

Review: Tech Night, March 2018

Saying Goodbye to Cable

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On the subject of “cutting loose of cable TV, CKCS long-time member Paul Stackhouse found there was a full house of members and guests interested in the subject. It is clear that the climbing cost of cable service has caused hundreds, or maybe thousands of Lexingtonians to look for lower cost options.

Paul offered four questions one should answer to decide if leaving cable TV is for you.

1. DO YOU WATCH NON-BROADCAST CHANNELS?
2. WHAT CHANNELS DO YOU WANT TO KEEP/LOSE?
3. WHAT STREAMING SERVICE SHOULD I CHOOSE?
4. DO YOU (ALREADY) HAVE A STREAMING DEVICE?

To cut costs, Paul primarily suggested two options to consider.

- (1) Getting an antenna and watching TV over the air or
- (2) Paying for a monthly streaming service using internet from your internet service provider, delivered through your smart TV or another device.

In answering question 2, if you generally watch just local TV channels for news, local sports, and network programs they offer, and you are not into national sports or specialty channels, then watching ‘over the air’ is for you. Best, it is the least expensive. Remember the days of rabbit ears to receive TV signals? Newer and better antennas that you can hang almost anywhere can easily access 25 plus local channels in the Lexington area (more or less depending on your location) will provide you high definition signal on modern TVs. It involves a onetime cost about \$30 for the antenna, and no monthly bills.

If, however, you watch lots of sports, cooking and home improvement shows, cable news, movies, or other cable-only networks you can still save money by getting your TV over the internet. There are three things you need.

(1) You still must purchase your internet connection from a local provider such as Spectrum, Windstream, etc. Super high-speed internet is not necessary, in most cases 15 Mbps (megabytes per second) or higher is sufficient.

(2) You need to subscribe to a streaming service like Hulu, YouTube TV, SlingTV or others to provide you the channel package that includes the channels you commonly watch. There are about a dozen of these, so some homework will be required.

(3) If you don't already have a smart TV, or network connectable Blu-ray player, you'll need to purchase a device to convert the internet (network) signal back into a TV (HDMI) signal. This selection requires some shopping to get the unit you like to match the streaming service that carries the channels you want. Like offering from Apple (AppleTV), Amazon (FireStick TV), Google (Chromecast), or the platform agnostic Roku just to name a few of a dozen or more out there to consider. All of the devices are just a one-time purchase; any ongoing costs are for the streaming service to which you subscribe to watch TV through the device.

If you wish to record shows to watch later, many services offer the ability to record your programs 'in their cloud' which you can pick a time to watch. It's like having a cable box DVR, but they have the box, not you.

Do the research: Choose the channels you want to watch, choose the streaming service that offers those channels, and choose a device that allows you to run that streaming service. Note: Firestick (an Amazon device) won't play YouTube TV (a Google brand) and Chromecast (a Google device) won't play Amazon Prime video; while Apple or Roku will play either. When you cut the cable, you should find it simpler and less expensive than you might think.

Reference documents:

Choosing a service that carries the channels you want:

<https://www.techhive.com/article/3211536/streaming-services/best-tv-streaming-services.html>

Deciding among various streaming devices

<https://www.tomsguide.com/us/best-streaming-players,review-2140.html>

Comparing Smart TVs: <https://www.lifewire.com/best-smart-tvs-4135681>