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News/ Manhattan Borough President
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**MESSINGER ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF
COMMUNITY ACCESS ORGANIZATION TO AD-
MINISTER PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE CHANNELS**

Several months after Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger appointed a seven-member initial board of directors to administer Manhattan's four public access channels, the Borough President and the CAO's chair Gretchen Dykstra announce today that the Manhattan Community Access Organization has ratified its by-laws and has filed for incorporation.

The CAO's central charge is to administer and manage all the public access channels of the cable television systems in Manhattan – currently Paragon and Manhattan cable system – and oversee the use of facilities, equipment, supplies, services and other support made available for programming.

Prior to ratifying its by-laws, the Board met with many local public access producer groups, government officials and the Time-Warner company. "I think this small group of talented and dedicated individuals has done an extraordinary job of putting together the most extensive and thoughtful set of by-laws to govern such

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an organization. From the outset, I stressed to them that I wanted an open and independent board and organization. I am very pleased to say they took my charge to heart,” said the Borough President.

Highlights of the CAD’s by-laws include:

- * A 19-member board, representing the ethnic, economic and geographical diversity of Manhattan will, one year after the CAO begins training sessions for public access producers, include six slots reserved for active public access producers.

- * The establishment of an Advisory Nominating Committee, to recommend individuals for the six public access producer slots on the Board.

- * Tough prohibitions against conflicts of interest, ensuring the independence and integrity of the Board.

- * In addition to its Annual Meeting the Board will hold at least two meetings each year that will be open to the public.

CAO’s goals include:

- * A training program that will assist and train individuals and community groups on how to use public access television. The program will include advice on how to plan and produce programming for public access channel, instruction on how to use equipment and production facilities creatively and efficiently, and how to maximize channel time.

- * An extensive outreach program that will encourage newcomers and beginners to participate in the

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training sessions. Likewise, outreach to experienced producers to assist in setting the organization's goals and policies.

* A charge to develop additional funding resources to expand and promote public access television.

The Manhattan CAO unlike its counterparts in the other boroughs is in a unique situation since Manhattan has a history of public access television while the others do not.

"There are very high expectations for the Manhattan CAO. There is a long history of public access television here and people have very strong opinions about how the CAO should operate. Current users and future public access producers will be very impressed with the openness of this organization," said Ms. Messinger.

Under the terms of the agreement between the City and Time-Warner, the CAO will receive a capital grant of \$5.35 million to be used for facilities and equipment. At this time, that money is held in escrow by the Borough President until the State Cable Commission on Television (CCT) – which has jurisdiction over cable issues – authorizes its disbursement. The CAO is required to submit to the Borough President and the CCT a capital expenditure plan, detailing how the CAO intends to spend these capital funds.

In addition to the capital grant, Time-Warner is required to pay the CAO \$3 per subscriber per year to assist in defraying operating costs. This money will

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also be used to make grants to assist public access producers and support programming initiatives of the CAO.

Biographies of the Board of Directors (in alphabetical order)

Andrew Blau – Vice Chair – Project Coordinator and Research Associate, Columbia Institute for Tele-Information, Columbia Graduate School of Business. Former Assistant for Communication Policy/Advocacy for the United Church of Christ. Former Chair of the group, New York Citizen's Committee for Responsible Media. Vice-Chair of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers and an active member of the Association of Independent Video and Filmakers Advocacy Committee.

Gretchen Dykstra – Chair – Project Director for National Video Resources, a project of the Rockefeller Foundation. Served as Director of Communications for the Charter Revision Commission. A member of the Communications Advisory Committee for the Gay Men's Health Crisis. Active with Citizens Union Foundation and Television Trust for the Environment.

Laura Handman is a Partner with the law firm of Lankenau & Bickford, representing national and local magazines, new weeklies and book publishers in the areas of libel, privacy, copyright, trademark, obscenity and other matters. Prior to that, she worked as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York. Serves as a Director for the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts.

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Christopher Poussaint, Vice President of Research and Development with J.I. Sopher and Company, a real estate brokerage firm in New York City. Co-chair of Publicity and Communications for Community Board 1. Graduate of Institute for New Cinema Artists. Independent producer for cable and broadcast television and a member of the National Association of Broadcasters and the National Cable Television Association.

Ruby Rich, Director of Film and Media programs, the New York State Council on the Arts. Former film critic, Chicago Reader. Writer, Village Voice. Former Director, Film Center, School of the Arts Institute. Member of the National Advisory Board, Frameline Festival, San Francisco.

Arthur Tsuchiya is a visiting Assistant Professor with the Department of Theater at Middlebury College, Vermont. Formerly with the New York State Council on the Arts. Currently serves as Senior Consultant to Independent Television Services.

Blanca Vazquez, editor, Centro Bulletin, a journal focusing on Puerto Ricans living in the United States and Puerto Rico, published by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, New York. Active with El Museo del Barrio, Institute for Puerto Rican Policy, the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights and Media Network.

Upon her recent election as Chair of the Manhattan CAO, Gretchen Dykstra said: "Whether it's for entertainment, education or empowerment, we hope to set a new standard for opening up television in

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Manhattan, so that anyone who wants, will have a voice. We all can learn from and enjoy the diversity of these opinions, ideas and dreams.”
