



Glenn Williams General Manager
Justin Petty, Board President
Boston Neighborhood Network (BNN-Media)

Comments

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Bok and your fellow City Councilors.

My name is Glenn Williams. I am the General Manager of Boston Neighborhood Network (BNN), Boston's nonprofit, charitable, public access TV and radio provider, and our fully equipped digital media center.

I am proud to be with you today on behalf of BNN in support of this Order to fund the public, educational, and government access services (known as PEG) that BNN provides to Boston's cable viewers, radio listeners, and residents.

First, I would like to note that the impact of community media in Boston is stronger than ever!

At the Mayor's Open House at the Josiah Quince School on February 24th I was pleasantly surprised at the number participants that recognized our work and pointed out particular shows they enjoyed. I'm affiliated with several organizations across Boston and this year; because of our outreach and visibility I am proud to say more and more residents are recognizing us for our presence, professionalism and excellence.

We regularly hear the testimony of young people from across the educational field about the value of our hands-on training programs, summer youth programs, and internship programs and about how these programs prepare them for careers in media.

I'm pleased to report to the Council that during this fiscal year to date:

- BNN staff and crew produced over 900 shows, including,
 - Neighborhood Network News, BNN's nightly news program,
 - We escalated our capacity to cover events live. For instance on September 21st the exclusive live coverage of the Rev. Dr. Michael E. Haynes' Funeral and Celebration. On July 14th Unity Cup Soccer Tournament in South Boston, the October 28th City Councilor at Large Candidate Debate held at English High School. Election day coverage on the radio with a round table discussion. Not to mention the number of High School Games of the Week

- BNN Members produced 2657 new TV shows in Boston. This number is down slightly because of the COVID 19 Pandemic.
- Our partnership with the Boston Public Schools during this time has produced unprecedented participation and value to continuing the education of our students impacted. Just to share the Video On Demand numbers we have received to date. 3,863 replays via Video on Demand alone since mid-March. We also air 6 times a week live call-in programs for elementary, middle school and high school math. This became very valuable to the high school seniors preparing for the AP tests. We are in the production phase of airing graduation ceremonies that will allow families to witness their children's accomplishments. This means aunts and uncles from across the country will have the pleasure of being part of their loved one's graduations.
- Many BNN produced shows are now available for viewing through Video on Demand for the convenience of those who can't watch programs when broadcast.
- Over 800 Boston non-profits, schools, churches, city agencies and community groups used BNN resources—TV and radio studios, media lab, equipment, and production facilities—to connect with Boston residents. Numerous Boston non-profits like Parkway Hearing, Boston Main Streets, Disability Law Center, and the City's Disability Commission use our facility to enrich their communities with their missions and information.
- Over 21 Boston residents have taken the radio production classes and have created over 300 hours of local interest programs. One of the benefits to having a radio station attached to our organization is the opportunity it provides residents with disabilities the avenue to share their voice. And besides TV isn't for everyone.
- We have created 22 Public Service Announcements to keep Bostonians informed and aware. Granted because of the current Pandemic that we are experiencing several have come from the CDC, Boston Water, and the city itself. We have also created them for BPS, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of MA, Army Corp of Engineers for cleaning up the canal down the cape and of course the coronavirus.
- Last summer we had camps where students from Boston could come in and learn, create and exhibit their work on television.

I know that some of you have been on a variety of programs at BNN, some of you with me as host. I hope that you all recognize the enormous contributions BNN has made to the community of Boston. I have been associated with Boston Neighborhood Network for 24 years. As a television and radio host and producer, member and President of the Board of Directors, WBCA Radio Manager and now General Manager. I have seen this organization grow into the award-winning access media center it is today. In lieu of listing those awards I will let you know of one I'm very proud of, our Around Town has been nominated for a New England Regional Emmy for their documentary work on displaced immigrant

children, *The Last Dream*.

With our many partnerships, BNN-Media will also be able to continue to provide engineering and technical support to Boston PEG channels, including Boston City Council TV, City TV, and Boston Kids & Family TV and of course WBCA low-power FM community radio station, which I believe are all essential community programming services.

On behalf of BNN, I thank the City Council, Mayor Martin J. Walsh, Chief Information Officer David Elges, Michael Lynch and everyone at DoIT and Justin Petty President of our Board of Directors for your commitment to sustaining BNN-Media—a place for Boston residents to create local programming for the good of their neighbors.

Without the support of the City of Boston through its cable and radio licensees, we would not be able to serve so many Boston residents and non-profits over these many years.

Thank you.



May 28, 2020

Good morning, Chairwoman Bok and Councilors.

My name is Theodora Hanna, and I am Co-CEO of Tech Goes Home, Boston's non-profit organization devoted to addressing the digital divide for our residents of all ages. I am testifying this morning in favor of this Order to fund the PEG Access Fund, which will support Tech Goes Home, an award-winning nonprofit that empowers communities to access and use digital tools to overcome barriers and advance lives.

Tech Goes Home (TGH) brings together the critical trio of digital life skills, quality internet, and a new device on which our community members can continue their education, apply for unemployment benefits and jobs, order essentials online, and access telehealth.

With the City's steadfast and foundational support, in the past five years alone, we have served 22,000 learners and distributed 14,500 new computers. Participants have learned how to find jobs online, digitally communicate with their children's teachers, find affordable housing, sign up for SNAP, explore coding, navigate online city resources, communicate with elected officials, and so much more.

Working with 200 community partners, we prioritize low-income and underserved populations aged 3 to 94, including people without technology at home, the unemployed and underemployed, people with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and people experiencing housing instability. Of the population TGH serves, 75% of TGH households have incomes under \$35,000, 85% are people of color, nearly 50% are from immigrant families, and 30% of adult learners are unemployed.

The current pandemic has shone a glaring spotlight on the devastating effects of digital exclusion. We thank Councilors Campbell and Janey for their resolution to identify the extent of the divide among Boston Public Schools families in order to help minimize the achievement gap. Without short term and long term attention to this social injustice that affects our neighbors of all ages, those on the wrong side of the digital divide will continue to disproportionately suffer. In response, we are redoubling our efforts while adapting our model to the stay-at-home reality. For instance, we have launched a Distance Learning program that mirrors our in-person courses, created a COVID-19 resource page on our website, and developed a live webinar series for TGH learners and the general public. Our team is also creating video tutorials on topics such as ordering groceries, accessing health information, reaching out to doctors, filing for unemployment, and completing the census online.

Last year, we experienced greater demand than ever for our programs and served a record-breaking 5,500 learners. Given the current pandemic and associated stay-at-home orders, the demand for our services has sky-rocketed. Though we have worked tirelessly to build our philanthropic support to marry the City's essential commitment, we need significantly increased support from both public and private sectors if we are going to effectively end this inequity.

With the support of the Council and approval of funding in the PEG Access Fund, we are eager to continue this partnership and better the lives of our Boston neighbors. To learn more about our work, please visit techgoeshome.org or reach out to me any time at theo@techgoeshome.org.

Thank you for all you do for the residents of our city.

Theodora Hanna
Co-CEO, Tech Goes Home