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

In the Matter of)
HISPANIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY NETWORK, INC., aka HCCN) MB Docket No. 23-267) NAL/Acct. No. 202341420025) FRNS: 0014120505; 0013410998
ANTONIO CESAR GUEL Former President of HCCN and) NAL/Acct. No. 202341420026) FRNS: 0006568448; 0023037682)
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JENNIFER JUAREZ, aka Jenifer Juarez, Licensee of Low Power Television Stations Application for Renewal) NAL/Acct. No. 202341420027) FRN: 0024126237)
KHDE-LD, Denver, CO) Facility ID No. 189604) LMS File No. 0000176579
KJTN-LP, Abilene, TX	 Facility ID No. 127351 CDBS File No. BRTTL-20160411AAZ and LMS File No. 0000192978
KZAB-LP, Abilene, TX	 Facility ID No. 130088 CDBS File No. BRTTL-20160412ABN and LMS File No. 0000192977
KZTE-LD, Fulton, AR) Facility ID No. 128037) LMS File No. 0000132447
KTEQ-LP, Fulton, AR) Facility ID No. 130047) LMS File No. 0000132448
WESL-LP, Jamestown, KY) Facility ID No. 128034) LMS File No. 0000142902
KRPO-LD, Quartzite, AZ) Facility ID No. 128964) LMS File No. 0000192826

ORDER

Issued: February 5, 2024 Released: February 5, 2024

1. This hearing proceeding was initiated by the FCC's Media Bureau on August 10,

2023, regarding renewal of the seven Low Power Television stations listed above.¹ Because named licensee Jennifer Juarez waived her right to a hearing and surrendered the licenses, the Presiding Judge certified issues inherent to Ms. Juarez to the Commission and clarified which issues remain active in this proceeding.² The issues to be considered are as follows:

- (1) To determine whether Antonio Cesar Guel and Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. is (and/or has been, during the most recent license term) a real-party-in-interest to the captioned applications for Stations KHDE-LD, KJTN-LP, KZAB-LP, KZTE-LD, KTEQ-LP, KRPO-LD, and WESL-LP;
- (2) To determine whether there has been a de facto transfer of control of KHDE-LD, KJTN-LP, KZAB-LP, KZTE-LD, KTEQ-LP, KRPO-LD, and WESL-LP to Antonio Cesar Guel or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. in violation of section 310(d) of the Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. § 310(d), and sections 73.1150(a), (b), and 73.3540 of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR §§ 73.1150(a), (b), and 73.3540;
- (3) To determine whether Antonio Cesar Guel and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. have exercised and continue to exercise de facto control over KHDE-LD, KJTN-LP, KZAB-LP, KZTE-LD, KTEQ-LP, KRPO-LD, and WESL-LP;
- (4) To determine whether Antonio Cesar Guel and Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. should, for purposes of this proceeding, be considered one and the same entity;
- (5) To determine whether Antonio Cesar Guel and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. have misrepresented material information to the Commission and/or lacked candor;
- (6) To determine whether Antonio Cesar Guel and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. have abused Commission processes first by filing an assignment application that lacked bona fides while maintaining de facto control of KHDE-LD, KJTN-LP, KZAB-LP, KZTE-LD, KTEQ-LP, KRPO-LD, and WESL-LP, and then by impermissibly and intentionally bifurcating ownership of KHDE-LD, KJTN-LP, KZAB-LP, KZTE-LD, KTEQ-LP, KRPO-LD, and WESL-LP for years by not timely filing the requisite consummation notice;
- (7) To determine, in light of evidence adduced regarding issues (1)

2

¹ Hispanic Christian Community Network, Antoinio Cesar Guel, and Jennifer Juarez, Order to Show Cause Why a Cease and Desist Order Should Not be Issued, Order to Show Cause Why an Order of Revocation Should not be Issued, Hearing Designation Order, Notice of Opportunity for Hearing, and Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, MB Docket No. 23-267, DA 23-678, 2023 WL 5197159 (MB Aug. 10, 2023) (HCCN HDO).

