

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

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| In the Matter of |) | |
| |) | |
| Nichols Broadcasting Group, LLC |) | Facility ID No.: 39344 |
| |) | NAL/Acct. No.: 202141420003 |
| Licensee of Station WEWA-LD |) | FRN: 0024240467 |
| Wewahitchka, FL |) | LMS File No.: 0000130241 |

NOTICE OF APPARENT LIABILITY FOR FORFEITURE

Adopted: May 25, 2021

Released: May 25, 2021

By the Chief, Video Division, Media Bureau:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Media Bureau (Bureau) has before it the application (Application)¹ of Nichols Broadcasting Group, LLC (Licensee), for renewal of its license for WEWA-LD, Wewahitchka, FL (Station). In this *Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture (NAL)*, we find the Licensee apparently willfully violated section 73.3539(a) of the Commission’s rules (Rules)² by failing to timely file a license renewal application for the Station. Based upon our review of the facts and circumstances before us, we conclude that the Licensee is apparently liable for a monetary forfeiture in the amount of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500).

II. BACKGROUND

2. Section 73.3539(a) of the Rules requires that applications for renewal of license for broadcast stations must be filed “not later than the first day of the fourth full calendar month prior to the expiration date of the license sought to be renewed.”³ The application for renewal of the Station’s license should have been filed by October 1, 2020, the first day of the fourth full calendar month prior to the Station’s license expiration date of February 1, 2021.⁴ However, the Licensee did not file the Application until December 30, 2020. In the Application, the Licensee indicates that the renewal application deadline was “simply overlooked.”

III. DISCUSSION

3. *Proposed Forfeiture.* We find that the Licensee is apparently liable for a forfeiture in the amount of \$1,500. In this case, the Licensee failed to file the Application on or before October 1, 2020, as required by section 73.3539(a) of the Rules. The Application was not received until December 30, 2020, nearly three months late.

4. Pursuant to section 503(b)(1)(B) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (Act), a person who is found to have willfully and/or repeatedly failed to comply with any provision of the Act or any rule, regulation, or order issued by the Commission, shall be liable to the United States for a

¹ File No. 0000130241. WEWA-LD is a low power television station.

² 47 CFR § 73.3539(a).

³ *Id.*

⁴ See 47 CFR §§ 73.1020, 73.3539(a); See *Media Bureau Announces Procedures For 2020-2023 Television License Renewal Cycle*, Public Notice, 35 FCC Rcd 3656 (2020).

forfeiture penalty.⁵ Section 312(f)(1) of the Act defines willful as “the conscious and deliberate commission or omission of [any] act, irrespective of any intent to violate” the law.⁶ The legislative history to section 312(f)(1) of the Act clarifies that this definition of willful applies to both section 312 and 503(b) of the Act,⁷ and the Commission has so interpreted the term in the section 503(b) context.⁸ Section 312(f)(2) of the Act provides that “[t]he term ‘repeated,’ when used with reference to the commission or omission of any act, means the commission or omission of such act more than once or, if such commission or omission is continuous, for more than one day.”⁹

5. The Commission’s *Forfeiture Policy Statement* and section 1.80(b)(10) of the Rules establish a base forfeiture amount of \$3,000 for failure to file a required form or information.¹⁰ In determining the appropriate forfeiture amount, we may adjust the base amount upward or downward by considering the factors enumerated in section 503(b)(2)(E) of the Act, including “the nature, circumstances, extent and gravity of the violation, and, with respect to the violator, the degree of culpability, any history of prior offenses, ability to pay, and such other matters as justice may require.”¹¹

6. In this case, the Licensee failed to timely file a license renewal application for the Station, as required by section 73.3539(a) of the Rules. The Licensee indicates that the renewal application deadline was “simply overlooked.” We note that inadvertently missing a Commission deadline is “at best, ignorance of the law, which the Commission does not consider a mitigating circumstance.”¹² Taking into consideration all of the factors required by section 503(b)(2)(E) of the Act and the *Forfeiture Policy Statement*, we will reduce the forfeiture from the base amount to \$1,500 for the failure to file a timely renewal application, because, as a low power television station, the Station is providing a secondary service.¹³

7. *License Renewal Application.* In evaluating an application for license renewal, the Commission’s decision is governed by section 309(k) of the Act.¹⁴ That section provides that if, upon consideration of the application and pleadings, we find that: (1) the station has served the public interest, convenience, and necessity; (2) there have been no serious violations of the Act or the Rules; and (3) there have been no other violations which, taken together, constitute a pattern of abuse, we are to grant

⁵ See 47 U.S.C. § 503(b)(1)(B); see also 47 CFR § 1.80(a)(2).

⁶ 47 U.S.C. § 312(f)(1).

⁷ See H.R. Rep. No. 97-765, at 51 (1982) (Conf. Rep.).

⁸ See *Southern California Broadcasting Co.*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 6 FCC Rcd 4387, 4388, para. 5 (1991) (*Southern California*), recon. denied, 7 FCC Rcd 3454 (1992).

