



City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division

# Guide to the Mayor's Office of Cable Communications filings

Finding aid prepared by Patrick T. Collins

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**Repository:** City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division  
**Title:** Mayor's Office of Cable Communications filings  
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**Quantity:** 7.5 Cubic feet (7 Record Cartons, 1 Flat File)

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## Biographical/Historical note

The Mayor's Office of Cable Communications was established in July of 1980 and given the task of researching and planning the development of Boston's cable television and communication system. The idea of cable

television for the City of Boston was first explored in 1973, but was abandoned because the City found that it would have to bear an unfair financial burden. Mayor Kevin White re-visited the cable issue in 1979 and it was decided that the City would move forward with a franchise system. The Office of Cable Communications was the sole office within the City government that dealt exclusively and specifically with the cable franchising process in Boston; and as such, the office served an important policy-making function as the principle advisor to the Mayor on the cable franchise issue. The Mayor had the exclusive power to award the cable franchise license.

The Office of Cable Communications, in its roles as head of cable development and advisor to the Mayor undertook the following activities:

- Researched and monitored cable development in major U.S. cities to learn from the experiences of other municipalities;
- Received and reviewed the first round of franchise applications/proposals for Boston's cable system from the Fall of 1980 thru the Spring of 1981;
- Formulated the Issuing Authority's Report (i.e. Request for Proposals) specifying Boston's demands for its future cable system;
- Assisted in the establishment of the Cable Access Advisory Committee and provided staff support for the issuance of the Committee's final report to the Mayor in December of 1980;
- Staged a workshop on cable communications at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for City of Boston Department heads and their designees to stimulate their thinking on how cable communications capabilities can be utilized to deliver City services more efficiently;
- Planned a citywide public education effort on cable aimed at eliciting neighborhood and institutional participation in the planning process;
- Held public hearings in 1981 in order to allow the final two franchise applicants (Cablevision of Boston and Warner Amex) to present, explain, and answer questions concerning their applications/proposals.

Presently the Office of Cable Communications still handles all cable related business for the City. The Office is located in the Mayor's cabinet under the Chief Information Officer. Its current roles and responsibilities include:

- Monitoring cable television franchises with both Comcast and RCN-BecoComm
- Reports and mediates consumer issues regarding cable television service & performance & rates and construction
- Programs Boston Kids & Family TV in cooperation with WGBH on Comcast Channel A-22 & RCN's Channel 3
- Produces and programs "Boston City TV," the City's shared education and city public affairs service on Comcast Channel A-24 & RCN Channel 16
- Funds and collaborates with the Boston Community Access & Programming Foundation, (BNN-TV) which programs community access television on Comcast Channels A-9 & A-23 and RCN's Channels 19 & 83
- Certifies eligible telecommunications providers to do business with the city of Boston under the city's Office of Telecommunications Policy
- Works with the City's ROW and Permitting agencies to ensure proper protections for city streets and public ways

In addition to the above listed activities, the Office of Cable Communications, as it has done since the granting of the first cable license in December of 1982, holds an annual public hearing to review the past year's performance of Boston's cable franchisee(s).

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## Scope and Contents note

This collection consists of the copies of records filed in the Office of the City Clerk by the Mayor's Office of Cable Communications for public inspection pursuant to 207 CMR (Code of Massachusetts Regulations) 3.00.

These records span the dates 1980 – 2003, with bulk dates of 1980 – 1984 and 1996 - 2003. Present within these records are proposals/applications, reports, correspondence, documents pertaining to public hearings, plans and maps, contracts, and cable licenses. There is also an application, dated January 19, 1981, by the City of Boston for a planning grant from the Public Telecommunications Facilities Program.