² Hispanic Christian Community Network, Antoinio Cesar Guel, and Jennifer Juarez, Certification Order, MB Docket 23-267, FCC 23M-13, 2023 WL 6793901 (ALJ Oct. 10, 2023); Hispanic Christian Community Network, Antoinio Cesar Guel, and Jennifer Juarez, Summary of Initial Conference, MB Docket No. 23-267, FCC 23M-12, 2023 WL 6458476 (ALJ Oct. 2, 2023) (HCCN Summary of Initial Conference).

- through (6), whether Antonio Cesar Guel and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. shall be ordered to cease and desist from violating Commission Rules and the Communications Act, including making willfully inaccurate, incomplete, evasive, false, or misleading statements before the Commission in violation of section 1.17 of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR § 1.17, and engaging in unauthorized control and operation of broadcast stations in violation of sections 301, 308, and 310 of the Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. §§ 301, 308, and 310;
- (8) To determine, in light of evidence adduced regarding issues (1) through (6), whether Antonio Cesar Guel and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. shall be ordered to cease and desist from operating, controlling, managing or providing any assistance to any stations;
- (9) To determine, in light of evidence adduced regarding issues (1) through (6), whether Antonio Cesar Guel and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. shall be ordered to cease and desist from preparing and/or filing applications or other documents regarding Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. with the Commission;
- (10) To determine, in light of evidence adduced regarding issues (1) through (6), whether Antonio Cesar Guel and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc., to the extent Antonio Cesar Guel or and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. is allowed to assist any other licensee/permittee/applicant in any way with the operation or construction of any station, or to provide any assistance or input in any way in preparing or filing any application with the Commission [see issue (8)], shall be ordered to cease and desist from doing so without also providing a copy of any order issued in this proceeding that finds Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. or Antonio Cesar Guel lacks the character to be a Commission licensee in any and all filings with the Commission in every matter in which it/he participates in any way;
- (11) To determine, in light of evidence adduced regarding issues (1) through (6), whether Antonio Cesar Guel and and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. possess the character qualifications to be Commission licensees; and
- (12) To determine, pursuant to section 503(b)(1) of the Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. § 503(b)(1), whether an Order of Forfeiture should be issued against Antonio Cesar Guel and/or Hispanic Christian Community Network Inc. in an amount not to exceed the statutory limit for the willful and/or repeated violation of each rule section specified above, including section 1.17 of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR § 1.17, and each statutory provision noted above, including sections 301 and 308 of the Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. §§ 301 and 308, for which the statute of limitations in section 503(b)(6) of the Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. § 503(b)(6), has not lapsed.³

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³ HCCN Summary of Initial Conference at para. 7.

Current Motions

- 2. On November 9, 2023, Antonio Cesar Guel, former president of Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc. (HCCN), filed a Motion for Summary Decision with respect to those remaining issues.⁴ The Enforcement Bureau submitted an opposition to that motion on December 7, 2023.⁵ In addition, on December 18, 2023, the Enforcement Bureau filed a motion to add the following three issues to this proceeding:
 - (i) To determine whether there has been a de facto transfer of control of stations licensed to Mekaddesh Group Corporation and/or Hispanic Family Christian Network, Inc. to Antonio Cesar Guel in violation of section 310(d) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (Act), and sections 73.1150(a), (b), and 73.3540 of the Commission's rules;
 - (ii) To determine whether Antonio Cesar Guel has exercised and continues to exercise de facto control over stations licensed to Mekaddesh Group Corporation and/or Hispanic Family Christian Network, Inc.; and
 - (iii) To determine whether Antonio Cesar Guel is (and/or has been, during the most recent license term) a real-party-in-interest to applications for broadcast stations licensed to Mekaddesh Group Corporation and/or Hispanic Family Christian Network, Inc.

The Enforcement Bureau also seeks to add Mekaddesh Group Corporation and Hispanic Family Christian Network as parties and proposes conforming amendments to the existing issues.⁶ Anthony Cesar Guel filed an Opposition to that motion on January 8, 2024.⁷

Antonio Cesar Guel's Motion for Summary Decision

Initial Pleadings

3. The Motion for Summary Decision requests that issues 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 be "resolved adversely" to Mr. Guel.⁸ Similarly, Mr. Guel does not oppose the issuance of a cease and desist order as described by issue 7.⁹ With respect to issue 4, Mr. Guel does not object to being treated interchangeably with HCCN for purposes of this proceeding up to the date that

4

⁴ Hispanic Christian Community Network, Inc., and Antonio Cesar Guel, Motion for Summary Decision, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Nov. 9, 2023) (Guel Motion for Summary Decision).

