

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

In the Matter of)
)
Amendment of Section 73.622(j), Table of) MB Docket No. 22-30
Allotments, Television Broadcast Stations) RM-11916
(Vernon, Alabama))

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

Adopted: January 20, 2022

Released: January 20, 2022

Comment Date: [30 days after date of publication in the Federal Register]
Reply Comment Date: [45 days after date of publication in the Federal Register]

By the Chief, Video Division, Media Bureau:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Video Division, Media Bureau (Bureau), has before it a petition for rulemaking (Petition), filed October 29, 2021, by the Alabama Educational Television Commission (Petitioner or AETC). The Petitioner requests the allotment of reserved noncommercial educational (NCE) channel *4 to Vernon, Alabama as the community’s first local television service.

II. BACKGROUND

2. The Petitioner states it is the licensee of nine NCE television broadcast stations in Alabama, and provides its viewers with a variety of educational, public affairs, and other noncommercial programming. According to the Petitioner, Vernon is a community deserving of a new television broadcast service. In support, the Petitioner states that Vernon has a population of 5,551 and is the county seat of Lamar County, Alabama. Vernon has a mayor, Board of Registrars, Circuit Clerk, Judge Probate, Sheriff, and six-member City Council. The community also has police, fire, and utility departments, as well as a public library, regional hospital, airport, numerous businesses and places of worship, and its own Zip Code. In addition, the proposed allotment would allow the provision of noncommercial educational television service to areas not currently served by AETC. The Petitioner states its intention

1 Alabama Educational Television Commission’s Petition for Rulemaking (filed Oct. 29, 2021) (Petition). The Petitioner amended the petition shortly thereafter to make a minor update to its technical showing.

2 The Commission recently released an Order adopting a revised Table of Allotments, 47 CFR § 73.622(j), to codify Commission actions taken over the past several years that modified the Post-Transition Table of DTV Allotments, 47 CFR § 73.622(i), as it appears in the October 1, 2018 version of the Code of Federal Regulations. See Expanding the Economic and Innovation Opportunities of Spectrum Through Incentive Auction, Docket No. 12-268, Order, FCC 21-111 (rel. Oct. 25, 2021). These actions primarily related to the incentive auction and repacking process authorized by the Spectrum Act. See Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, Pub. L. No. 112-96, §§ 6402 (codified at 47 U.S.C. § 309(j)(8)(G)), 6403 (codified at 47 U.S.C. § 1452), 126 Stat. 156 (2012). If the Media Bureau adopts the Petitioner’s allotment proposal, it will amend the recently adopted Table of Allotments.

3 Petition at 3.

4 Petition at 5, Engineering at 3.

5 Id.

6 Petition at 3-4, Engineering at Exhs. 1, 2.

to file an application for channel *4, if allotted,⁷ and take all necessary steps to obtain a construction permit.⁸

III. DISCUSSION

3. The proposed amendment to the Table of Allotments warrants consideration. The Petitioner’s proposal would result in a first local service to Vernon.⁹ The Petitioner demonstrates, and a staff engineering analysis confirms, that channel *4 can be allotted to Vernon, Alabama, consistent with the minimum geographic spacing requirements for new allotments in section 73.623(d) of the Commission’s rules (rules),¹⁰ at 33° 54’ 44.26” N and 87° 48’ 06.20” W.¹¹ In addition, the allotment point complies with section 73.625(a)(1) of the rules as the entire community of Vernon is encompassed by the 35 dBμ contour.¹²

4. Accordingly, we seek comment on the proposed amendment of the Table of Allotments, section 73.622(j) of the rules,¹³ for the community listed below, to read as follows:

<u>City and State</u>	<u>Channel No.</u>	
	<u>Present</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Vernon, Alabama	-	*4

IV. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

5. *Showings Required.* Comments are invited on the proposal discussed in this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). The Petitioner or any proponent that expresses interest in the allotment will be expected to answer whatever questions are presented in initial comments. The Petitioner of a proposed allotment is required to file comments even if it only resubmits or incorporates by reference its former pleadings. The Petitioner must restate its present intention to apply for the channel if it is allotted and, if authorized, to build a station promptly.¹⁴ Failure to file may lead to denial of the request. Any requests by a proponent for withdrawal or dismissal of an allotment request must be filed with the Commission in accordance with section 1.420(j) of the rules.¹⁵

⁷ NCE television stations are identified in the Table by an asterisk to indicate they are reserved for noncommercial educational use. 47 CFR § 73.622(a).