Many companies and corporations originally applied for the single cable license for the City of Boston in the Fall of 1980. Represented here are Cablevision of Boston, The New York Times Company, Abetta Corp., American Cablevision of Boston, Times Mirror Cable Television of Boston, Tribune Cable of Boston, Boston Cablevision Services, Inc., Rollins Cablevision of Boston Inc., and Warner Amex Cable Communications. The Office of Cable Communications selected only Cablevision of Boston (Cablevision) and Warner Amex Cable Communications (Warner Amex) for further review after the first round of applications. Therefore, material from these two companies accounts for the majority of documents within this collection. Mayor Kevin White awarded the Final License to Cablevision of Boston in December of 1982. Hence, there is a greater amount of material from Cablevision than Warner Amex present in the majority of documents just mentioned.

A company by the name of Cablevision Systems Boston Corporation originally applied for the license that Cablevision of Boston was awarded. These two companies, if not the same company, are very closely related, i.e. Cablevision Systems Boston Corporation is one of the parent companies of Cablevision of Boston. Cablevision Systems Boston Corporation applied for the license in the Fall of 1980. On April 1, 1981 Cablevision Systems Boston Corporation, Charles F. Dolan, and Cablevision Systems Development Company entered into an agreement and formed Cablevision of Boston. In March of 1982 Mayor White awarded a Provisional Cable License to Cablevision Systems Boston Corporation. In December of 1982 Cablevision Systems Boston Corporation applied to, and was granted permission to transfer this Provisional Cable License to Cablevision of Boston. Later that same month Mayor White awarded the Final Cable License to Cablevision of Boston. Records within this collection document these agreements, transfers, and awards.

In 1996, a company by the name of Metrropolitan Fiber Systems/McCourt, Inc. (MFS/M, Inc.) became involved in a dispute with Cablevision of Boston as to whether or not MFS/M, Inc. was providing an illegal cable service to parts of the City of Boston and the surrounding areas. Cablevision's complaint resulted in an extended back-and-forth of "Petitions" and "Replies," among other formal communications, between both companies and the Federal Communications Commission. Many of these documents were filed with the City Clerks office and are present in this collection in the Federal Communications Commission series.

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**Series I: Correspondence (8 Folders)**

All documents within this series were separated by company or creator and then ordered chronologically. Incoming and outgoing correspondence were interfiled in chronological order. Two letters, one from the Attorney General of the State of Ohio and the other from the Cable Communications Office of the City of Columbus, Ohio, were filed with the Warner Amex correspondence since both letters dealt with Warner Amex's cable services.

Box	Folder	
1	1	Action for Children's Television, 1981 January 21
1	2-6	Cablevision of Boston, 1981-1983
1	7	Mayor's Office of Cable Communications
Box		
7		RCN-BecoCom, L.L.C., 1998 May 27
		One letter to Mayor Thomas Menino with regards to RCN-BecoCom's Amended Proposal to the City of Boston Issuing Authority Reports. The letter

is the only document present, there are no copies of the Amended Proposal mentioned in the letter.

1            8                            Warner Amex Cable Communications, 1981

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**Series II: Proposals / Applications (77 Folders)**

The terms "Proposals" and "Applications" refer to the same type of document. The application process for the cable license involved not only a formal application but also a proposal outlining the system and stating how the applicant planned on meeting all the requirements in the Request for Proposal. Two terms are used here because some companies referred to their application packages as “applications” and others used the term “proposal.” While strictly speaking the two terms may have different definitions, here they refer to the same type of document. All documents have been separated by company name and the companies have been arranged alphabetically.

Since Cablevision and Warner Amex were the two companies chosen to move forward in the application process of 1980-1981, a Final/Amended Proposal appears for both in addition to the proposals originally submitted by each company. The date of the final proposal for Cablevision is April 22, 1981; the date of the Warner Amex's final proposal is April 23, 1981. The proposals from the City of Boston are for a federal grant from the Public Telecommunications Facilities Program to help the city with the cost of planning the new cable system. There is also a copy of the original proposal dated January 19, 1981 as well as a copy of the request to reactivate the grant application dated May 7, 1982.

RCN-BecoCom, L.L.C. also filed an application for a cable television license in and for the City of Boston in 1997.

