

Village Views

by Jeffrey Kaplan, Mayor, Village of Ellenville

(The following is the latest communication from Mayor Kaplan to TimeWarner Cable in the ongoing matter of loss of FM service.)

TimeWarner Cable
1 Cablevision Center 2nd Floor - Suite 2
Ferndale, New York 12734
Attention: Ms. Brenda Parks

Dear Ms. Parks:

I am in receipt of your letter of December 30 advising that TimeWarner has yet to reach a definitive agreement with Cablevision to provide for ongoing coverage of several sports channels.

I have found it extremely disturbing that since my election as Village Mayor communications from your office have included notifications of rate increases, loss of FM service throughout our area, and potential loss of several popular sports networks as a result of TimeWarner's inability to reach a definitive agreement with Cablevision.

There is a common and disturbing message in each of these three notifications. The TimeWarner customer is a captive audience, TimeWarner Cable is in the business of maximizing its profit, and with the abdication of rate controls, the fees and services to your cable customers are at the whim of TimeWarner's business decision.

Regarding the FM cable service, as I assume you are aware, I have attempted to reach you on several occasions since our meeting following your initial notification that we would be losing this service, and to date have yet to receive a response. For many years the mid-Hudson area had excellent FM cable service as a result of TimeWarner's predecessors supplying this service to its customers. TimeWarner's decision to discontinue this service has resulted in many of your customers being unable to use their FM stereo systems in their homes.

Although Time Warner's initial response was that few people had signed up for the FM service, as I have advised you on several occasions, there was no filter on the FM service and thus Time Warner had no idea of the number of its customers that were taking advantage of FM cable service. At the very least, reinstating this service with a filter with an additional cost to those customers interested in having FM cable reception in their homes would be appropriate. Since terminating the FM service, I have received numerous complaints from your customers who can no longer use their FM radios.

The message from TimeWarner is clear. The only real checks and balances available to municipalities serviced by TimeWarner are the open issues contained within the franchise agreement. I will strongly recommend to the Town of Wawarsing and the Village of Ellenville boards that when these agreements come up for renewal a specialist in negotiating franchise agreements be retained to insure the full extent of the benefits available to the municipalities are received. 

(If you have any comments about any of these issues, or would like to add your personal or business support:)

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