⁹ 47 U.S.C. § 312(f)(2).

¹⁰ See *Forfeiture Policy Statement and Amendment of Section 1.80 of the Rules to Incorporate the Forfeiture Guidelines*, Report and Order, 12 FCC Rcd 17087, 17113-15 (1997) (*Forfeiture Policy Statement*), recon. denied, 15 FCC Rcd 303 (1999); 47 CFR § 1.80(b), paragraph (b)(10), Table 1.

¹¹ 47 U.S.C. § 503(b)(2)(E). See also *Forfeiture Policy Statement*, 12 FCC Rcd at 17100-01; 47 CFR § 1.80(b)(10); 47 CFR § 1.80(b), paragraph (b)(10), Table 3.

¹² See *Southern California*, 6 FCC Rcd at 4387, para. 3.

¹³ See, e.g., *FCR Broadcasting, Inc.*, Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, 36 FCC Rcd 1383 (MB 2021); *Iglesia Sinai Pentecostes, Inc.*, Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, 36 FCC Rcd 1513 (MB 2021); *Gerard Media LLC*, Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, 36 FCC Rcd 1436 (MB 2021) (all reducing fine for a late renewal application to \$1,500 because the stations “provid[e] a secondary service.”). See also *Digital Low Power Television, Television Translator, and Television Booster Stations and Digital Class A Television Stations*, Report and Order, 19 FCC Rcd 19331, 19333, paras. 2-6 (2004) (“The low power television service consists of LPTV, TV translator, and television booster stations... Stations in the low power television service are authorized with ‘secondary’ frequency use status.”).

¹⁴ 47 U.S.C. § 309(k).

the renewal application.¹⁵ If, however, the licensee fails to meet that standard, the Commission may deny the application—after notice and opportunity for a hearing under section 309(e) of the Act—or grant the application “on terms and conditions as are appropriate, including renewal for a term less than the maximum otherwise permitted.”¹⁶

8. We find that the Licensee’s apparent violation of section 73.3539(a) of the Rules does not constitute a “serious violation” warranting designation of the Application for evidentiary hearing. Moreover, we find no evidence of violations that, when considered together, constitute a pattern of abuse.¹⁷ Further, based on our review of the Application, we find that the Station served the public interest, convenience, and necessity during the subject license term. We will therefore grant the Application by separate action upon the conclusion of this forfeiture proceeding if there are no issues other than those set forth in this *NAL* that would preclude grant of the Application.

IV. ORDERING CLAUSES

9. Accordingly, **IT IS ORDERED**, pursuant to section 503(b) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. § 503(b), and sections 1.80 and 0.283(d) of the Commission’s rules, 47 CFR §§ 1.80 and 0.283, that Nichols Broadcasting Group, LLC, is hereby **NOTIFIED** of its **APPARENT LIABILITY FOR FORFEITURE** in the amount of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) for its apparent and/or willful violation of section 73.3539(a) of the Commission’s rules, 47 CFR § 73.3539(a).

10. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that, pursuant to section 1.80 of the Commission’s rules, 47 CFR § 1.80, within thirty (30) days of the release date of this *NAL*, Nichols Broadcasting Group, LLC, **SHALL PAY** the full amount of the proposed forfeiture or **SHALL FILE** a written statement seeking reduction or cancellation of the proposed forfeiture.

11. Payment of the forfeiture must be made by credit card, ACH (Automated Clearing House) debit from a bank account using the Commission’s Fee Filer (the Commission’s online payment system),¹⁸ or by wire transfer. The Commission no longer accepts forfeiture payments by check or money order. Below are instructions that payors should follow based on the form of payment selected:¹⁹

- Payment by wire transfer must be made to ABA Number 021030004, receiving bank TREAS/NYC, and Account Number 27000001. A completed Form 159 must be faxed to the Federal Communications Commission at 202-418-2843 or e-mailed to RROGWireFaxes@fcc.gov on the same business day the wire transfer is initiated. Failure to provide all required information in Form 159 may result in payment not being recognized as having been received. When completing FCC Form 159, enter the Account Number in block number 23A (call sign/other ID), enter the letters “FORF” in block number 24A (payment

¹⁵ 47 U.S.C. § 309(k)(1).

¹⁶ 47 U.S.C. §§ 309(k)(2), 309(k)(3).

¹⁷ For example, we do not find here that the Licensee’s Station operation “was conducted in an exceedingly careless, inept and negligent manner and that the licensee is either incapable of correcting or unwilling to correct the operating deficiencies.” *See Heart of the Black Hills Stations*, Decision, 32 FCC 2d 196, 198, para. 6 (1971). Nor do we find on the record here that “the number, nature and extent” of the violations indicate that “the licensee cannot be relied upon to operate [the station] in the future in accordance with the requirements of its licenses and the Commission’s Rules.” *Id.* at 200, paras. 10-11. *See also Center for Study and Application of Black Econ. Dev.*, Hearing Designation Order, 6 FCC Rcd 4622 (1991); *Calvary Educ. Broad. Network, Inc.*, Hearing Designation Order, 7 FCC Rcd 4037 (1992).

