

West Bend Community Television

The work toward a Public Access Channel in West Bend started in 1978, with a strong Cable Committee consisting of seven community representatives who were appointed by the Mayor. In 1979, West Bend Community Cable was started, with a Cable TV Coordinator (Liza Schlick) hired on a part time basis. City Common Council and School Board meetings made up most of the programming with one to two studio productions per month. At that time, the studio was located in the Badger Middle School basement. The facility was not a very pleasant place. All of the equipment was "used" and the signal going over the air was weak.

In 1980 the second coordinator (Mark Landvatter) was hired, now making the position full-time. The hours were Sunday through Thursday from 2:00-10:00 p.m. Most of the programming was not local. Only 20% of the programs were local programs.

In 1986, the third coordinator (Lisa Branston) was hired. The hours then changed to Monday through Friday from 1:00-9:00 p.m. Equipment was improved on the playback system and the editing system, but *we* were still only at 20% local programming, with no weekend playback.

In September of 1988, the fourth coordinator (Diane DuKatz) was hired. In 1989 an automatic system was purchased and weekend programs began. In 1991, West Bend Community Cable TV moved to the first floor of the newly purchased/remodeled City Hall... Equipment purchases for the year included a Super VHS playback deck, in addition to the two then current VHS decks, adding 6 hours of programming on the weekend.

In 1992, studio and Common Council live broadcasts were improved with a direct line to the cable company. In 1993, WBCC-TV started covering all Common Council meetings. In 1994, WBCC-TV began live broadcasts of the City's Plan Commission meetings on the first Tuesday of the month. The West Bend Joint School District won an award for a Youth Apprenticeship program that was done with the assistance of WBCC-TV. The videotape was used state-wide in presentations. Copies of the tape were also sent to six different school districts in different states. In 1995 a three-camera system was set up in the Common Council Chambers. This gave live broadcasts a more professional look for all City meetings and voter's forums.

Changes have continued at WBCCTV. In September 2005 Duane DuKatz retired and a fifth coordinator (Mike Ryan) was hired. New equipment purchased in early 2005 upgraded the City Council Chambers with new cameras and video projectors for PowerPoint presentations. In 2006, playback was upgraded with two Leightronix TCD-RP Digital Video Recorders each capable of storing up to 70 hours worth of program material. Playback hours now extend 8-10 hours per day, depending upon available programming. Weekend playback is now more varied, instead of stripping of the same program at the same time each day. Three Canon GL-2 mini DV camcorders were also bought. In 2008, the name was changed to West Bend Community Television to take note of changing technology.

In 2010 we bought a Leightronix Ultranexus Video Server. All programs are now stored as digital (computer) files on hard drives connected to the Ultranexus. With 6 TB of storage space, we have a much more diverse selection of programs, including archived programs from previous years. Programming on the Community Channel is run from 11:30 am to 6:00 am the next day, except on Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays when programs run 24 hours.

In 2011 the Common Council approved the Value Task Force to look into City Departments and recommend improvements. One suggestion was to increase our sports programming. Padrick Dunn was hired to fill the newly created Producer/Director position. We are increasing our sports programs and our hours on the Schools Channel.

In 2013, we upgraded program acquisition with Sony NXCams. These cameras record digital files to SDHC cards. They are also HD capable as we work again to increase the quality of our programs.

Also in 2012 and 2013, West Bend City Hall went through a remodeling and expansion project. As part of this project, the studio was relocated from the basement of City Hall to the main floor. The new location near the Common Council Chambers puts us in a better position to record programs originating in the Council Chambers. Access to the studio is now through the main City Hall doors.

We went from a layout downstairs that was basically one large room to a three room suite which includes the Control Room, a Studio Room and an actual Office room. The separation allows us to do multiple projects at once without getting in each other's way.

Thirty-five years after its inception, West Bend Community Television is still serving the West Bend community. WBCTV operates two channels on Charter Cable in West Bend. The Community Channel, channel 987, allows residents to tune into Common Council Meetings, Plan Commission Meetings as well as programs about community events and programs produced by local residents. The Schools Channel, channel 986, allows residents the chance to see local School Board Meetings, and events and sports from local schools up to and including UW-Washington County. We are also AT&T's U-verse channel 99 and webcast Common Council and Plan Commission Meetings live and have Video on Demand for other programs. All of this can be accessed through the City of West Bend Website

Mike Ryan
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City of West Bend
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