

Here is your entry form

Complete this entry form and mail it, along with your entry, by June 3, 1992 to:

Association of Washington Cities
1076 South Franklin
Olympia, WA 98501

Title of Project: Yakima Public Affairs Channel (municipal cable access TV)

Municipality: City of Yakima

Address: 129 North 2nd Street, Yakima WA 98902

Population: 58,000

General Entry Category (check one):

- 1. Up to 1,499 population
- 2. 1,500 - 4,999 population
- 3. 5,000 - 14,999 population
- 4. 15,000 - 39,999 population
- 5. Over 40,000 population

Special Award (open to all populations)

Growth Management

Name: Wendy Warren

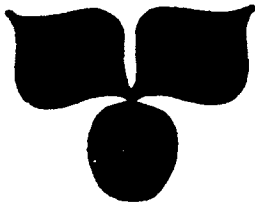
Title: Cable Communications Manager

Signature: Wendy Warren

Date: June 1, 1993.

**The 1993
AWC Municipal
Achievement Awards**

84-1



CABLE COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

(509) 575-6092

1103 SOUTH 24TH AVENUE, YAKIMA, WASHINGTON 98902

1993 AWC Municipal Achievement Awards
Project Summary

Yakima Public Affairs Cable
(municipal cable access television)

Among its most critical strategic issues, the Yakima City Council has named communication to and from its constituents as necessary to encourage and enhance citizen participation for a healthy local government. Towards that end, the staff and volunteers of Yakima Community Television have worked steadily over the past several years to increase the impact of cable access TV as an information resource in Yakima.

Yakima Community Television, operated by the Cable Communications Division of the City of Yakima, has provided public cable access programming to our community for more than ten years. As a national model, YCTV began putting cameras and post-production equipment into the hands of ordinary citizens in early 1983. Some 800 citizen-producers have been certified since then. Their efforts have resulted in a number of regional and national awards for excellence in cable access programming.

Throughout its history, the YCTV staff -- all city employees -- has squeezed in municipal television production from time to time, but it was not until 1990 that a more focused and aggressive effort was made to bring municipal issues of community-wide interest to the screens of cable TV viewers.

In January, 1991, following installation of three remote-controlled cameras in the council chamber and the conversion of half of a storage closet into a mini-control room, YCTV began televising weekly council meetings live, with taped replays. A recent citizen survey showed that 43% of the respondents regularly watch the council meetings on YCTV. Among cable subscribers, 13% say one reason they have cable TV is because of the community/municipal access channel.¹

¹ The survey was mailed to 1000 randomly selected addresses within the city and 404 completed surveys were returned.

In March, 1991, YCTV expanded from three to four staff members with the addition of a municipal producer. The original intent of the position was to provide a full-time professional who could produce an array of videos for training and public information for city divisions and departments. This production-intensive approach resulted in several award winning programs on topics as diverse as fire safety, annexation, irrigation water rates, and neighborhood clean-up. In both 1991 and 1992, YCTV received the highest honors for government access programming from the Northwest Chapter of the Alliance for Community Media (formerly known as National Federation of Local Cable Programmers). The National Association of Planners recognized the city's Planning Division and YCTV in 1991 for *Annexation: Entering Yakima*, a video overview which answers ten of the most often asked questions about the annexation process and is used at the start of neighborhood meetings as well as airing on the channel.

In September, 1992 -- barely two years into the City's commitment to access television as an information tool -- Yakima Community TV received its highest honor to date. The National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisers honored the City for excellence in government programming and named YCTV the outstanding government access facility in the U.S. for populations between 50,000 and 100,000.

The city has creatively addressed the voracious appetite of television and its viewers for information with only limited dollars and staff time. Working with the Washington Service Corps, YCTV has employed talented young people to work with city and community organizations on programs that directly impact local citizens. Innovative service corps projects have provided video expertise to the city's Office of Housing and Neighborhood Conservation and to the Gang Intervention Prevention Coalition (GIPC).

The Housing Office video (with English and Spanish versions) instructs first-time home-buyers or renters in their rights and responsibilities. The GIPC utilized a service corps intern to create a video "brochure" used on the channel and in community presentations and several PSAs informing kids and parents about daily supervised activities for young people 8 to 21 years old. In addition, the intern also organized a production team from among kids drawn to GIPC's programs and these young people intend, in turn, to make their own community shows.

In both 1991 and 1992, The National Service Corps Association recognized the City of Yakima for these projects which bring young adults into a positive work situation with a focus on community service.

Beginning in January of this year, YCTV again stepped up the effort to meet the City Council's desire to better inform the public and involve more citizens in local government. The staff re-evaluated the goal of municipal television and looked to C-SPAN for inspiration.