⁸ Petition at 5.

⁹ The Commission determines a preferential arrangement of television allotments based on the following five priorities: (1) provide at least one television service to all parts of the United States; (2) provide each community with at least one television broadcast station; (3) provide a choice of at least two television services to all parts of the United States; (4) provide each community with at least two television broadcast stations; and (5) assign any remaining channels to communities based on population, geographic location, and the number of television services available to the community from stations located in other communities. *Amendment of Section 3.606 of the Commission’s Rules and Regulations*, Sixth Report and Order, 41 F.C.C. 148, 167-73 (1952).

¹⁰ 47 CFR § 73.623(d).

¹¹ Engineering Exh. at 2.

¹² See 47 CFR § 73.625(a)(1).

¹³ 47 CFR § 73.622(j).

¹⁴ See, e.g., *Buffalo, Iola, Normangee, and Madisonville, Texas*, MB Docket No. 07-729, Report and Order, 24 FCC Rcd 8192, 8194, para. 9 (Aud. Div. 2009).

¹⁵ 47 CFR § 1.420(j).

6. *Cut-off Protection.* The following procedures will govern the consideration of the filings in this proceeding:

- (a) Counterproposals advanced in this proceeding itself will be considered, if advanced in initial comments, so that parties may comment on them in reply comments. They will not be considered if advanced in reply comments.¹⁶
- (b) The filing of a counterproposal may lead the Commission to allot a different channel than was requested in the Petition.¹⁷

7. *Comments and Reply Comments.* Pursuant to sections 1.415, 1.419, and 1.420 of the rules,¹⁸ interested parties may file comments and reply comments on or before the dates indicated on the first page of this document. Comments may be filed using the Commission's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS).¹⁹

- Electronic Filers: Comments may be filed electronically using the Internet by accessing the ECFS: <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/>. Parties that choose to file electronically only need to submit one copy of each filing so long as the submission conforms to all procedural and filing requirements. Online filing is optional.
- Paper Filers: Parties who choose to file by paper must file an original and one copy of each filing. Filings can be sent by hand or messenger delivery, 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. Any paper filing that is not addressed to the Office of the Secretary will be treated as filed on the day it is received in the Office of the Secretary. Accordingly, failure to follow the specified requirements may result in the treatment of a filing as untimely.
 - 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.
 - U.S. Postal Service first-class, Express, and Priority mail must be addressed to 45 L Street, NE, Washington D.C. 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-19.²⁰
 - During the time the Commission's building is closed to the general public and until further notice, if more than one docket or rulemaking number appears in the caption of a proceeding, paper filers need not submit two additional copies for each additional docket or rulemaking number; an original and one copy are sufficient.

8. *Service.* Pursuant to section 1.420 of the rules,²¹ all submissions by parties to this proceeding or by persons acting on behalf of such parties must be made in written comments, reply comments, or other appropriate pleadings. The person filing the comments shall serve comments on the petitioners. Reply comments shall be served on the person(s) who filed comments to which the reply is

¹⁶ 47 CFR § 1.420(d).

¹⁷ 47 CFR § 1.420(g)(2).

¹⁸ 47 CFR §§ 1.415, 1.419, and 1.420.

¹⁹ See *Electronic Filing of Documents in Rulemaking Proceedings*, 63 FR 24121 (1998).

²⁰ See *FCC Announces Closure of FCC Headquarters Open Window and Change in Hand-Delivery Policy*, Public Notice, 35 FCC Rcd 2788 (2020).

