy training to the community.





Residents Expect City Information Everywhere

- Residents, media, and community groups expect to be able to watch proceedings in full when needed. That visibility remains essential.
- But most residents do not experience City government only by watching full meetings. They expect to encounter City information across multiple channels they already use:
 - Mobile video and short clips.
 - Social platforms.
 - The City website in plain language.
 - Email/text-style service alerts.

Departments across the City increasingly rely on OTC for that broader public-facing communication. Looking forward:

- We need to maintain uninterrupted Government Access to public meetings.
- We also need dedicated City capacity to communicate decisions and services on the channels residents use.

Resident Expectations

- Public meetings are available to watch.
- Key information from those meetings and City decisions also appears where residents already are (phone, web, social, in-language).

The City's role needs to include:

- Providing live and replay access to proceedings, and
- Publishing accurate, accessible information about those decisions across channels.

Proposal: New Telecast Services Model (2026-2027)

Partnering with Saint Paul
Neighborhood Network



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Evaluating Options for Telecast Services

Option 1: Status Quo (OTC)

- OTC staff produce every City Council and Ramsey County meeting in-house.
- Relies on a very small team; not scalable long-term.
- County does not formally share operating cost.

Option 2: Community Partnership Model (SPNN)

- SPNN produces meetings for City Council and Ramsey County (~300 hrs/year).
- City and County split cost (~\$18,750 each); OTC keeps oversight and standards.
- PEG dollars support chambers infrastructure, not new General Fund.
- Keeps access local and stable.



Preferred Model

Option 3: Vendor Managed Services (Granicus)

- For-profit vendor (e.g. Granicus/Swagit) provides full broadcast service.
- Higher ongoing contract cost than SPNN for similar work.
- Dollars leave Saint Paul; less alignment with community media and PEG.



Option 2: Community Partnership Model (SPNN)

- SPNN is a trusted Saint Paul partner for 40+ years in community media
- Strong roots in neighborhoods and resident access
- Faces same funding pressures as other community media (cord-cutting)
- **Managed services option:**
 - SPNN provides ~300 broadcast hours/year at \$125/hr (~\$37,500)
 - City oversees contract and ensures quality
 - Flexibility to scale service as needed
 - OTC maintains similar capability.

Accountability Model

Responsible: SPNN Operates live meeting coverage and posting.	Accountable: OTC Sets standards, ensures compliance, oversees service.
Consulted: City Council/Ramsey County Board Set transparency expectations and approve cost share.	Informed: Residents/Media/City Staff Receive reliable, uninterrupted access to Council and County meetings — live, replayed, and on-demand.



Current State

Telecast Services 2026-2027

Category	Cost Item	City Funding	County Funding	Notes
Operations (Live Meeting Production) (10016300)	OTC in-house broadcast operations for City Council & County meetings (~300 hrs/yr)	OTC General Fund: 3 Video Production Specialists + 1 Media Services Coordinator)	—	City staff physically run meetings live, cut cameras, manage audio, publish replay.
Streaming & Public Access Tools (71016200)	Webstreaming Contract	—	\$10,800	County-funded Granicus services.
	Webstreaming Subscription	—	\$2,700	County-funded Granicus services.
	Government Transparency Suite / Meeting Portal (Granicus)	\$31,865.63 (GF)		City public meeting portal, agendas, and video access.
	Encoding Appliance Software	\$1,620.73 (GF)	\$1,620.73	Encoder software/hardware for broadcast signal. The City and County maintain separate Granicus encoders with separate instances of Legistar.
	Open Platform Suite (streaming & archiving)	\$3,641.79 (GF)		Archiving, indexing, and publishing recordings.
Capital / Chambers Infrastructure (CRF) (21116210)	Council Chambers AV / broadcast infrastructure Capital Replacement Fund (CRF)	\$34,500 (GF)	\$34,500	Both City and County currently contribute \$34.5K each to keep Council Chambers cameras, audio, control room equipment, and encoders up to standard.
PEG Allocation (2025) (21116215)	PEG revenue (Public/Educational/Government Access support)	City PEG share: \$185,000 (SF)	—	SPNN PEG share ~ \$565,192. PEG is generally restricted to capital/infrastructure for PEG channels, not ongoing City staff time.



