

15. CHARTER FRANCHISE RENEWAL

Charter Communications currently holds a cable television franchise to provide cable service within the territorial limits of Southampton County, which is scheduled to expire on November 23, 2016.

As you may recall, Charter submitted a written request as required by the federal *Cable Act* by letter dated December 27, 2013 advising the County that it was invoking its rights under the formal renewal procedures set forth in the Cable Act, 47 U.S.C. § 546(a)-(g). Formal procedures would have obligated and required the County to perform a documented needs assessment and a past performance proceeding not later than June 2014.

In response, we sought Charter's consideration in utilizing the informal renewal process described in Section 626(h) of the Cable Act, 47 U.S.C. § 546(h), to which they agreed.

Earlier this month, I received the attached draft of a franchise renewal agreement from Charter. I'm seeking your consideration this evening in appointing two Board members to a committee to work with legal counsel and staff in negotiating a new cable franchise with Charter Communications.

Once negotiated, the agreement must be adopted by ordinance of the Board, following a public hearing.

MOTION REQUIRED: A motion is required to appoint two Board members to a Cable Franchise negotiation committee.



VIA U.S. MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

February 12, 2016

Mr. Michael W. Johnson
County Administrator
Southampton County
P.O. Box 400
26022 Administration Center Drive
Courtland, VA 23837

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Our records indicate that the franchise agreement between Charter Communications VI, LLC, locally known as Charter Communications (“Charter”) and the County of Southampton, Virginia (“County”) expires on November 23, 2016.

Enclosed for your consideration is a draft franchise renewal agreement between Charter and the County pursuant to the informal renewal process under Section 626(h) of the Cable Act (47 U.S.C. § 546).

Please review this agreement, and let me know when would be convenient for us to discuss this in more detail. I can be reached at jim.corrin@charter.com and (864) 286-5090. I look forward to working with you to successfully conclude our informal renewal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Corrin".

Jim Corrin
Director, Government Relations

Enclosure

FRANCHISE AGREEMENT

This Franchise Agreement (“Franchise”) is between the County of Southampton, VIRGINIA hereinafter referred to as the “Grantor” and *CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS VI, LLC* locally known as CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS, hereinafter referred to as the “Grantee.”

The Grantor hereby acknowledges that the Grantee has substantially complied with the material terms of the current Franchise under applicable law, and that the financial, legal, and technical ability of the Grantee is reasonably sufficient to provide services, facilities, and equipment necessary to meet the future cable-related needs of the community, and having afforded the public adequate notice and opportunity for comment, desires to enter into this Franchise with the Grantee for the construction and operation of a cable system on the terms set forth herein.

1. Definitions:

- a. “Cable Act” means the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984, P.L. 98-549, 47 U.S.C. §521 Supp., as it may be amended or superseded.
- b. “Cable System,” “Cable Service,” and “Basic Cable Service” shall be defined as set forth in the Cable Act.
- c. “Franchise” means the authorization granted hereunder of a franchise, privilege, permit, license or otherwise to construct, operate and maintain a Cable System within the Service Area.
- d. “Service Area” shall mean the geographic boundaries of the Grantor.
- e. “Streets” means the public streets, avenues, highways, boulevards, concourses, driveways, bridges, tunnels, parks, parkways, waterways, alleys, all other rights-of-way and easements, and the public grounds, places or water within the geographic boundaries of Grantor.
- f. “Subscriber” means any person lawfully receiving any Cable Service from the Grantee.

2. Granting of Franchise. The Grantor hereby grants to Grantee a non-exclusive Franchise for the use of the Streets and dedicated easements within the Service Area for the construction, operation and maintenance of the Cable System, upon the terms and conditions set forth herein. Nothing in this Franchise shall be construed to prohibit the Grantee from offering any service over its Cable System that is not prohibited by federal or state law.

3. Term. The Franchise shall be for a term *of ten (10) years*, commencing on the Effective Date of this Franchise as set forth in Section 14. This Franchise will be automatically extended for an additional term of *five (5) years* from the expiration date as set forth in Section 14, unless either party notifies the other in writing of its desire to not exercise this automatic extension (and enter renewal negotiations under the Cable Act) at least three

(3) years before the expiration of this Franchise. If such a notice is given, the parties will then proceed under the federal Cable Act renewal procedures.

4. Use of the Streets and Dedicated Easements.

- a. Grantee shall have the right to use the Streets of the Grantor for the construction, operation and maintenance of the Cable System, including the right to repair, replace and enlarge and extend the Cable System, provided that Grantee shall utilize the facilities of utilities whenever practicable.
- b. The facilities of the Grantee shall be installed underground in those Service Areas where existing telephone and electric services are both underground at the time of system construction. In areas where either telephone or electric utility facilities are installed aerially at the time of system construction, the Grantee may install its facilities aerially with the understanding that at such time as the existing aerial facilities are required to be placed underground by the Grantor, the Grantee shall likewise place its facilities underground.
- c. Grantee shall have the right to remove, trim, cut and keep clear of the Cable System, the trees in and along the Streets of the Grantor.
- d. Grantee in the exercise of any right granted to it by the Franchise shall, at no cost to the Grantor, promptly repair or replace any facility or service of the Grantor which Grantee damages, including but not limited to any Street or sewer, electric facility, water main, fire alarm, police communication or traffic control.