While staff still produces some labor and time-intensive videos, the municipal producer has turned his efforts to covering not only council meetings, but public forums, news conferences, and speakers around town. In addition, he hosts a monthly call-in program on growth management issues, and conducts frequent interviews with the mayor, city manager, department managers, and our congressman. On May 4th, we launched Y-PAC: Yakima Public Affairs Channel, which airs a five-hour block of programs every Tuesday evening beginning with the replay of that day's council meeting. This is the first phase of a projected full-time local public affairs channel which will be incorporated into planned cable system expansion over the next four years.

Despite an energetic and enthused one-man effort, Y-PAC severely tests staff time and division dollars. Again, creative problem solving and a willing group of citizens have come to the rescue. Eight community producers with a special interest in public affairs have begun covering many of the issues and events staff cannot get to, increasing YCTV's reach into the community and service to our citizens.

All staff time, equipment and facilities are funded through the 5% franchise fee the city collects from its cable TV operator. In 1993, projected revenues are \$260,000 and are held in the cable division enterprise fund, separate from general fund monies. One-quarter of those revenues goes into municipal access TV services, mainly through salary and benefits, and equipment earmarked for staff use. Over the past two years, the cable communications fund has spent over \$45,000 on cameras and studio equipment in the council chamber and for field production gear used on municipal programs. Our staff also trains other municipal employees in basic TV production to broaden the city's ability to use video as a tool of research, record, and reach.

How do we know Y-PAC benefits the community? By the positive feedback council members, managers and staff hear wherever they go. By the response on our recent survey which showed that 15% of cable subscribers include YCTV among their most frequently watched channels. By the way the phones light up when any small technical problem infringes on the play back of programs on Tuesday evening. By some viewers who have been so moved by what they were watching during live council meetings, they drove to City Hall to express their views! And by the many citizens who have stepped forward to participate in Y-PAC as producers working with staff.

Yakima Community Television is two-way communication between a government and its people at its best. Our role as conduit for information and ideas contributes to the overall quality of life which makes Yakima Washington's Best Neighborhood.

June 25, 1990

Yakima Herald-Republic

a daily part of your life

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EDITORIALS

Yakima City Council, the video, due soon

The Yakima City Council, to its credit, has approved use of wall-mounted, remote controlled cameras in the council chambers so that sometime this fall city council meetings can be broadcast on Yakima Community Television.

Some years ago KYVE taped and aired council meetings once a month but the process became too problematic. The council chamber is tiny and so full-size TV equipment has long been impractical. Modern video equipment, however, now makes it feasible and affordable to install remote-controlled gear.

The plan proposed by YCTV, calls for three wall-mounted cameras. The local TCI Cable Co. will install cabling for the live feed over Cable Channel 36. The meetings also may be taped for rebroadcast at night when more people can watch, fulfilling the purpose of allowing broader citizen information and participation.

The plan is also an excellent solution to an aggravating problem. Traditionally television personnel have been stationed near the front of the chambers. This has caused disruptions when they enter and leave and impedes contact between the council and citizens attending the meeting. It also made it impossible for local TV stations to get a shot of anyone addressing the council, facing away from them in the narrow council chambers.

The YCTV plan allows local TV stations to get a video and audio feed from the city's YCTV cameras directly into their equipment and to have a permanent station in the back of the room.

The main benefit of the plan, however, is for more persons to be able to know more about city government.

YCTV has accurately noted that "allowing the proceedings to be videotaped is no small step on the council's part. Anyone in the public eye has cause to be wary of television cameras and the staff and volunteers here will keep in mind both our responsibility to the public and respect for the council."

The plan will be a valuable additional citizen service both by the Yakima City Council and by Yakima Community Television.

TAKE ON TOWELS & BATH



(Staff photos by Roy Musitelli)

Remote video monitors poised to scan Yakima City Council meetings were activated for Tuesday's first live telecast of a City

Council meeting on YCTV, the city's community access channel, available to cable television subscribers.

Live...from Yakima City Hall

By MARK WALKER
Of the Herald-Republic

"Do we have to have that monitor there? It drives me crazy," sighed Yakima City Councilman George Pechtel as Tuesday's regular council meeting concluded.

