DeKalb
Decatur, Dunwoody, Stone Mountain and others on Twitter: @dekalbnewsnow

DECATUR
Comcast says city owes for decade of service

Earlier this week Decatur’s commission approved Network Cable Infrastructures of Duluth to build a new fiber optic communications network that will cover 14 city and 10 school sites. The anticipated costs are about $2 million with City Schools Decatur paying 28% of that.

City Manager Andrea Arnold said she hopes construction will start in June and take 12 to 14 months.

But Comcast Cable, whose predecessor Media One built the city’s current (and original) network in 1999, claims the city owes it money. Andy Macke, vice president of external affairs for Comcast, attended Monday’s meeting and said afterwards the city has “gotten over a million dollars of benefits at no charge.”

Under the original franchise agreement the city didn’t have to pay anything for its network, but Macke said that was only effective from 1999 to 2009.

“For the last 10 years we’ve been chasing after the city to build a commercial network (Media One built an institutional network or “I-net”),” Macke said. “We ultimately tried to work with them in good faith. They’ve done a lot of renovations over the past decade - including the Public Works Building, City Hall, the Beacon Hill complex. We didn’t hold their feet to the fire, figuring that they’d negotiate a deal.”

According to Arnold, late last year Comcast said it would decommission the current network unless the city began paying a monthly fee of $30,000. Macke counters that Comcast has offered “several proposals,” and the $30,000 figure was “the highest.”

Decatur will need coverage while its new network gets built. Macke believes that with three CSX crossings, constructing the underground cable will take longer than 12 to 14 months.

“We haven’t had a dialogue with Andrea in a while,” Macke said. “We have to bring closure to this. Comcast has been a good partner with the city of Decatur.”

BILL BANKS FOR THE AJC

Upcoming

■ Scrabble Saturday. 1-3 p.m. Saturday. Free for ages 11+. Decatur Library, 215 Sycamore St., Decatur. Funding is provided by The Dekalb Library Foundation and Friends of the Decatur Library. 404-370-3070, events.DekalbLibrary.org/event/1787096

■ Lifeguarding Classes. Various dates and times May and June. Cost varies. Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta, 5342 Tilly Mill Road, Dunwoody. For ages 15+, lifeguard training and certification is offered with the American Red Cross. Jenni Beebe at 678-812-3862 or jenni.beebe@AtlantaJCC.org. Register: AtlantaJCC.org/lifeguard

■ Mommy, Daddy & Me Swim Classes. Various dates and times May and June. Cost varies. Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta, 5342 Tilly Mill Road, Dunwoody. For ages 4 to 18 with their parents, these classes require parents to be in the water with their child at all times. Jenni Beebe at 678-812-3862 or jenni.beebe@AtlantaJCC.org. Register: AtlantaJCC.org/MommyDaddyMe

■ American Red Cross Blood Drive. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. May 20. Fellowship Hall, Avondale Pattillo United Methodist Church, 3260 Covington Highway, Avondale Estates. Visit RedCrossBlood.org to schedule a time to donate, but reservations are not required.