Proposal for 2026-2027

Telecast Services 2026-2027

Category	Cost Item	City Funding	County Funding	Notes
Operations (Live Meeting Production) (21116210)	SPNN Broadcast Operations Contract (~300 hrs/yr Council + County meetings)	\$18,750 (GF)	\$18,750	SPNN staff physically run meetings live, cut cameras, manage audio, publish replay.
Streaming & Public Access Tools (71016200)	Webstreaming Contract	—	\$10,800	County-funded Granicus services.
	Webstreaming Subscription	—	\$2,700	County-funded Granicus services.
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Capital / Chambers Infrastructure (CRF) (21116210)	Council Chambers AV / broadcast infrastructure Capital Replacement Fund (CRF)	\$15,750 (GF) \$37,500 (SF – PEG)	\$15,750	Both City and County currently contribute \$34.5K each to keep Council Chambers cameras, audio, control room equipment, and encoders up to standard.
PEG Allocation (2026-2027) (21116215)	PEG revenue under proposed 85% / 15% split (City 15%, SPNN 85%)	City PEG share: \$112,000 (SF)	—	PEG is capital-restricted. Of the City's ~\$112K PEG: ~\$75K supports OTC's equipment/tech; ~\$37.5K supports the CRF backfill. SPNN's ~85% share (~\$638K) supports Public/Educational access space and equipment and supports SPNN's Government Access production capacity.



Next Steps & Roadmap

Comcast Franchise

November 2025

Finalize
Stakeholder
Alignment



December 2025

Introduce Final
Agreements for
Review/Adoption



Jan - Feb 2026
Implementation &
Training Period



March 2026

SPNN Assumes
Meeting Direction
Responsibilities



- ✓ OTC and SPNN present to City Council Budget Committee on Telecast Services Updates
- ✓ OTC/CAO finalizes agreement language

- ✓ SPNN Performance Agreement Introduced
- ✓ Telecast Services Agreement Introduced
- ✓ Agreements reviewed and adopted

- ✓ OTC and SPNN begin an implementation period where SPNN staff shadow OTC meeting directors

- ✓ SPNN assumes day-to-day responsibilities for meeting broadcast direction under OTC supervision

Appendix

Background Information



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Public, Educational, & Government (PEG) Access

- ✓ Comcast is obligated to provide five PEG channels at no additional cost to customers:
 - SPNN provides Public and Educational Access: Community-produced content.
 - OTC provides Government Access: Local government meetings and services.
- ✓ Comcast must also support PEG channel equipment and infrastructure through a 2.5% gross revenue fee, specifically allocated to PEG capital costs.
- ✓ The City has the right to reclaim PEG channel capacity if underutilized, ensuring active use.
- ✓ Comcast is required to make these PEG channels accessible on all service tiers, ensuring no additional charges for subscribers.
- ✓ Comcast must cooperate with the City and PEG operators to ensure effective delivery of PEG services, including technical support for channel quality.