⁵ Enforcement Bureau's Opposition to Motion for Summary Decision, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Dec. 7, 2023) (EB Opposition to Summary Decision).

⁶ Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Enlarge, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Dec. 18, 2023) (EB Motion to Enlarge).

⁷ Anthony Cesar Guel, Opposition to Motion to Enlarge Issues, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 8, 2024) (Guel Opposition to Motion to Enlarge).

⁸ Guel Motion for Summary Decision at 4-9.

⁹ *Id.* at 9-10.

HCCN declared bankruptcy in 2014.¹⁰ On issue 11, Mr. Guel "will accept a determination adverse to him in this proceeding that he is not qualified to be a Commission licensee" because he is not a U.S. citizen.¹¹ He also does not object to the entry of an Order of Forfeiture pursuant to issue 12.¹² The Guel Motion argues, however, that it is beyond the Commission's authority to order Mr. Guel to cease and desist from the broadcasting business in the manner described in issues 8, 9, and 10.

- 4. The Enforcement Bureau contends that Mr. Guel has not established a basis on which to grant summary decision on any of the issues because his motion does not include an affidavit or supporting information. It points out that section 1.251(a)(1) of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR § 1.251(a)(1), requires a party seeking summary decision to show that no genuine issue of material fact exists in the hearing "by affidavit or by other materials" rather than resting on "mere allegations or denials." ¹³ Moreover, the Bureau argues, the Guel motion by its terms has left several issues unresolved. For instance, regarding issue 5, Mr. Guel acknowledges that he falsely certified on applications to the Commission that he is a U.S. citizen, but indicates that those misrepresentations were not intentional, and the Bureau notes that Mr. Guel fails to address other alleged misrepresentations that were identified in the HCCN/Guel HDO.¹⁴ As to issue 11, the Bureau submits that while Mr. Guel concedes that he is not qualified to hold a Commission license as a non-citizen, he does not address the impact of the other alleged rule violations at issue on his fitness to be a licensee. These potentially disqualifying actions remain relevant, the Bureau contends, because section 310(b) of the Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. § 310(b) permits a foreign national to hold an ownership interest of up to 20 percent in a licensee corporation.¹⁵
- 5. The Bureau accordingly argues that because Mr. Guel does not properly support summary judgement on issues 1-6 and 11, the cease and desist order proposed in issue 7 and the forfeiture proposed in issue 12 are not yet ripe for consideration. If further contends that while the Presiding Judge has the authority to issue the cease and desist orders proposed in issues 8-10, there are other facts not in the record that could be probative in determining the scope of those orders. The Bureau also raises uncertainty as to whether HCCN no longer exists, as Mr. Guel asserts, such that Mr. Guel has not been in control of HCCN since November 11, 2014, when HCCN filed for bankruptcy.

Discussion of Guel Supplement and EB Motion to Strike

6. On December 22, 2023, Mr. Guel submitted in the Commission's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) a supplement to his Motion for Summary Decision that includes a recent declaration from Mr. Guel, made under penalty of perjury.¹⁹ The Enforcement Bureau filed

¹¹ *Id.* at 11.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 7-8.

¹² Id. at 21-22.

¹³ EB Opposition to Summary Decision at para. 4 (quoting 47 CFR § 1.251(a)(1)).

¹⁴ *Id.* at paras. 22-25.

¹⁵ *Id.* at paras. 28-31.

¹⁶ *Id.* at paras. 27 and 47.

¹⁷ *Id.* at paras. 39-45.

¹⁸ *Id.* at paras. 17-21.