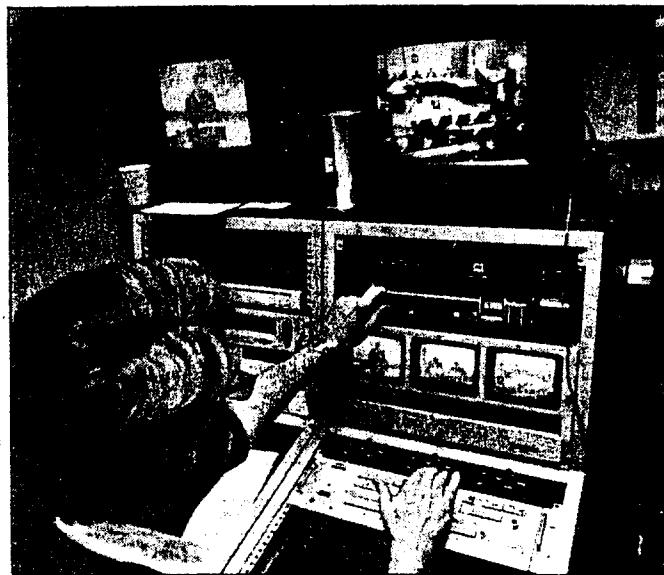
Pechtel's peeve was with a television monitor placed on the floor directly in front of the policy makers so they could see what the camera focused on as the council entered the brave new world of live television.

The meeting was the first one telecast live over the city's community access channel available to cable subscribers, YCTV, cable Channel 36.

Pechtel said his biggest complaint was not the fact the meeting was telecast live, but that the monitor detracted from his concentration.

Councilman Clarence Barnett, who was the only council member to vote against telecasting meetings live when it was considered last summer, said he's pleased with the location of the monitor.

"I like it because I know where the camera is looking," Barnett said, adding that he remains skep-



YCTV engineer Lynn Tobin operates the three remote video monitors in the City Council chambers from a small back room.

tical about live television coverage.

"I voted against it because my concern is if we're live on TV, it might inhibit the discussion. I was

warned not to grandstand and that's just my point — I think it will inhibit open discussion," he said.

Barnett said he would prefer having the focus on the speaker at

all times and not pan around the room.

To accomplish the live telecast, YCTV workers installed three cameras at strategic places in the council chambers. YCTV engineer Lynn Tobin runs the control board and a hookup with TCI Cable allows the meetings to be shown live.

But what viewers saw Tuesday was a routine, 50-minute council meeting that featured little in the way of exciting viewing.

Council members opened their meeting with a prayer for peace in the Middle East, unanimously approved two zone change applications and approved a new emergency medical dispatching system.

None of those items generated much discussion or controversy.

No one opposed the zone changes, one to allow construction of a Red Lobster near North First and I streets and the other to allow expansion of the state Department of Licensing at Lincoln Center.

Nonetheless, council members believe the live telecasts — with a repeat showing at 7 p.m. Tuesdays — provides Yakima residents an opportunity to become more fully aware of city business.

Tune in at 2 p.m. next Tuesday for the next show.

It's Yak-SPAN

Public-access channel shines its lights onto city government scene

By TIM J. CHRISTIE
Of the Herald-Republic

For those who can't get enough of four-hour City Council meetings, Yakima's own version of C-SPAN debuted Tuesday night.

Like C-SPAN, the favorite cable channel of political junkies everywhere, Yakima Public Access Cable — or Y-PAC — promises a steady diet of unfiltered public-affairs programming.

Y-PAC will air at 6 p.m. Tuesdays and feature a weekly menu of Yakima City Council meetings, news conferences, interviews with local newsmakers and documentaries on local issues, said Y-PAC producer Randy Beehler. Length of programming will depend on the length of council meetings, he said.

Y-PAC will air on YCTV, cable channel 9, the city's public-access channel. YCTV already airs City Council meetings live, but Beehler said Y-PAC programming will offer more than reruns.

"The best comparison I can come up with is C-SPAN," he said.

In addition to coverage of Congress, C-SPAN offers interviews, news conferences, call-in shows and speeches.

Tuesday's programming on Y-PAC included one in a series of segments on growth management, a rerun of the day's council meeting, an interview with Mayor Pat Berndt, and a half-hour program called "Yakima Agenda," focusing on specific issues affecting Yakima and its environs. The first "Yakima Agenda" featured city engineers talking about the condition of city streets.

"The whole basis for doing this from my perspective is to let the viewer be the editor," Beehler said.

For example, when reporters cover a news conference, they decide what is most important, what should be emphasized and what should be left out, he said. On Y-PAC, viewers will be able to watch a news conference in its entirety and decide for themselves what's important, he said.