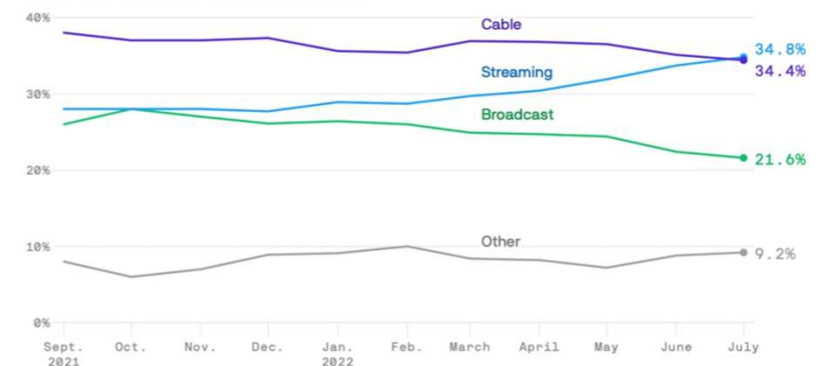


National Trends in Cable Franchising

- ✓ Decline in 40-year funding stream for community television due to cord cutting.
- ✓ Video programming marketplace has shifted significantly since the 1980s when cable operators initially built the infrastructure.
- ✓ Majority of internet service (69% of the market in 2021) is delivered through cable infrastructure in public right-of-way.
- ✓ Traditional cable TV subscribers are abandoning cable for digital/video streaming services delivered via broadband.
- ✓ Cable operators are shifting strategies to convert cable TV subscribers to "over-the-top" (OTT) delivery (streaming services), though these OTT services are often delivered through the same cable infrastructure in City right-of-way.

Share of total TV consumption, by type

For people ages 2+; Monthly, September 2021 to July 2022



Data: Nielsen; Chart: Axios Visuals Fischer, Sara. "Streaming Surpasses Cable as Top Way to Consume TV." Axios, 18 Aug. 2022



Cable Franchise & PEG Fees Trends

	2019 Actuals	2020 Actuals	2021 Actuals	2022 Actuals	2023 Actuals	5 Year Average	2024 Budget
Cable Franchise Fees	\$2,338,124	\$2,122,185	\$2,107,990	\$1,913,672	\$1,790,210	\$2,054,436	\$1,870,000
PEG	\$1,131,254	\$1,061,092	\$1,053,995	\$956,836	\$895,106	\$1,019,657	\$965,000



Relevant Regulations and Agreements

City Charter

The CIO is responsible for ensuring telecast services are provided, but the **charter does not require OTC to directly provide these services**. The referenced standard is **8 hours of programming**, allowing flexibility in service models.

Telecast Services Agreement

Current 2-year agreement defines **City responsibilities for recording, cablecasting, and webstreaming public meetings** but allows for renegotiation. Any shift to a managed services model would require an amendment and agreement on cost-sharing.



Expires Dec. 31, 2025

Comcast Franchise

Governs the **City's authority over cable franchise operations and Public, Educational, and Government (PEG) channels**. Establishes obligations for **funding and equipment upkeep** related to public access programming.



Expires Dec. 2025

SPNN Performance Agreement

Defines **community programming commitments** and the role of **Saint Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN)** in supporting public access television. Specifies **SPNN's obligations for playback of government programming**, which could be leveraged in a shift of Telecast Services to SPNN.



Expired in 2018



Sec. 15.08. - Broadcasting city council activities.

- a) All regular city council meetings will be cablecast live on the government access channel and played back on the same government access channel within two (2) days of the meeting on days and times approved by the city council. All regular city council meetings will also be webcast live and available on the internet. Special meetings of the city council shall be cable and webcast at the discretion of the chair.
- b) Regular city council meeting agendas will be available on the city's internet site at least three (3) days prior to the meeting.
- c) At least eight (8) programming hours featuring city council issues addressing city topics of the city council's choice will be produced annually. Each month programs will be cablecast on the government access channel on a schedule approved by the city council and made available on the city's web and the internet.
- d) Technology support services will be provided for legislative hearings.

The director of the office of technology shall be responsible for ensuring that the above services are provided.



Telecast Services Agreement (2024-2025)

The City shall:

- a) Record and cablecast live on the City of Saint Paul's government access channel (currently channel 18), the County Board meetings, meetings of County Board committees, and other County meetings in the Council Chambers or virtually, all in accordance with the City's Office of Technology and Communications standards and procedures for recording and cablecasting meetings of the Saint Paul City Council.
- b) The City shall provide through its contract with Granicus, and through utilization of the City's Office of Technology and Communications, live and recorded webstreaming and indexing of County meetings, for those meetings that are televised on the City's government access channel (City Channel 18), and as determined by the County, both to the public and to County's local area network.
- c) Provide the County with administrative oversight of technicians and staff involved in the cablecasts and graphics consultations, not to exceed four hours per month unless previously approved by the County's Director of Communications & Public Relations.
- d) Furnish all labor necessary to perform the services set forth in this Agreement. The City shall utilize equipment procured through the Capital Replacement Fund (defined below) and/or City-owned equipment for the Recording and cablecasting services and shall furnish up to two technicians as required for each meeting that is recorded.
- e) The City will provide access to, and/or a copy of, all recorded Ramsey County meetings in an agreed to format as technology and resources dictate.
- f) Replace bulbs and other lighting supplies in the Council Chambers used for cablecasting of the meetings and maintain the City-owned equipment.
- g) Maintain a Capital Replacement Fund for replacement of the City owned equipment. The City and the County shall each contribute 50% of the annual amount placed in the Fund. The City shall manage the Fund and shall report to the County the amounts of both City and County contributions and expenditures made from the Fund. It is understood and agreed to by the parties that the County's contributions to the Fund in no way give the County an ownership or property interest in the City owned equipment.



