



Everett Falt, Clerk

## TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN

Incorporated 1845

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Blairstown, New Jersey 07825  
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Stephen J. Lance, Mayor

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New Jersey Board of Public Utilities  
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor  
PO Box 350  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350

30 June 2020

RE: Docket No. CM20030211

To the Board of Public Utilities:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the residents of the Township of Blairstown regarding the Service Electric/ Altice Cable Television transaction referenced in the above docket number.

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 coverage. At present, hundreds of homes in Blairstown 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. Service Electric has only extended a single line for about a mile in Blairstown Township in over 15 years.

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.

***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 Township of Blairstown has submitted a cable television service extension request to Altice. Altice has not offered Blairstown Township any commitment for extensions in service beyond the general statements contained in the petition.

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 connect to Zoom meetings to participate in their school classroom at the same time from home. Realtors continue to cite the poor Internet service as one reason that prospective buyers choose homes outside of our township.

We therefore urge the Board of Public Utilities to withhold approval for this transaction until specific concessions on extension of cable lines are made. This is our township's only means for effecting change; we have no leverage with which to require an expansion of service.

Therefore, we strongly urge the Board of Public Utilities 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen J. Lance". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephen" and last name "Lance" being clearly legible.

Stephen J Lance, Mayor  
Township of Blirstown

List of additional service areas requested in Blirstown Township:

Mount Hermon Road from Cedar Lake Road to Union Brick Road at the Hope Township border, with these connecting roads:

Shotwell Road and Alice Court

Frontage Road

Centerville Road

Union Brick Road

#26 to #41 Hoagland Road

Raub Road

Dry Road

Artist View Lane

Doe Drive

River Run Hollow Road

Stony Brook Road

Amackassin Road