



TOWNSHIP OF HARDYSTON

HARDYSTON, NEW JERSEY 07419

Carrine Piccolo-Kaufer, P.P., AICP
Township Manager/Planner
149 Wheatworth Road, Suite A
Hardyston, NJ 07419
(973) 823-7020
Extension: 9444
Fax: (973) 823-7021
E-mail: ckauffer@hardyston.com

June 30, 2020

NJ Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350

Delivered via email - board.secretary@bpu.nj.gov

RE: Docket No. CM20030211

Dear Board of Public Utilities,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the residents of the Township of Hardyston regarding the Service Electric/Altice Cable Television Transaction referenced above.

The Board of Public Utilities is the sole regulator whose consent is required for this transaction and is involved because it concerns cable services. However, any expansion of existing cable lines, in effect, also increases Internet. At present, hundreds of homes in Hardyston Township have service that fails to meet the federal definition for high speed Internet. Our town's previous attempts to negotiate an extension of Service Electric lines, which would have resulted in more homes having high speed Internet, have been unsuccessful.

The current petition before the BPU makes assurance of "improved service" to twenty-eight NJ "communities" and promises greater speeds to existing customers. However, this skirts the core problem in rural New Jersey. The issue is not that the homes with current Service Electric service have poor Internet; the issue is that few homes have access to Service Electric at all. The existing cable/Internet lines are few and far between. The current Altice petition does not offer any clarity on that. ***We therefore ask that the Board of Public Utilities not approve this petition without specific commitment from Altice to extend cable lines (which also enables Internet service) in our town.***

The need for better Internet is critical: The closing of schools and businesses during the Covid pandemic exacerbated the existing broadband problem. Many children cannot "Zoom" at the same time from home, necessitating traveling to relatives' homes to attend school virtually. Our farmers are not able to sell their agricultural products direct-to-the-public at an on-farm location, or use remote sensing of field and greenhouse conditions, remote control of equipment, or facilitate shipping and receiving coordination without better Internet. Realtors continue to cite the poor Internet service as one reason that prospective buyers choose homes outside of our town.

We therefore urge the BPU to withhold approval for this transaction until specific concessions on extension of cable lines are made. This is our town's only means for effecting change; we have no leverage with which to require expansions of service. Therefore, we strongly urge the BPU to use this opportunity to procure concessions from Altice for residents in rural towns like ours.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these critical issues.

Very truly yours,

Carrine Piccolo-Kaufer
Township Manager/Planner

CC: Hardyston Township Mayor & Council