



701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Council Memo

Department Source: Cultural Affairs

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: June 15, 2026

Re: Report on history of funding for CAT TV, Vidwest, and PEG channel fees.

Impacted Ward: Citywide

Executive Summary

At the June 1, 2026 meeting, a report was requested by Mayor Buffalo regarding the history of funding for CAT TV, Vidwest, and PEG channel fees as well as the expected deliverables from the City’s current contract with Vidwest.

Discussion

Background

Since 2008, the City of Columbia has had agreements with nonprofit organizations, previously Columbia Access Television (CAT TV) and now Vidwest, for services related to the operation of a public access channel and community access center. Additional services to the City have also been part of the most recent service agreements, which have included co-produced arts shows, facilitated trainings, maintenance of City-owned equipment, and annual memberships to City-funded arts organizations. The primary intent of these service agreements has been the operation of a PEG Channel (Public, Educational, Government Channel), with funding of the operation of the community access center to serve as a means for the community to produce the original content to be broadcast on the public access channel.

Financial Background

The video service provider fee (historically known as a franchise fee) is a business license gross receipts tax for utilization of the public right of way by the cable company for operation of its business. In 2007, the video service provider fee was capped at 5% and was subsequently decreased to 4%. On August 28, 2025, the fee was further decreased to 3.5% and will continue to decrease by 0.5% per year until it reaches 2.5%. See dollar amounts for this fee collection from the past 10 years in the table below.

Year	Video Service Provider Fee Collected (Total)
FY15	\$997,350.50
FY16	\$953,200.45
FY17	\$845,412.24
FY18	\$876,315.05
FY19	\$750,557.33
FY20	\$686,155.53
FY21	\$618,554.24



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FY22	\$577,076.83
FY23	\$536,639.73
FY24	\$430,997.34
FY25	\$302,861.57

Historically as a part of the old franchise agreements (and at the time the City originally entered into its first agreement with CAT TV), the City also received additional compensation in the form of cost reimbursement/equipment/services from cable operators for PEG channel operation/maintenance. The City no longer receives the additional compensation for PEG channel operations. If the City were to require any additional equipment or services for PEG channel operation, the fair market value of the additional compensation would be deducted from the business license gross receipts tax received by the City.

History of Past Funding

Prior to Vidwest, the organization CAT TV received funding for operation of the public access channel from FY08 through FY19, before the nonprofit organization dissolved in 2019. The City funding for the public access channel and services stepped down over the years from \$200,000 per year (FY08-FY14), \$100,000 in FY15, \$50,000 in FY16, and \$35,000 per year (FY17-19). Since 2015, the Office of Cultural Affairs has been the department who has overseen the contract agreements with CAT TV and subsequently Vidwest.

After CAT TV dissolved, an RFP was issued for operational services of a public access channel and community access center. Vidwest was the sole bidder, and an FY20 agreement for \$34,981.12 was approved. Subsequently, the organization was unable to fulfill this FY20 contract for services due to its move to its current location at 1600 Business Loop 70 East, which did not have a fiber connection to its community access center which resulted in the public access channel going dark. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the organization’s ability to operate a community access center in accordance with the prior contract. To resolve the discrepancies between the contract performance obligations and the expenditure of funds, a resolution was approved by Council in November 2021 ([R174-21](#)), which accepted the reduced performance of Vidwest under the FY20 contract dated October 11, 2019 and relieved Vidwest of any further contract obligations. Subsequently, another RFP process was administered which resulted in the current agreement with Vidwest.

See full Legislative History section at the end of this report for an overview of past agreements.

Current Status of Agreement with Vidwest

After an RFP process in FY22, the City entered into a contract for services with Vidwest for the operation of a community access center and public access channel, which also provides additional services for community organizations. The term of the contract was for one year with two successive renewal terms (for a total of three years), payment of \$35,000 per year.

As the third year of the original contract was coming to an end in the summer of 2025, City staff was in the process of preparing the FY26 budget. Amid budget constraints, directives to streamline department budgets, and an overall assessment of the City's need for outsourced services, staff recommended not to pursue a contract agreement for services in the upcoming fiscal year (FY26). Staff informed Vidwest of this decision in June 2025 and worked with the organization to extend the current contract for an additional year using FY25 budgeted funding of \$35,000. The fourth, one-year term of the agreement with Vidwest commenced in August 2025, which included an amendment with omissions of services from previous service agreements, and it is expected to come to an end in August 2026.

During the course of the FY25 agreement, the organization has partially been fulfilling the terms. Services include the PEG channel being substantially utilized as required by Missouri law (a minimum of forty hours per week of local programming for at least three months. In determining whether a PEG channel is substantially utilized, a program shall be counted not more than four times during a calendar week.) However, the operation of a community access center has not provided new, original programming to be broadcast on the channel. Monthly reports submitted by Vidwest indicate that there have been zero "first runs" of new content broadcast on the channel during this most recent term, and only three first runs (in January 2025) during the previous term. The PEG channel broadcasts programs from the CAT TV and Vidwest archives, which includes programming that is sometimes 10 to 15+ years old.