5. Maintenance of the System.

- a. Grantee shall at all times employ ordinary care in the maintenance and operation of the Cable System so as not to endanger the life, health or property of any citizen of the Grantor or the property of the Grantor
- b. All construction practices and installation of equipment shall be done in accordance with all applicable sections of the National Electric Safety Code.
- c. The Cable System shall be designed, constructed and operated so as to meet those technical standards adopted by the FCC relating to Cable Systems contained in part 76 of the FCC's rules and regulations as they may, from time to time, be amended, regardless of the transmission technology utilized.

6. Service.

- a. The Grantee shall continue to provide Cable Service to all residences within the Service Area where Grantee currently provides Cable Service. Grantee shall have the right, but not the obligation, to extend the Cable System into any other portion of the Service Area, including annexed areas. Cable Service offered to Subscribers pursuant to this Franchise shall be conditioned upon Grantee having

legal access to any such Subscriber's dwelling unit or other units wherein such Cable Service is provided.

- b. The Grantor shall promptly provide written notice to the Grantee of its annexation of any territory which is being provided Cable Service by the Grantee or its affiliates. Such annexed area will be subject to the provisions of this Franchise upon sixty (60) days' written notice from the Grantor, subject to the conditions set forth below and subsection (a) above. The Grantor shall also notify Grantee in writing of all new street address assignments or changes within the Service Area. Grantee shall within ninety (90) days after receipt of the annexation notice, pay the Grantor franchise fees on revenue received from the operation of the Cable System to provide Cable Services in any area annexed by the Grantor if the Grantor has provided a written annexation notice that includes the addresses that will be moved into the Service Area in an Excel format or in a format that will allow Grantee to change its billing system. If the annexation notice does not include the addresses that will be moved into the Service Area, Grantee shall pay franchise fees within ninety (90) days after it receives the annexed addresses as set forth above. All notices due under this section shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested to the addresses set forth in Section 11 with a copy to the Director of Government Relations. In any audit of franchise fees due under this Agreement, Grantee shall not be liable for franchise fees on annexed areas unless and until Grantee has received notification and information that meets the standards set forth in this section.

7. Insurance/Indemnity.

- a. The Grantee shall maintain throughout the term of the Franchise insurance in amounts at least as follows:

Workers' Compensation	Statutory Limits
Commercial General Liability	[\$1,000,000] per occurrence, Combined Single Liability (C.S.L.) [\$2,000,000] General Aggregate
Auto Liability including coverage on all owned, non owned hired autos	[\$1,000,000] per occurrence C.S.L.
Umbrella Liability	
Umbrella Liability	[\$1,000,000] per occurrence C.S.L.

- b. The Grantor shall be added as an additional insured, arising out of work performed by Charter, to the above Commercial General Liability, Auto Liability and Umbrella Liability insurance coverage.
- c. The Grantee shall furnish the Grantor with current certificates of insurance evidencing such coverage upon request.

- d. Grantee hereby agrees to indemnify and hold the Grantor, including its agents and employees, harmless from any claims or damages resulting from the actions of Grantee in constructing, operating or maintaining the Cable System. Grantor agrees to give the Grantee written notice of its obligation to indemnify Grantor within ten (10) days of receipt of a claim or action pursuant to this section. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Grantee shall not be obligated to indemnify Grantor for any damages, liability or claims resulting from the willful misconduct or negligence of Grantor or for the Grantor's use of the Cable System.

8. Revocation.

- a. Prior to revocation or termination of the Franchise, the Grantor shall give written notice to the Grantee of its intent to revoke the Franchise on the basis of a pattern of noncompliance by the Grantee, including one or more instances of substantial noncompliance with a material provision of the Franchise. The notice shall set forth the exact nature of the noncompliance. The Grantee shall have sixty (60) days from such notice to either object in writing and to state its reasons for such objection and provide any explanation or to cure the alleged noncompliance. If Grantee has not cured the breach within such sixty (60) day time period or if the Grantor has not otherwise received a satisfactory response from Grantee, the Grantor may then seek to revoke the Franchise at a public hearing. The Grantee shall be given at least thirty (30) days prior written notice of such public hearing, specifying the time and place of such hearing and stating its intent to revoke the Franchise.
- b. At the hearing, the Grantor shall give the Grantee an opportunity to state its position on the matter, present evidence and question witnesses, after which it shall determine whether or not the Franchise shall be revoked. The public hearing shall be on the record and a written transcript and a certified copy of the findings shall be made available to the Grantee within ten (10) business days. The Grantee may appeal such determination to an appropriate court, which shall have the power to review the decision of the Grantor de novo.
- c. Upon revocation of the Franchise, Grantee may remove the Cable System from the Streets of the Grantor, or abandon the Cable System in place.