Appendix H. - Cable Communications Franchise— Comcast of St. Paul, Inc.

Section 102. - Franchise administrator.

The City may from time to time designate an entity to be responsible for the continuing administration of the Cable franchise and for the planning and development of Cable services by providing written notice of the designation to the Company. The designee as of the effective date of this franchise shall be the City's Cable Communications Officer. Any action taken by such designee, within the scope of the authority granted by the City, and any notice received from such designee, shall be treated as an action of, or notice by the City.



SPNN Performance Agreement (2017-2018)

C. Access and Community Programming Channel Time

1. SPNN will maintain and enforce policies and procedures for allocating, reserving and using time on the designated Access Channels. Such policies and all subsequent policy changes will be submitted to the City's Office of Technology and Communications within thirty (30) days of a change. No program cablecast on an Access Channel will violate federal, state, or local laws and regulations.
2. SPNN will be responsible for the playback of video, audio and text programming on the four (4) designated Access Channels, in accordance with SPNN's established policies and procedures. SPNN will staff playback facilities to insure program playback seven days per week and an average of twelve hours per day per channel, and a failure rate of no more than 5 percent of the total playback hours.
3. SPNN will produce and provide Community Programming via cable television, the web/internet and other electronic formats and mediums that will include, but not be limited to: local sports events, parades, community and public affairs, education, political and cultural events programming about non-profits and the diverse nonEnglish speaking communities in Saint Paul. The Community Programming shall consist of no less than ten (10) hours per month and no less than five (5) multi-media projects per month. Such programming will include City Council and Mayoral Inaugurations, the Mayor's State-of-the-City Address, and up to four (4) other public events or meetings as requested by the Office of Technology and Communications. The City will provide its staff, on a staff available basis for the production of City government related programming.
4. SPNN shall maintain and adhere to its written policy regarding the fair and equal treatment of political candidates with respect to programs produced by SPNN and public events covered by SPNN. SPNN shall notify the City 30 days in advance of any proposed changes to the policy.
5. SPNN will not engage in commercial production activities with for-profit entities or engage in production or other activities, which adversely affect SPNN's ability to perform or provide the services specified in this Agreement.
6. SPNN will provide cablecasting and scheduling services in cooperation with the educational access community.
7. SPNN will create a plan, which will be approved by the City, to address the goal of telecasting at least one monthly community program per each diverse non-English speaking Saint Paul population, representing the Hmong, Karen, Latino and Somali communities.



Exploring Alternative Telecast Service Models

- A. Status Quo, OTC Retains Full Control
- B. SPNN Services, OTC Retains Operational Oversight
- C. Semi-Autonomous Vendor Managed Services (Granicus Swaggit product)



Option A: Status Quo – OTC Continues Providing All Telecast Services

- OTC maintains **full internal production and support** for City Council and Ramsey County meetings.
- **No role for SPNN in government broadcast operations** under performance agreement.
- **All services remain under OTC's operational control.**
- **Requires renewal of the Telecast Services Agreement for 2026.**

Pros:

- Preserves continuity of service delivery with no transition risk.
- Keeps production standards and quality fully within OTC oversight.
- Builds on established processes that stakeholders are already familiar with.

Cons:

- Represents the highest overall cost model compared to alternatives.
- Limits opportunities to reallocate OTC resources toward other enterprise and departmental priorities.