¹⁸ Payments made using the Commission’s Fee Filer system do not require the submission of an FCC Form 159.

¹⁹ For questions regarding payment procedures, please contact the Financial Operations Group Help Desk by phone at 1-877-480-3201 (option #6), or by e-mail at ARINQUIRIES@fcc.gov.

type code), and enter in block number 11 the FRN(s) captioned above (Payor FRN).²⁰ For additional detail and wire transfer instructions, go to <https://www.fcc.gov/licensing-databases/fees/wire-transfer>.

- Payment by credit card must be made by using the Commission’s Fee Filer website at <https://apps.fcc.gov/FeeFiler/login.cfm>. To pay by credit card, log in using the FRN captioned above. If payment must be split across FRNs, complete this process for each FRN. Next, select “Pay bills” on the Fee Filer Menu, and select the bill number associated with the NAL Account – the bill number is the NAL Account number with the first two digits excluded – and then choose the “Pay by Credit Card” option. Please note that there is a dollar limitation on credit card transactions, which cannot exceed \$24,999.
- Payment by ACH must be made by using the Commission’s Fee Filer website at <https://apps.fcc.gov/FeeFiler/login.cfm>. To pay by ACH, log in using the FRN captioned above. If payment must be split across FRNs, complete this process for each FRN. Next, select “Pay bills” on the Fee Filer Menu and then select the bill number associated to the NAL Account—the bill number is the NAL Account number with the first two digits excluded—and choose the “Pay from Bank Account” option. Please contact the appropriate financial institution to confirm the correct Routing Number and the correct account number from which payment will be made and verify with that financial institution that the designated account has authorization to accept ACH transactions.

12. The written response seeking reduction or cancellation of the proposed forfeiture, if any, must include a detailed factual statement supported by appropriate documentation and affidavits pursuant to sections 1.16 and 1.80(f)(3) of the Rules.²¹ The written response must be filed with the Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 45 L Street, NE, Washington, DC 20554, ATTN: Barbara A. Kreisman, Chief, Video Division, Media Bureau, and **MUST INCLUDE** the NAL/Acct. No. referenced above. A courtesy copy should also be emailed to Andrew.Kennedy@fcc.gov to assist in processing the response.

- Filings can be sent by commercial overnight courier, or by first-class or overnight U.S. Postal Service mail. All filings must be addressed to the Commission’s Secretary, Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission.
 - Commercial overnight mail (other than U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail) must be sent to 9050 Junction Drive, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701.
 - Postal Service first-class, Express, and Priority mail must be addressed to 45 L Street, NE, Washington, DC 20554.
 - Effective March 19, 2020, and until further notice, the Commission no longer accepts any hand or messenger delivered filings. This is a temporary measure taken to help protect the health and safety of individuals, and to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19.²²

13. The Commission will not consider reducing or canceling a forfeiture in response to a claim of inability to pay unless the respondent submits: (1) federal tax returns for the most recent three-year period; (2) financial statements prepared according to generally accepted accounting practices (GAAP); or (3) some other reliable and objective documentation that accurately reflects the respondent’s current financial status. Any claim of inability to pay must specifically identify the basis for the claim by

²⁰ Instructions for completing the form may be obtained at <https://www.fcc.gov/Forms/Form159/159.pdf>.

²¹ 47 CFR §§ 1.16 and 1.80(f)(3).

²² See *FCC Announces Closure of FCC Headquarters Open Window and Change in Hand-Delivery Policy*, Public Notice, 35 FCC Rcd 2788 (2020).

reference to the financial documentation submitted. Inability to pay, however, is only one of several factors that the Commission will consider in determining the appropriate forfeiture, and we have discretion to not reduce or cancel the forfeiture if other prongs of 47 U.S.C. § 503(b)(2)(E) support that result.²³

14. Requests for full payment of the forfeiture proposed in this *NAL* under the installment plan should be sent to: Associate Managing Director-Financial Operations, 45 L Street, NE, Washington, DC 20554.²⁴ Questions regarding payment procedures should be directed to the Financial Operations Group Help Desk by phone, 1-877-480-3201 (option #6), or by e-mail at ARINQUIRIES@fcc.gov.

15. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED**, that copies of this *NAL* shall be sent, by First Class and Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested, to Nichols Broadcasting Group, LLC, 181 Tide Drive, Hamilton, AL 35570, and to its contact representative, Susan Hansen, B.W. St. Clair, 6868 Vivian St., Arvada, CO 80004.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Barbara A. Kreisman
Chief, Video Division
Media Bureau

²³ See, e.g., *Adrian Abramovich*, Forfeiture Order, 33 FCC Rcd 4663, 4678-79, paras. 44-45 (2018).

²⁴ See 47 CFR § 1.1914.