Box	Folder	
1	9	ABETTA Corp., 1980 November 3
1	10-17	American Cablevision of Boston, 1980 November 3
1	18-19	Boston Cablevision Services, Inc., 1980 November 3
2	30-35	Cablevision Systems Boston Corporation, 1980 October 31, 1981 April 22
1	20-29	
2	36-37	City of Boston, Mayor's Office of Cable Communications, 1981 January 19, 1982 May 7
2	38-42	New York Times Company, 1980 October 27
7		RCN-BecoCom, L.L.C., 1997 November 24
2	43-49	Rollins Cablevision of Boston, Inc., 1980 November 3
2	50	Times Mirror Cable Television of Boston, 1980 November 3
3	51-53	
3	54-56	Tribune Cable of Boston, 1980 November 3
3	57-79	Warner Amex Cable Communications, 1980 November 1, 1981 April 23
4	80-85	

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**Series III: Public Hearings (10 Folders)**

This series contains transcripts of hearings, procedural rules for hearings, public notices of hearings, as well as exhibits. There is also some correspondence present within this series. Separation by company was not possible with these documents since often times a single item dealt with more than one company. All documents pertaining to a certain hearing were kept together and the hearings have been ordered chronologically.

Box	Folder	
4	86-90	1981
4	91	1982
4	92-94	1983
4	95	1985-1986, 1988-1989, 1992-1994

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**Series IV: Reports (10 Folders)**

This series contains reports and papers about cable and its various uses within the City of Boston, demographic analysis, analysis of different cable proposals, and also the Issuing Authority Report (i.e. Request for Proposal) from 1981. Included with the Analysis of Cablevision's and Warner Amex's Final Applications/Proposals is the Malarkey Taylor Report, "Analysis of Cable Television License Proposals" from June 30, 1981. Separation by company was not an option within this series since many of the documents present did not deal with a specific company or dealt with more than one. In this series, reports of the same type (e.g. Site Visit Reports) have been filed together in chronological order; otherwise all reports were filed alphabetically.

Box	Folder	
4	96-99	Analysis of Cablevision's and Warner Amex's Final Applications/Proposals, 1981
4	100	Cable Television Task Force Report, 1984 January 20
4	101	City Department Position Papers on Uses for Cable, 1981 March - October
4	102	Demographic Analysis, 1979 December, 1980 July
4	103	Issuing Authority Report, 1981 February
4	104	MIT Research Program on Communications Policy Report, 1981 February
4	105	Site Visit Reports, 1981 June

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**Series V: Licenses (36 Folders)**

This series contains documents which pertain only to the actual cable license and/or the transfer of that license, not the application process. All documents in this series have been filed in chronological order.

Box	Folder	
5	106-107	Provisional Cable Television License, 1982 March 25
5	108	Transfer of Provisional License, 1982 December 10
5	109	Final License, 1982 December 15
5	110-132	Final License Documentation, Cablevision of Boston, 1982 December 15
6	133-137	
6	138	Proposed Amendments to Final License, 1988 August 22

6	139	Report on Proposed Amendments, 1988 August 22
6	140	Amended Final License, 1988 December 15
6	141	Report on Request for Amendment to Final License, 1993 October 29
7		Interim Cable Television Renewal License, 1997 December 15 Between Cablevision of Boston, Inc. and the City of Boston.
7		Amendment to the Interim Cable Television Renewal License, 1998 February 18
7		Second Amendment to Interim Cable Television Renewal License, 1998 April 24
7		Renewal Cable Television License, Cablevision of Boston, Inc., 1998 May 11
7		Application for Transfer of Cable License, 2000 June 16
7		Transfer of Cable Television License, 2002 July 17
7		Proposed Amendment to the Cable Television License and Agreement, 2003 November 24 Between Comcast of Boston, Inc. and the City of Boston.

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**Series VI: Contracts (1 Folder)**

This series contains contractual documents between Cablevision of Boston and The Boston Community Access and Programming Foundation, Inc. All documents in this series have been filed in chronological order.