Current Telecast Services Funding Model

County: Annual Fixed Costs: \$48,900

Cablecasting: \$3,600

Equipment Maintenance:
\$2,500

Webstreaming: \$10,800

**Capital Replacement
Fund:** \$32,000

*Variable service on request
(tech time + admin) \$48/hour
+ \$200 admin.*

City: Annual Fixed Costs

Capital Replacement Fund

- **\$32,000/year** (matching the County's share).

OTC Video Team (PEA):

3 Video Specialists, 1 Media Services Coordinator

- Up to 20% of staff time

OTC (Professional Services): Granicus

- Government Transparency Suite (includes MediaManager, streaming, agenda/video integration): \$32,472.50
- Granicus Encoding Appliance Software (GT): \$1,651.50
- Open Platform Suite: \$3,711.16



Current Telecast Services Staffing Model (OTC)

OTC Video Team Composition (PEA)

- **3 Video Production Specialists**
- **1 Media Services Coordinator (Team Lead)**

Key Responsibilities

- Producing high-quality, mobile-first video content for public information and City initiatives.
- Managing live broadcasts of public meetings per charter requirements for City Council.
- Provides services for Ramsey County under Telecast Services Agreement.
- Overseeing public access television operations.
- Oversight of Comcast cable complaints process through Franchise Agreement as LFA.

Time Allocation

- **Total broadcast hours per year:** ~200 meetings (approx. 300-400 hours of staff time total across all roles directing).
- **Impact on other responsibilities:** Staff members must be present for broadcasts.



Option B: SPNN Managed Services

OTC Manages Contract

- SPNN takes on broadcasts as a paid-by-the-hour service.
- 300 hours/year at \$125/hr (\$37,500), with option to scale.
- SPNN production team delivers; may use trained interns/contractors.
- Shifts from production to contract management and technical coordination.
- Requires updated Telecast Services and SPNN Performance Agreements.

Cost

- Broadcast Baseline:
\$37,500/year
(300 hours at \$125/hr).
- Additional hours/services:
Negotiated at hourly rate.
- Total Annual Cost
dependent on hours utilized and SPNN capacity



SPNN's Challenges and How City Support Helps

- PEG revenues have dropped sharply, leaving SPNN with a structural deficit (~\$54K FY25).
- Every SPNN team must generate its own revenue to stay afloat — an unstable model.
- Production services are budgeted to raise \$80K, but without a baseline contract, revenue is uncertain.
- A City contract for 300 hours (\$37,500) provides predictable income and stabilizes the production team.
- This stability frees SPNN to expand services and sustain small nonprofits and grassroots groups with little budget.
- Ensures continuity of public meeting coverage while preserving a trusted community partner with deep local roots.



Option B: Potential Funding Approach

Current Model

- City and County each contribute **\$32,000 annually** into the **Capital Replacement Fund (CRF)** for long-term equipment and telecasting needs
- This creates a combined **\$64,000/year CRF contribution**.

Proposed Adjustment (SPNN Contract)

- Redirect **about half of the CRF contributions (\$32,000)** to fund **SPNN's \$37,500 baseline contract** (300 hours at \$125/hr)
- OTC would **fill the gap** in the CRF by allocating **PEG funds** to maintain necessary capital equipment replacement and modernization.

Rationale

- Provides a **stable revenue baseline for SPNN**, allowing them to deliver telecast services while continuing community programming.
- Maintains City/County's **long-term equipment sustainability** commitment by supplementing with PEG resources.



Option C: Semi-Autonomous Managed Services (Granicus Swagit)

- Implement **Swagit remote managed services** for public meeting broadcasts.
- OTC's role moves to **ensuring chambers technology functions properly** and is replaced as needed.
- Swagit staff operate broadcasts **remotely** and provide **automatic time-stamping and indexing** of agenda items.

Cons:

- Requires significant upfront investment (estimated \$70,000 installation).
- City loses direct operational control; vendor dependency.
- Less local workforce development and community integration than SPNN model.

Financial Impact

- **Additional Costs:**
- \$120,000 annual service fee
- \$70,000 one-time installation
- **Total Annual Cost:** \$120,000 recurring