Y-PAC does not consider itself in competition with local news stations, he said. "It's not going to be an other n... competition with mainstream media. We're another op-

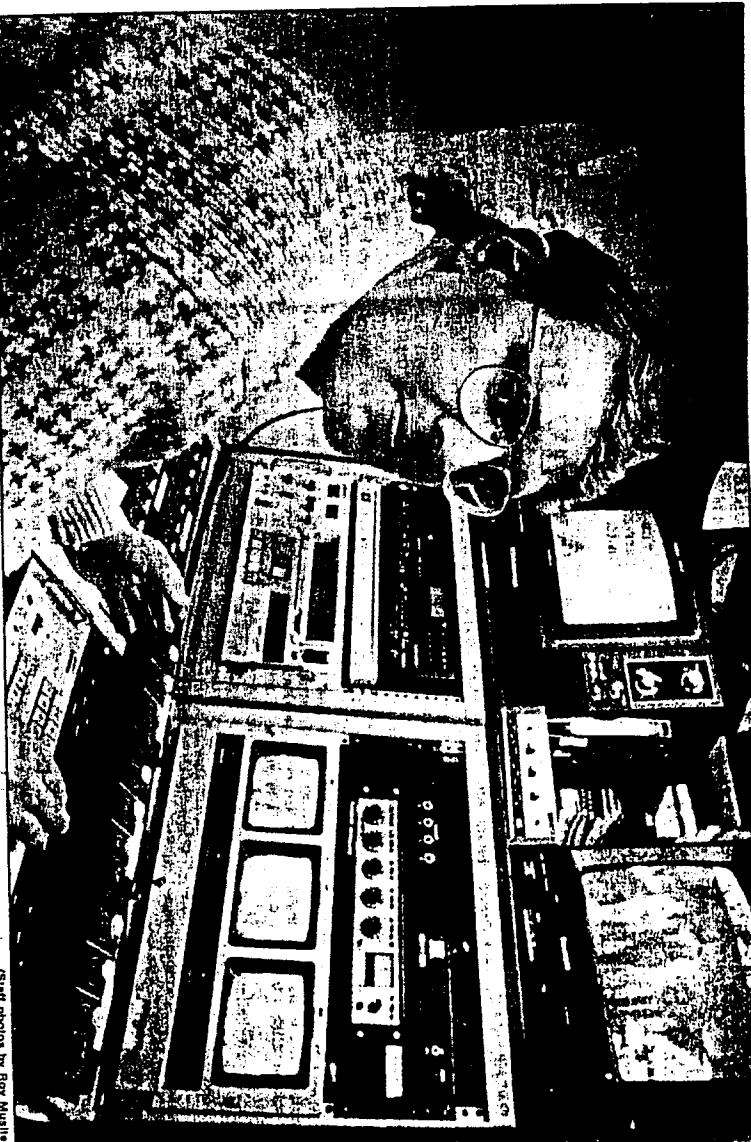
tion for getting information."

Y-PAC has no plans to cover the Yakima school board because its meetings already can be viewed on KXSC, Yakima Valley Skills Center channels 12 and 13. But Beehler said he would be interested in covering the Yakima County commissioners if they expressed an inclination.

Y-PAC is part of YCTV, the city's public-access channel. As the franchiser of the cable utility, the city receives 5 percent of TCI Cablevision's gross profits, which is used as operating funds by YCTV, Beehler said.

City-controlled purse strings won't affect Y-PAC's coverage and interviews of newsmakers, Beehler said. He already has interviewed city leaders, and no one has tried to impose their authority over a question he posed or a topic he wanted to discuss, he said.

"We are given a tremendous amount of autonomy," he said.



Randy Beehler is shown at the controls of Y-PAC, Yakima's public-access TV channel with a focus on public affairs. (Staff photos by Roy Muddell)



Members of the Oldtime Fiddlers Association pick and grin for Yakima City Council after a proclamation in its honor was read Tuesday, officially making this Washington Oldtime Fiddlers Week.

Council fiddles around, discusses snow removal

The Yakima City Council fiddled around for a while Tuesday before digging into the issue of snow removal.

After Mayor Pat Berndt read a proclamation declaring this week Washington Oldtime Fiddlers Association Week, 10 of the group's members serenaded the council, playing four songs with guitar, banjo, mandolin, stand-up bass — and of course, a couple of fiddles.

After the entertainment, the council discussed rewriting a nearly 70-year-old ordinance requiring citizens to remove snow from sidewalks in front of their homes and businesses.

City Attorney John Vanek said he reviewed the ordinance after the heavy snowfall during the winter prompted requests to the city to enforce the law.

As it stands now, a violation of the ordinance is a misdemeanor, which entitles the defendant to a jury trial in Yakima County District Court and a public defender. If he or she were indigent.

Violators are subject to a fine and even jail time, Vanek said. But the city has never prosecuted anyone for failing to remove snow, he said.

So Vanek proposed that the council approve a rewritten version of the ordinance that makes a violation a civil infraction, akin to a parking ticket. Violators would be subject to fines up to \$50.

But action was delayed after the council couldn't agree on whether owners, tenants or both should be held responsible for violations. Council members will take the issue up again later.

"We get calls all the time... When we have technical problems, we get the angriest phone calls from people." At Tuesday's meeting, Councilman Clarence Barnett wondered about the popularity of the television on other channels.