²¹ 47 CFR § 1.420.

directed. A certificate of service shall accompany such comments and reply comments.²² Additionally, a copy of such comments should be served on the Petitioner, as follows:

M. Scott Johnson, Esq.
Smithwick & Belendiuk, PC
5028 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Suite 301
Washington, D.C. 20016

9. *Ex Parte Notices– Restricted.* The proceeding this Notice initiates shall be treated as a “restricted” proceeding in accordance with the Commission’s *ex parte* rules.²³ For purposes of this restricted notice and comment rulemaking proceeding, members of the public are advised that no *ex parte* presentations are permitted from the time the Commission adopts a notice of proposed rulemaking until the proceeding has been decided and such decision in the applicable docket is no longer subject to reconsideration by the Commission or review by any court.²⁴ An *ex parte* presentation is not prohibited if specifically requested by the Commission or staff for the clarification or adduction of evidence or resolution of issues in the proceeding.²⁵ However, any new written information elicited from such a request or any summary of any new information shall be served by the person making the presentation upon the other parties to the proceeding in a particular docket unless the Commission specifically waives this service requirement.²⁶ Any comment that has not been served on the petitioner constitutes an *ex parte* presentation and shall not be considered in the proceeding. Any reply comment which has not been served on the person(s) who filed the comment, to which the reply is directed, constitutes an *ex parte* presentation and shall not be considered in the proceeding.

10. *Availability of Documents.* Comments, reply comments, and *ex parte* submissions will be available for public inspection via ECFS (<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/>). Documents will be available electronically in ASCII, Microsoft Word, and/or Adobe Acrobat.

11. *Paperwork Reduction and Regulatory Flexibility.* The Commission has determined that the relevant provisions of the Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980, as amended,²⁷ do not apply to a rulemaking proceeding to amend the Table of Allotments, section 73.622(j) of the rules.²⁸ This document does not contain proposed information collection requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.²⁹ In addition, therefore, it does not contain any proposed information collection burden “for small

²² See 47 CFR § 1.420(a), (b) and (c).

²³ 47 CFR §§ 1.1200 *et seq.*

²⁴ 47 CFR § 1.1208.

²⁵ 47 CFR § 1.1204(a)(10).

²⁶ 47 CFR § 1.1204(a)(10)(ii). In addition, an oral presentation in a restricted proceeding not designated for hearing requesting action by a particular date or giving reasons that a proceeding should be expedited other than the need to avoid administrative delay is permitted. A detailed summary of the presentation must be filed in the record and served by the person making the presentation on the other parties to the proceeding, who may respond in support or opposition to the request for expedition, including by oral *ex parte* presentation, subject to the same service requirement. 47 CFR § 1.1204(a)(11).

²⁷ See 5 U.S.C. § 603. The RFA, *see* 5 U.S.C. § 601 *et seq.*, has been amended by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 (SBREFA), Pub. L. No. 104-121, Title II, 110 Stat. 857 (1996). The SBREFA was enacted as Title II of the Contract with America Advancement Act of 1996 (CWAAA).

²⁸ 47 CFR § 73.622(j).

²⁹ See 44 U.S.C. §§ 3501-3520.

business concerns with fewer than 25 employees,” pursuant to the Small Business Paperwork Relief Act of 2002.³⁰

12. *People with Disabilities.* To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an e-mail to fcc504@fcc.gov or call the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau at 202-418-0530 (voice), 202-418-0432 (tty).

13. *Additional Information.* For further information concerning the proceeding listed above, contact Joyce Bernstein, Video Division, Media Bureau, (202) 418-1647, Joyce.Bernstein@fcc.gov.

V. ORDERING CLAUSES

14. **IT IS ORDERED** that, pursuant to authority found in 47 U.S.C. sections 4(i), 5(c)(1), 303(g) and (r), and 307(b) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§ 154(i), 155(c)(1), 303(g), (r), and 307(b) and sections 0.61, 0.204(b), and 0.283 of the rules, 47 CFR §§ 0.61, 0.204(b), and 0.283, **IT IS PROPOSED TO AMEND** the Table of Allotments, section 73.622(j) of the rules, 47 CFR § 73.622(j), as set forth in this *NPRM*, and this *NPRM IS ADOPTED*.

15. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that, pursuant to applicable procedures set forth in sections 1.415, 1.419, 1.420 of the rules, 47 CFR §§ 1.415, 1.419, and 1.420, interested parties may file comments, including counterproposals, on the *NPRM* in MB Docket No. 22-30 and RM-11916 on or before thirty (30) days after publication in the Federal Register and reply comments on or before forty five (45) days after publication in the Federal Register.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Barbara A. Kreisman
Chief, Video Division
Media Bureau

³⁰ See 44 U.S.C. § 3506(c)(4).