

## President's Piece:

### What is Net Neutrality?

*Danita Love, President and Council President, Highland Hills*

It's a subject that only crops up from time to time—usually when new legislation is being pushed through or a tech company has done something really stupid—but it's an important thing to know about today's age of ubiquitous internet. If you still aren't sure what net neutrality is—or even if you have a rough idea but aren't an expert—check out this introduction to net neutrality and what it could mean for you.

As its name indicates, net neutrality is about creating a neutral internet. The basic principle driving net neutrality is that the internet should be a free and open platform, almost like any other utility we use in our home (like electricity). Users should be able to use their bandwidth however they want (as long as it's legal), and internet service providers should not be able to provide priority service to any corner of the internet. Every web site (whether it's Google, Netflix, Amazon, or UnknownStartup.com) should all be treated the same when it comes to giving users the bandwidth to reach the internet-connected services they prefer.

Your electric company has no say over how you use your electricity, they only get to charge you for providing the electricity. Net neutrality aims to do something similar with your internet pipes.

Those against net neutrality—commonly including internet service providers (ISPs), like Comcast or AT&T—believe that, as providers of internet access, they should be able to distribute bandwidth differently depending on the service. They'd prefer, for example, to create tiers of internet service that's more about paying for priority access than for bandwidth speeds. As such, in theory, they could charge high-bandwidth services—like Netflix, for example—extra money, since their service costs more for Comcast to provide to its customers—or they could charge users, like you and me, extra to access Netflix. They can also provide certain services to you at different speeds. For example, perhaps your ISP might give preferential treatment to Hulu, so it streams Hulu videos quickly and for free, while Netflix is stuck running slowly (or we have to pay extra to access it).

## Municipal Topic:

### Fracking for Natural Gas

*Debra Sarnowski, Treasurer and Councilwoman, Garfield Heights*

The processing of removing pockets of natural gas from layers of shale, called fracking, is very complex and has generated intense environmental and political opposition. This process begins with drilling miles deep into the shale and then using new techniques, horizontally through it another mile wide. A mixture of water, sand, and a toxic brew of chemicals is pumped into the wells at tremendous pressure, fracturing the rock and keeping the fissures open. Previously trapped natural gas flows up to the well head. Fracking a single well takes an average of two million gallons of water a day. Half of the fracking water comes up the well with chemicals and sometimes, carrying traces of radiation from underground rocks. Municipal purification plants can not deal with the waste water, causing contaminated groundwater and streams.

A 2005 energy law exempts fracking from the drinking water law's underground injection rules unless diesel fuels are used—a provision critics refer to as the Halliburton loophole after the oil services company once headed by former Vice President Cheney. Federal law contains no public disclosure requirements for hydraulic fracturing fluids. Lawsuits over drinking water and other potential environmental issues are driving up production costs on what is known as the Marcellus Shale.

Researchers at three Ohio colleges and universities (Cleveland State University, Ohio State and Marietta College) are studying the potential for natural gas fueled economic boom. They are assessing the financial impact of tapping oil and natural gas reserves stored thousands of feet underground. A \$125,000 funded study is looking into the benefits of drilling deep under Eastern Ohio. A "land grab" is underway with gas companies trying to secure control of property with access to swaths of Marcellus and Utica shale—the potentially resource rich rock formations. Politicians, landowners, and business are all involved in the drilling boom. They foresee dollar signs and jobs as local businesses make the parts and equipment needed to build the infrastructure, provide services, along with managing the water and environmental issues for the industry.

At the request of Congress, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is conducting a study of how fracking might affect groundwater but do not expect the EPA to ban fracking since the United States is in desperate need of jobs and economic development as well as domestic sources of energy. Environmental groups are lobbying hard for tighter federal regulation of the industry and the chemicals it uses. The age of natural gas has just begun!

\*\*\* Josh Fox, the director of the documentary "Gasland" talks about the industry's insistence that there are no documented cases in which fracturing has caused groundwater contamination, along with a public that is aware of cases in which gas-drilling caused pollution.