¹⁹ Antonio Cesar Guel, Supplement to Motion for Summary Decision, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Dec. 22, 2023) (Guel Supplement).

a Motion to Strike that pleading on January 4, 2024.²⁰ Mr. Guel filed an Opposition to that Motion to Strike on January 10, 2024.²¹ The Enforcement Bureau contends that the Guel Supplement is not authorized by the Commission's rules. It observes that there is no provision in the rules allowing a party to reply to an objection to its motion for summary decision; indeed, the Commission's hearing rules specify that, with respect to interlocutory requests in hearing proceedings, "replies to oppositions will not be entertained."²² The Bureau points out that, even if Mr. Guel had been permitted to file a reply to its Opposition, his pleading would have been due on or before December 14, 2023, or five days following submission of the Opposition.²³ Rather, the Bureau asserts, the Guel Supplement was filed late on Friday, December 22, and it was not served until Saturday, December 23; due to the Monday holiday, the Bureau did not receive notice of the Guel Supplement until Tuesday, December 26.²⁴ The Enforcement Bureau also points out several procedural deficiencies in the pleading, including the absence of page or paragraph numbers.²⁵

- 7. In opposition, Mr. Guel recognizes that the Commission's rules prohibit unauthorized replies but argues that his pleading was not a reply to the Bureau's Opposition to the Motion for Summary Decision. He instead asserts that the Guel Supplement "simply provided additional information and analysis" and that "there is no provision in the Commission's Rules which prohibits the filing of a Supplement in conjunction with the filing of motions for summary decision." Mr. Guel contends that because the Guel Supplement was an interlocutory pleading, the Bureau's response to that pleading was due within four days, or on December 29, and that the Bureau's January 4 Motion to Strike is in reality a late-filed opposition to the Guel Supplement. Moreover, Mr. Guel asserts, "[c]ounsel for EB could have had 'notice' of the filing if she had chosen to simply 'open' her emails on December 24, when the email arrived."
- 8. The Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Strike is granted and the December 22, 2023, Guel Supplement will therefore not be considered. The Enforcement Bureau is correct regarding the various shortcomings of the Guel Supplement, including that it is not a pleading authorized under the Commission's rules. A motion to strike a pleading, on the other hand, is an acceptable and common part of motions practice in an administrative hearing. Even if one were to recognize Mr. Guel's argument that the Guel Supplement does not constitute a reply to the Bureau's Opposition to the Motion for Summary Decision, additional pleadings in a hearing proceeding "may be filed only if specifically requested or authorized by the person(s) who is to

²⁵ *Id.* at para. 7. On January 18, 2024, Mr. Guel submitted pleadings aiming to correct those procedural defects. Antonio Cesar Guel, Motion for Leave to File Errata to Supplement to Motion for Summary Decision, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 18, 2024); Antonio Cesar Guel, Supplement to Motion for Summary Decision, Errata, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 18, 2024).

²⁰ Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Strike Unauthorized Supplement, MB Docket No. 23-167 (filed Jan. 4, 2024) (EB Motion to Strike).

²¹ Antonio Cesar Guel, Opposition to Enforcement Bureau Motion to Strike, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 10, 2024) (Guel Opposition to Motion to Strike).

²² EB Motion to Strike at para. 3 (quoting 47 CFR § 1.294(b)).

²³ *Id.* at n.13 (citing 47 CFR § 1.45(b)).

²⁴ *Id.* at para. 6.

²⁶ Guel Opposition to Motion to Strike at 4.

²⁷ *Id.* at 3.

²⁸ *Id*.

²⁹ *Id*. at 6.

make the ruling."³⁰ Mr. Guel did not, however, request leave to file the Supplement. It is not enough to allude to the need for authorization in the text of the contested pleading, as Mr. Guel argues.³¹ The rule is clear that authorization to file extraneous pleadings must be specifically sought. It is longstanding practice that a party seeking to file a pleading not authorized by the Commission's rules submits a formal motion for leave to file, separately from the substantive pleading, although it is permissible for both documents to be submitted simultaneously.