With regard to operation of the community access center required by the agreement, Vidwest has met the terms set forth in the scope of services, which were modified to include managing "a video production facility and equipment, available for public use at such hours and times as it determines. Access to equipment and facilities shall be open to all those who satisfactorily complete training classes provided by the organization, pay a membership fee, or who receive a certification from the organization, stating that they have satisfied requirements through means other than organization training."

Additional services for community organizations (per the second amendment to the FY22 agreement, term beginning Aug. 2025) include providing services to community organizations who are funded by the City in the form of complimentary full-year membership to the organization and annual consultations. Vidwest also provided two, two-hour trainings, which were held in April 2026. This second amendment to the agreement omitted the previously required services of eight, 30-minute Arts Focus shows co-produced with OCA as well as two "Public Service Announcement (PSA) Days" to produce template 30-second PSAs to organizations (the two, two-hour training sessions took the place of the PSA Days activity).

Declining Role of Public Access Television

In discussions with Vidwest this year, both City staff and the organization have acknowledged that the need for public access cable television broadcast has diminished over the past decade. Viewership has declined of traditional cable access programming



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with audiences shifting to on-demand digital platforms, social media, and streaming services. The current PEG channel reaches a limited audience.

Ultimately, it was this declining role of the PEG channel, paired with the decreasing need for these outsourced services which led to the decision to discontinue moving forward with a new contract agreement with the organization for these services.

Future Opportunities

City staff has met with the organization to hear about their proposal for future contracts for services, possibly in the form of outsourced media support (for example: photo or video filming at City or community events, and livestreaming services of public events, meetings or civic programs). These opportunities for outsourced media services could be considered to supplement the newly formed Communications Department, and a future RFP process would be overseen by the new Communications Director.

Additional Sources of City Funding

It should be noted that Vidwest has also received additional grant funding through the City's Office of Cultural Affairs over the years, recent grants listed below. To the extent the programs and services provided by Vidwest meet programming goals, the City has opportunities to continue to support the nonprofit through this annual grant funding process.

- FY26 Small Request Grant: \$500.00 (Project: Vidwest Fest: A community media concert showcase)
- FY26 Annual Grant: \$9,897.00 (Project: Media CoMoguls: A Workshop Series)
- FY25 Annual Grant: \$6,767.00 (Project: Media Accessed: A Workshop Series)
- FY25 Mid-Year Grant: \$3,261.00 (Project: The Unexpected Show: An educational comedy sketch show about Columbia, Missouri)
- FY24 Annual Grant: \$4,532.00 (Project: Media Accessed: A Workshop Series)
- ARP Subgranting Program (National Endowment for the Arts subgrant) FY22-FY23: \$8,712.00 (American Rescue Plan operational support)

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: N/A
Long-Term Impact: N/A

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Resilient Economy, Secondary Impact: Inclusive and Equitable Community, Tertiary Impact: Organizational Excellence

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Economic Development, Secondary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
12/6/21	<p>REP92-21: Request for Proposals for Public Access Channel and Community Access Center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Subsequent contract was administered via City Purchasing process. Vidwest was the sole bidder on the RFP. FY22-FY25 agreements, \$35,000 funding per year.</i>
11/1/21	<p>R175-21: Directing the City Manager to execute a new contract with VidWest to provide public access channel programming and community media services. [Action: Did not approve]</p>
11/1/21	<p>R174-21: Accepting the performance of Vidwest under contract dated October 11, 2019 and relieving Vidwest of any further contract obligations [Action: Approved]</p>
1/21/20	<p>R9-20: Accepting unused funds received from Columbia Access Television (CAT).</p>
10/7/19	<p>R146-19: Authorizing an agreement with VidWest for operation of a public access channel and management of a video production facility and associated equipment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This agreement was the result of a RFP process for a public access channel and community access center to fulfill services previously handled by Columbia Access Television. Vidwest was the sole bidder on the RFP.</i>
11/5/18	<p>R173-18: Authorizing an agreement with Columbia Access Television (CAT) for operation of the public access channel in FY 2019.</p>
3/5/18	<p>R33-18: Authorizing an agreement with Columbia Access Television (CAT) for operation of the public access channel in FY 2018.</p>
3/20/17	<p>R36-17: Authorizing an agreement with Columbia Access Television (CAT) for operation of the public access channel in FY 2017.</p>



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4/20/15	R70-15: Transferring funds to the Office of Cultural Affairs for disbursement to Columbia Access Television (CAT-TV) in FY 2015.
4/6/15	R62-15: Authorizing an agreement with Columbia Access Television (CAT) for operation of the public access channel in FY 2015. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>This memo also states that CAT will receive \$50,000 in FY16.</i>
9/15/14	R190-13: Authorizing an amendment to the agreement with Columbia Access Television (CAT) for operation of the public access channel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Agreement funded Columbia Access Television through FY14. During the FY14 budget process, there was discussion about eliminating funding for CAT, with a vote to delete the funding (amendment sheet associated with B222-13), which was defeated and funding maintained.</i>
3/17/08	R61-08: Authorizing the City Manager to add a provision to the agreement with Columbia Access Television for operation of the public access channel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Agreement funded Columbia Access Television for \$200,000 per year for FY08 through FY13.</i>

Suggested Council Action

This report is informational only.