



PORT NETWORKS

PRESS RELEASE

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LOCAL COMPANY CHALLENGES VERIZON ON TELEPHONE DIRECTORY DUMPING

Baltimore, MD – April 1, 2009 – Baltimore residents tired of tripping over stacks of telephone directories on their steps and sidewalks found an ally this week, when local telecommunications company Port Networks filed a complaint with the City against rival Verizon Communications, the multi-state conglomerate responsible for turning carbon-dioxide-consuming trees into piles of wet pulp lining the City's streets.

"It's amazing that in the Internet era, Verizon continues to print and distribute so many of these directories, which it then distributes indiscriminately to customers and non-customers alike," explains Hugh Bethell, General Manager at Port Networks. "Somebody had to step in and do something, and since we're used to challenging Verizon, it might as well be us."

In filing its complaint against Verizon with the director of code enforcement for Baltimore Housing, Port Networks referenced Baltimore's ordinance prohibiting the house-to-house distribution of advertising material.

Article 19 of the Baltimore City Code specifies that "A person may not affix, place, or cause to be affixed or placed any advertising circular...in or on any residential property in the City (whether in or on a fence, railing, door, porch, lawn, sidewalk, or otherwise), except with the express permission of the owner or occupant of that property."

The Code defines an advertising circular as "any printed or written circular, notice, or other item the predominate purpose of which is to advertise one or more products, services, or other things for sale, lease, or trade; to direct attention to one or more businesses, commodities, services, events, or other activities for which a fee is charged or solicited; or otherwise to promote activity of a business or commercial nature."

"Verizon may argue that a telephone directory is not advertising, but we all know that the yellow pages are essentially doing just what the law prohibits – directing attention to businesses," says Bethell. "When plumbers, pizza places, and phrenologists pay money to be in the book, there's no way to claim that advertising isn't its purpose. Verizon doesn't distribute directories out of the kindness of its heart. It distributes them because it makes obscene amounts of money doing so."

The complaint filed by Port Networks notes that there are several good reasons for the City to apply Article 19 to Verizon's distribution of telephone directories.

(more...)

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LOCAL COMPANY CHALLENGES VERIZON ON TELEPHONE DIRECTORY DUMPING, cont.

First, uneven enforcement of the city code slants the playing field against local businesses. “We can’t drop off so much as a flyer without facing a fine,” notes Rob Mikes, a sales manager at Port Networks, “but Verizon can drop 2000 pages of ads for its telephone network and its clients on every single step in Baltimore, and they get away with it.”

Second, the mass distribution of printed telephone directories has an enormous negative impact on the environment. According to statistics from the Environmental Protection Agency, producing telephone directories for each of the City’s 258,000 households consumes close to 32,000 trees, uses 7.2 million gallons of fresh water, and requires 4.2 million kilowatts of electricity – enough to power 1,000 homes for six months.

Third, the unwanted directories dumped on steps and sidewalks around the City exacerbate the litter problem Baltimore is already battling. When left out in the rain, these directories turn into sodden piles of pulp that are difficult for residents and sanitation workers to deal with. Unless they are recycled, the telephone directories printed for Baltimore households will end up consuming more than 3,400 cubic yards of landfill space.

Like Port Networks, environmentally concerned individuals and companies around the country are banding together to stop the mass distribution of telephone directories by forcing carriers like Verizon to adopt an “opt-in” system for determining who will receive a directory. Citizens of Baltimore interested in supporting the fight are encouraged to sign the online petition at www.PaperlessPetition.org.

About Port Networks

Port Networks is a privately-held wireless telecommunications company based in Baltimore, MD. The company provides IP-based data and voice services to residential, business, and government clients, over a citywide wireless network that operates independently of the incumbent local exchange carrier (Verizon) and local cable television franchisee (Comcast). Because it owns its own network, the company can offer clients lower monthly rates, faster service installation, scaleable services, and one-call customer service. Founded in 2003, Port Networks is a registered Maryland small business enterprise and member of the Greater Baltimore Committee.

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