With FCC OK, Sterling considers pay cable

Sterling Manhattan Cable Television Inc., New York, reported last week it is "interested" in beginning pay cablecasting on its system in New York, but has no timetable for the start of such an operation.

Charles Dolan, president of Sterling Manhattan, said a recent FCC ruling affirming the legality of pay cablecasting paves the way for the inauguration of an alternative service to viewers who are willing to pay. He pointed out the commission has made it clear that local authorities may not ban pay cablecasting in their franchise agreements with CATV systems.

The commission's declaratory ruling on the matter came at the request of Time-Life Broadcast Inc. and Sterling Manhattan Cable Television Inc. Sterling, one of three franchised cable operators in New York, is 48%-owned by Time. The firms sought FCC authorization on pay cablecasting last July, noting that a clause of Sterling's franchise agreement with the city stated that franchised companies cannot engage in subscription operations without affirmative authorization from the FCC (BROADCASTING, July 12).

The commission said that it has already affirmed legality of pay-CATV in past ruling (it had indicated it would permit such operations when it disposed of various petitions for reconsideration of its order requiring local origination on systems with more than 3,500 subscribers), and that no further authorization of pay-CATV pre-empts any local franchise terms on record stating the contrary, the commission said.

It was emphasized, however, that this ruling "is not to be construed . . . to sanction, authorize or encourage the carriage of any specific program on pay cablevision." It noted concern that existing over-the-air TV signals could be siphoned off to subscription cable, and indicated it would keep a close eye on such developments and take whatever action necessary to prevent such siphoning.

FCC gets it together with new advisory group

In an attempt to improve communications among its various divisions, the FCC has established an Executive Advisory Council.

In an announcement last Thursday (Sept. 30) the commission said the council will include the chiefs of the broadcast, cable television, common carrier, field engineering and safety and special services bureaus, as well as Richard Wiley, FCC's general counsel, John Torbet, executive director, and Raymond Spence, chief engineer.

The council will meet on a bi-monthly basis, or whenever necessary, to provide the interchange of information and ideas.

Mr. Torbet, who spearheaded the council's establishment, said the new body grew out of a seminar attended by all the members last August at the Federal Executive Institute at Charlottesville, Va. Mr. Torbet said the council will meet at an out-of-town location, away from the ordinary pressures at the commission's Washington headquarters. There is no designated chairman for the group, he added, and meetings will be conducted on an informal basis.

The council has already met twice, at Charlottesville—once in August and again in September.

The new council replaces an ad-hoc body with the same membership, known as the Planning Advisory Committee. Regarded as generally ineffective, it had met only twice in the past three years.

ChangingHands

Announced

The following sales of broadcast stations were reported last week, subject to FCC approval:

- KARM-AM-FM Fresno, Calif.: Sold by George R. Harm and Floyd H. Hyde to Empire Broadcasting Corp. for $675,000. Sellers are trustees of the estate of the late Hattie Harm. Empire owns KLIV(AM) San Jose, Calif. Its president is Robert S. Kieve. KARM(AM) operates on 1430 khz with 5 kw full time. KARM-FM is on 101.9 mhz with 1.8 kw and an antenna 1,870 feet above average terrain. Broker: Hamilton-Landis & Associates.
- KABO(AM) Albuquerque, N.M.: Sold by Oscar I. Dodeck to Edward L. Gomez and others for $450,000. Mr. Gomez has a controlling interest in KOXX(FM) McAllen and KIRT(AM) Mission, both Texas. KABO is full time on 1350 khz with 5 kw day and 500 w night. Broker: Hamilton-Landis & Associates.
- KHUZ(AM) Borger, Tex.: Sold by J. Robert Wooten to Larry Dean Hickerson for $100,000. Mr. Hickerson is presently manager of KBGO(AM) Waco, Tex. KHUZ is full time on 1490 khz with 1 kw day and 250 w night. Broker: Hamilton-Landis & Associates.
- KAVA(AM) Burney, Calif.: Sold by Ulysses B. Bartmess to Hermiston Broadcasting Corp. for $50,000. Robert Chopping, president of Hermiston, has an interest in KOHU(AM) Hermiston, Ore., and is general manager and