Box	Folder	
6	142	Cablevision of Boston, 1983, 1990
7		Contract Extension for Cablevision of Boston, Inc., 1997 December 15

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**Series VII: Federal Communications Commission**

This Series contains documents which have been either received from or submitted to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Specific documents include those concerning Cablevision of Boston's (Cablevision) dispute with Metropolitan Fiber Systems/McCourt, Inc. (MFS/M, Inc.) over the legality of MFS/M, Inc.'s open video system. These documents span the dates 1996-1997. Also included are documents regarding the subsequent dispute between Cablevision and the City of Boston over whether or not Cablevision should be subject to rate regulation based on the amount and type of competition present in the Boston cable market. This dispute took place between 1997 and 1998. A number of documents also pertain to Residential Communications Network (RCN), their affiliates (including MFS/M, Inc.), and their dealings with the FCC concerning their open video systems. These documents span the dates 1997-1998.

Box		
7		Opposition of Cablevision of Boston, Inc. to the Motion of Metropolitan Fiber Systems/McCourt, inc. for Extension of Time, 1996 November 18
7		Reply of MFS/M, Inc. and MFS New York, Inc. d/b/a MFS Telecom of New York to Oppositions and Comments, 1996 November 25
7		MFS/M, Inc.'s Notification of Open Video System Certification, 1996 November 27
7		Comments of the Massachusetts Cable Television Commission on MFS/M, Inc.'s Second

- 7 OVS Application for its Boston System, 1996 December 4
- 7 Opposition of Cablevision of Boston, Inc. to the Application of MFS/M, Inc. for Open Video Certification, 1996 December 4
- 7 RCN-BETG, LLC Notification of Open Video System Certification, 1997 February 17
- 7 RCN-BETG, LLC Notice of Intent to Establish an Open Video System
- 7 Opposition of the Massachusetts Cable Television Commission to the Petition for Reconsideration [of MFS/M, Inc.], 1997 April 10
- 7 Opposition of Cablevision of Boston, Inc. to the Petition for Reconsideration of MFS/M, Inc. and MFS/NEW York, Inc. d/b/a MFS/M, Inc., 1997 April 15
- 7 Opposition to Petition for Reconsideration [of MFS/M, Inc.] of Time Warner Cable of New York City and Paragon Communications, 1997 April 15
- 7 Petition for Review and Notice of Appeal of an Order of the FCC on behalf of MFS/New York Inc. d/b/a MFS Telecom of New York and MFS/M, Inc., 1997 June 12
- 7 Cablevision of Boston, Inc.'s, Petition for Special Relief, 1997 July 14
- 7 Copy of "Cablevision of Boston, Inc.'s, Petition for Special Relief" sent to the Wholesale Lockbox Shift Supervisor at the FCC Cable Services Bureau, 1997 July 14
- 7 Reply of Cablevision of Boston, Inc. to the City of Boston's letter regarding Cablevision's "Petition for Special Relief", 1997 August 27
- 7 Cablevision of Boston, Inc.'s Petition for Reconsideration, 1998 October 23
- 7 Cablevision of Boston, Inc.'s Petition for Stay Pending Reconsideration, 1998 October 23

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**Series VIII: Miscellanea (1 Folder)**

This series contains miscellaneous documents that do not belong to any of the other series present. Items include advertising pamphlets, copies of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations, and references for information for Boston's cable system.

Box	Folder	
6	143	Misc., undated

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**Series IX: Maps / Plans (12 Folders, Oversize Material)**

This series contains maps and plans depicting Cablevision of Boston's work and progress on the City of Boston's cable system. In addition there are maps of various zones within the City of Boston that show various stages of construction. These maps may or may not represent the work of Cablevision. They have been separated and filed according to the geographic location they depict. Additional maps/plans may also be found throughout other parts of this collection; they were left in their original locations in order to avoid breaking their context.

Box	Folder	
6	144-145	Boston, 1979, 1982
6	146-148	Charlestown, 1982 November 2
6	149-154	East Boston, 1982 November 1
6	155	North End, 1982 November 12

Drawer

1

Oversized

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