

DEPT: CMO

Maintaining the government access channel requires several hours of staff time each week to prepare, schedule, and manage programming. Given the City's transition to digital platforms and the lack of available audience data for cable broadcasts, this staff investment is becoming increasingly difficult to justify. **Therefore, staff is requesting approval to notify Mediacom that the City of Ames is voluntarily relinquishing Government Access Channel 12 and Public Access Channel 16 effective on a mutually agreed upon date.**

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

To gauge public interest before making a recommendation, the Communications and Outreach Division broadcast notification of a possible change. **During several weeks in June, public service announcements aired on Channel 12 informing viewers that the City was considering discontinuing cable broadcasts and inviting comments. No comments or concerns were received.**

Following that effort, programming on Channel 12 was replaced with a static message informing viewers that the City is considering ending broadcasts and providing contact information for feedback. This notification will continue for one additional week. If no comments or concerns are received during that period, staff believes there is sufficient indication that discontinuing the channels will have minimal impact on the community.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Direct staff to notify Mediacom Communications that the City wishes to relinquish the Government and Public Access channels.
2. Refer this item back to staff for further information.
3. Do nothing, and continue to maintain the City's Government and Public Access channels.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The manner in which people access information changes over time, and the City must adapt its communications strategy with these changes. Because City Council meetings and other public meetings are streamed live on Facebook and YouTube, they remain available for on-demand viewing. These platforms provide convenient access on computers, tablets, smartphones, and smart televisions while also offering viewing metrics that help evaluate audience engagement. Because of the staff time involved in maintaining public access stations and the lack of comments received about discontinuing, this change should have minimal impact on the community. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1, as described above.