## Forum Wrap-Up:

### How The Six Year County Reappraisals and the Appeals Process Impacts Municipal Budgets

*Peggy Cleary, Secretary and Councilwoman, Fairview Park*

Every six years, all Ohio counties are required to conduct a full reappraisal of the value of each parcel of real estate. Cuyahoga County is scheduled to conduct its next full reappraisal for the 2012 tax year.

Our September forum featured Wade Steen, Cuyahoga County Fiscal Officer and Marty Murphy, Cuyahoga County Board of Revisions, who offered an overview of the system used to manage the reappraisal process. By June 2012, the County will notify all taxpayers of the proposed value of their property. Meetings are scheduled for July through October 12, 2012 to discuss with taxpayers the characteristics and proposed value of their property. The final (new) appraised values will be sent to the Department of Tax Equalization in November 2012.

The Cuyahoga County Board of Revisions is charged with the responsibility to assist citizens in filing complaints to seek relief, adjudicating complaints regarding the assessment of residential and commercial property within the County, and to submit correction notices to the Fiscal Officer, once the Board of Revision and court decisions are finalized.

To view the entire forum in its entirety, please visit our website [www.nocassoc.org](http://www.nocassoc.org) or <http://council.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/091511-intergov-relations-meeting.aspx>.

The NOCCA Executive Board would like to extend it thanks to the Cuyahoga County Intergovernmental Relations & Collaboration Committee for sponsoring this very informative forum.

## A Matter of Opinion:

### A Voice In Water Rates

*Paul Barker, Nominating Committee and Councilman, North Olmsted*

A few years ago there was an article in our NOCCA newsletter regarding storm water management. In the past six months we have learned that The Greater Cleveland Regional Sewer District will be increasing rates to cover the cost of processing storm water runoff, and to fund the rebuilding of the infrastructure of storm sewers. I'm sure we can all agree the need for rebuilding is the result of old age, EPA standards, and lack of forward thinking. However, as suburban elected officials, we have a voice through representation of a few Mayors who serve on the "regional" sewer board.

The City of Cleveland Division of Water will also be raising rates, but the only ones who have a say, are our colleagues from the City of Cleveland. Over the past few years we have heard and read negative stories about our water supplier. The issues are about unread and/or misread meters and poor customer service. The one that really irks me is that rates have to be increased to cover the shortfall in consumption caused by decreased water usage. Residents have started to conserve water and now they are being penalized for their efforts.

Of course it isn't about conservation, it's about mismanagement, bad service, and not being fiscally responsible. I was very disappointed when my colleagues from Cleveland voted to increase water rates. I think we can all agree, that when it comes to raising fees or taxes, we make sure all things are in order like management and service, before we make an informed decision to increase rates. What really upsets me is that none of the suburbs serviced by the City of Cleveland Division of Water have a say in rates, service to customers, or repairs to the aging water lines in our cities.

Maybe it's time for all cities serviced by the Cleveland Division of Water to start pressuring Mayor Jackson to form a Water Commission, comprised of Cleveland and suburban elected officials, so that we all have a voice in our water rates and the management of our valuable water supply.

## PLAN TO ATTEND THE WINTER FORUM

Thursday, November 17, 2011  
100th Bomb Group Restaurant  
20920 Brookpark  
Cleveland, Ohio 44135

### Bridging the Gap: A Dialogue on CWD Customer Service Improvements

Special Guest Speaker:  
Barry Withers

Registration 6:30 p.m.  
Program 7:00 p.m.  
Speakers 7:10 p.m.  
Q&A 8:00 p.m.

This forum will offer an overview of the system that will be used by Cuyahoga County to manage the reappraisal and appeal process of all properties and increase their understanding of its impact on property owners as well as municipal budgets.

Contact Linda Young at 216.548.7800 or via e-mail at [lindacrossyoung19@att.net](mailto:lindacrossyoung19@att.net) to make your reservation.

## NOCCA E-NEWS

November 2011

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P. O. Box 34044  
Parma, OH 44134

Linda Cross-Young, Administrative Secretary  
216.548.7800  
[lindacrossyoung19@att.net](mailto:lindacrossyoung19@att.net)