- 9. Equal Protection.** If any other provider of cable services or video services (without regard to the technology used to deliver such services) is lawfully authorized by the Grantor or by any other state or federal governmental entity to provide such services using facilities located wholly or partly in the public rights-of-way of the Grantor, the Grantor shall, within thirty (30) days of a written request from Grantee, modify this Franchise to insure that the obligations applicable to Grantee are no more burdensome than those imposed on the new competing provider. If the Grantor fails to make modifications consistent with this requirement, Grantee's Franchise shall be deemed so modified thirty (30) days after the Grantee's initial written notice. As an alternative to the Franchise modification request, the Grantee shall have the right and may choose to have this Franchise with the Grantor be deemed expired thirty (30) days after written

notice to the Grantor. Nothing in this Franchise shall impair the right of the Grantee to terminate this Franchise and, at Grantee's option, negotiate a renewal or replacement franchise, license, consent, certificate or other authorization with any appropriate government entity.

10. Confidentiality. If Grantee provides any books and records to the Grantor, the Grantor agrees to treat as confidential such books, records or maps that constitute proprietary or confidential information. Until otherwise ordered by a court or agency of competent jurisdiction, the Grantor agrees that, to the extent permitted by state and federal law, it shall deny access to any of Grantee's books and records marked confidential to any person.

11. Notices, Miscellaneous.

a. Unless otherwise provided by federal, state or local law, all notices, reports or demands pursuant to this Franchise shall be in writing and shall be deemed to be sufficiently given upon delivery to a Person at the address set forth below, or by U.S. certified mail, return receipt requested, nationally or internationally recognized courier service such as Federal Express or electronic mail communication to the designated electronic mail address provided below. Grantee shall provide thirty (30) days written notice of any changes in rates, programming services or channel positions using any reasonable written means. As set forth above, notice served upon the Grantor shall be delivered or sent to:

Grantor: County of Southampton
P.O. Box 400
26022 Administration Center Drive
Courtland, VA 23837

Grantee: Charter Communications
Area Vice President
2 Digital Place
4th Floor
Simpsonville, SC 29681

Copy to: Charter Communications
Vice President of Government Affairs
1099 New York Avenue
Suite 650
Washington, DC 20001

b. All provisions of this Franchise shall apply to the respective parties, their lawful successors, transferees and assigns.

c. If any particular section of this Franchise shall be held invalid, the remaining provisions and their application shall not be affected thereby.

- d. In the event of any conflict between this Franchise and any Grantor ordinance or regulation, this Franchise will prevail.
12. **Force Majeure.** The Grantee shall not be held in default under, or in noncompliance with the provisions of the Franchise, nor suffer any enforcement or penalty relating to noncompliance or default, where such noncompliance or alleged defaults occurred or were caused by circumstances reasonably beyond the ability of the Grantee to anticipate and control. This provision includes, but is not limited to, severe or unusual weather conditions, fire, flood, or other acts of God, strikes, work delays caused by failure of utility providers to service, maintain or monitor their utility poles to which Grantee's Cable System is attached, as well as unavailability of materials and/or qualified labor to perform the work necessary.
13. **Communications Sales and Use Tax.** The Grantee shall comply with the terms of 2006 Virginia House Bill 568.
14. **Effective Date.** The Franchise granted herein will take effect and be in full force from such date of acceptance by Grantee recorded on the signature page of this Franchise. This Franchise shall expire on _____, 2026 unless extended in accordance with Section 3 of this Franchise or by the mutual agreement of the parties.
15. **Acceptance and Entire Agreement.** The Grantor and the Grantee, by virtue of the signatures set forth below, agree to be legally bound by all provisions and conditions set forth in this Franchise. The Franchise constitutes the entire agreement between the Grantor and the Grantee. No modifications to this Franchise may be made without an appropriate written amendment signed by both parties. Any determination by the Grantor regarding the interpretation or enforcement of this Franchise shall be subject to de novo judicial review. If any fee or grant that is passed through to Subscribers is required by this Franchise, other than the franchise fee, such fee or grant shall go into effect sixty (60) days after the Effective Date of this Franchise.

Considered and approved this ____ day of _____, 2016

County of Southampton, VIRGINIA

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Accepted this ____ day of _____, 2016, subject to applicable federal, state and local law.

Charter Communications VI, LLC, I/k/a Charter Communications

Signature: _____

Name: Mark E. Brown

Title: VP, Counsel - Government Affairs