

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

In the Matter of)
)
Amendment of Section 73.622(j), Table of) MB Docket No. 23-14
Allotments, Television Broadcast Stations) RM-11943
(Roanoke, Virginia))

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

Adopted: January 10, 2023

Released: January 11, 2023

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 has before it a petition for rulemaking filed by Blue Ridge Public Television, Inc. (Petitioner or Blue Ridge PBS), the licensee of noncommercial educational television PBS member station WBRA-TV (WBRA-TV or Station), channel *3, Roanoke, Virginia.1 The Petitioner requests the substitution of channel *13 in place of channel *3 at Roanoke, Virginia in the Table of TV Allotments.2

II. BACKGROUND

2. In support of its channel substitution request, the Petitioner states that apart from WBRA-TV, only one of the seven other full-power television stations in the Roanoke-Lynchburg DMA operates on a VHF channel, and it operates on high-VHF channel 7. The Petitioner asserts that allowing the Station to move to a high-VHF channel would improve viewers' access to the Station's PBS and other public television programming by improving reception and resolving low-VHF reception issues.3 According to Petitioner, it has received many complaints from viewers unable to receive a reliable signal on channel *3, with some viewers noting that WBRA-TV is the only Roanoke station they cannot receive reliably over the air.4 Petitioner further states that the Commission has recognized that VHF channels have certain propagation characteristics which may cause reception issues for some viewers, as well as the existence of environmental noise blockages affecting VHF signal strength and reception, which may

1 Petition of Blue Ridge Public Television, Inc. for Rulemaking, LMS File No. 0000203784 (filed Nov. 18, 2022) (Petition). We note that Petitioner amended its Petition on January 9, 2023 (Amended Engineering Statement) to include further analysis of the population that may lose predicted service as a result of the proposed channel substitution. Amended Engineering Statement at 1. Noncommercial educational television stations are identified in the Table of TV Allotments by an asterisk to indicate they are reserved for noncommercial educational use. 47 CFR § 73.622(a).

2 47 CFR § 73.622(j).

3 Petition at 2-3. WBRA-TV is the only full-power noncommercial educational television station serving the Roanoke-Lynchburg DMA. WBRA-TV currently broadcasts its PBS, public affairs programming, and emergency notifications through WBRA-TV's participation in PBS's Warning, Alert Response Network. The Petitioner asserts that the proposed channel substitution will allow WBRA-TV to better serve the community by substantially improving viewer access to its educational and public affairs programming and emergency notifications. Id. at 2.

4 Id. at 3 and Exhibit 2, Statement of Will Anderson.

vary widely by service area.⁵ The Engineering Statement provided with the Petition confirms that the proposed channel *13 contour would provide full principal community coverage to Roanoke. An analysis using the Commission's *TVStudy* software tool, according to Petitioner, indicates that WBRA-TV's move from channel *3 to channel *13 is predicted to create an area where 64,309 persons are predicted to lose service without considering the service from other PBS stations.⁶ However, when taking into account service from other PBS stations, only 94 persons are predicted to lose PBS service, a number which the Petitioner asserts the Commission has found to be *de minimis*.⁷

III. DISCUSSION

3. We believe that the Petitioner's channel substitution proposal warrants consideration. Channel *13 can be substituted in place of channel *3 at Roanoke, Virginia, as proposed, in compliance with the principal community coverage requirements of section 73.625(a) of the Commission's rules (rules),⁸ at coordinates 37° 11' 46.0" N and 80° 09' 16.0" W. We believe any possible harm resulting from the loss of noncommercial educational service to some viewers is outweighed by the overall public interest benefit of improving reception to the Station's viewers, including within the Station's community of license. Although the Petitioner's proposal would result in a loss of PBS network programming to some viewers, when taking into account the service provided by noncommercial educational WUNC-TV and WUNL-TV to the WBRA-TV noise limited service contour area, fewer than 500 persons will lose access to PBS network programming, a number the Commission has deemed to be *de minimis*.⁹ We also find that this channel change meets the technical requirements set forth in sections 73.616 and 73.623 of the rules.¹⁰ Thus, we propose to substitute channel *13 in place of channel *3 for WBRA-TV with the following specifications:

<u>City and State</u>	<u>Channel</u>	<u>Power (kW)</u>	<u>Antenna HAAT (m)</u>
Roanoke, Virginia	*13	66	630.6

4. Accordingly, we seek comment on the proposed amendment of the Table of TV Allotments, section 73.622(j) of the rules,¹¹ for the community listed below, to read as follows:

<u>City and State</u>	<u>Channel No.</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Roanoke, Virginia	*3, 27, 30, 34, 36	*13, 27, 30, 34, 36

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

⁵ *Id.* at 3-4.

⁶ Amended Engineering Statement, Exhibit 1, Revised Engineering Statement of William Godfrey, Jr. at 4.

⁷ Engineering Statement at 5. Petitioner's analysis takes into account service being provided by PBS stations WUNC-TV, Chapel Hill, North Carolina (WUNC) and WUNL-TV, Winston-Salem, North Carolina (WUNL).

⁸ 47 CFR § 73.625(a).

⁹ See *WSET, Inc.*, 80 FCC 2d 233, 246 (1980) (finding that loss of service to approximately 550 persons is *de minimis*). The vast majority of viewers that will no longer receive WBRA-TV are located in North Carolina and continue to be served by WUNL and WUNC, which are both North Carolina PBS affiliates. In fact, many of those impacted viewers may already primarily rely upon WUNL and WUNC for their PBS network and public television programming.

¹⁰ 47 CFR §§ 73.616, 73.623.

¹¹ 47 CFR § 73.622(j).

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.¹² 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.¹³

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.¹⁴
- (b) The filing of a counterproposal may lead the Commission to allot a different channel than was requested in the Petition.¹⁵

7. *Comments and Reply Comments.* Pursuant to sections 1.415, 1.419, and 1.420 of the rules,¹⁶ 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).¹⁷

- 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-19.¹⁸

¹² 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).

¹³ 47 CFR § 1.420(j).

¹⁴ 47 CFR §1.420(d).

¹⁵ 47 CFR § 1.420(g)(2).

¹⁶ 47 CFR §§ 1.415, 1.419, and 1.420.

¹⁷ See *Electronic Filing of Documents in Rulemaking Proceedings*, 63 FR 24121 (1998).

¹⁸ See *FCC Announces Closure of FCC Headquarters Open Window and Change in Hand-Delivery Policy*, Public Notice, 35 FCC Rcd 2788 (2020).

- 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 section 1.420 of the rules,¹⁹ 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 directed. A certificate of service shall accompany such comments and reply comments.²⁰ Additionally, a copy of such comments should be served on counsel for petitioner, as follows:

Brad Deutsch, Esq.
Foster Garvey PC
1000 Potomac Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20007

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.²¹ 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.²² 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.²³ 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.²⁴ 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,²⁵ do not apply to a

¹⁹ 47 CFR § 1.420.

²⁰ See 47 CFR §1.420(a), (b), and (c).

²¹ 47 CFR §§ 1.1200 *et seq.*

²² 47 CFR § 1.1208.

²³ 47 CFR § 1.1204(a)(10).

²⁴ 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).

²⁵ 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).

rulemaking proceeding to amend the Table of Allotments, section 73.622(j) of the rules.²⁶ This document does not contain proposed information collection requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.²⁷ In addition, therefore, it does not contain any proposed information collection burden “for small business concerns with fewer than 25 employees,” pursuant to the Small Business Paperwork Relief Act of 2002.²⁸

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, or Emily Harrison, Video Division, Media Bureau, (202) 418-1665, Emily.Harrison@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. 23-14 and RM-11943 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

²⁶ 47 CFR § 73.622(j).

²⁷ See 44 U.S.C. §§ 3501-3520.

²⁸ See 44 U.S.C. § 3506(c)(4).