- 9. In any event, the Presiding Judge has considered whether to exercise discretion to allow this unauthorized pleading on her own motion but declines to do so as Mr. Guel has not offered any colorable reason why it should be accepted. The Presiding Judge might have been inclined to consider the Guel Supplement if it had adequately resolved the issues raised by the Bureau's Opposition to the Motion for Summary Decision, but it does not. There are 12 designated issues in this proceeding. Rather than discussing, issue-by-issue, the reasons that there are no material facts in dispute with respect to those designated issues for which summary decision is sought, the Guel Supplement cherry-picks particular statements from the *Guel HDO* and juxtaposes quotes from Mr. Guel's December 22 declaration that ostensibly admit culpability. Inexplicably, the Guel Supplement includes a number of matters from the *Guel HDO* regarding Jennifer Juarez that are no longer part of this proceeding.³²
- 10. In addition, the December 22 Guel declaration appears to be inconsistent with previous statements made by Mr. Guel, including his declaration of April 22, 2018, similarly made under penalty of perjury, that is attached to the Guel Supplement. The recent Guel declaration avers with respect to the 2018 statement that "[t]he information contained in that Decaration [sic] remains true and accurate."³³ The 2018 declaration, however, implies that Mr. Guel acted merely as an unpaid assistant to Jennifer Juarez ("I helped her build her stations, and help her program the stations"), while Mr. Guel's 2023 declaration indicates, "at no time did [Ms. Juarez] participate in any meaningful fashion in the operation of the Stations."³⁴
- 11. It is also worth addressing the timing issues raised by the parties with regard to the Guel Supplement. Mr. Guel attaches an automatically-generated email showing that the Guel Supplement was filed in ECFS on Friday, December 22, 2023, at 11:59 PM.³⁵ The Presiding Judge, her Special Counsel, and the Enforcement Bureau received an email dated Saturday, December 23, time-stamped at 4:27 PM, from Mr. Guel's counsel that attached the Guel Supplement with the message, "Attached is a courtesy copy of a pleading filed last night on Friday, December 22, 2023." The ECFS record of the pleading reflects that it was not posted to ECFS, i.e., made publicly available, until December 26. That is consistent with the statement in the ECFS confirmation submitted by Mr. Guel that, "Your filing will not be available for searching and retrieval immediately." In other words, Mr. Guel filed the Supplement late at night on the Friday before the Monday Christmas holiday and did not serve the Enforcement Bureau or the Presiding Judge until that Saturday afternoon, ensuring that the unexpected pleading would likely not be seen until at least the following Tuesday, December 26. Whether or not Mr. Guel

³¹ Guel Opposition to Motion to Strike at 4 (citing Guel Supplement at 2, 16).

³⁰ 47 CFR § 1.294(c).

³² See HCCN Summary of Initial Conference, supra.

³³ Guel Supplement at Attachment 1, para. 9 (2023 Declaration of Antonio Cesar Guel).

³⁴ *Id.* at Attachment 1, para. 3 (2023 Declaration of Antonio Cesar Guel), and Attachment 1 (2018 Declaration of Antonio Cesar Guel).

³⁵ Guel Opposition to Motion to Strike at 5 and Attachment 1 (FCC ECFS Filing Confirmation).

intended that result, he certainly cannot now be heard to criticize Bureau counsel (or by extension the Presiding Judge and her staff) for not checking email over a holiday weekend to look for an unanticipated pleading that was filed at 11:59 PM on a Friday without advance notice.

12. Moreover, as the Bureau points out, section 1.47(b) of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR §1.47(b), requires that service of a document be made "on or before the day on which the document is filed."36 Mr. Guel filed a Motion for Clarification on that point on January 18, 2024, suggesting that, for pleadings filed electronically very late at night, the rule should be clarified or waived since service would necessarily be completed the next day.³⁷ The Enforcement Bureau submitted an opposition to that motion on January 23.38 For the convenience of the parties, the Presiding Judge established 11:59 PM Eastern as the time by which a pleading must be submitted to be considered timely filed.³⁹ It was accordingly not unreasonable that Mr. Guel did not accomplish service of the Guel Supplement until December 23, but the lag time of several hours is unacceptable. The Commission's rules contemplate service being contemporaneous with the filing of a pleading, or even prior to official filing. The rule requiring that a courtesy copy be provided to the presiding officer even uses the term "contemporaneously." The Presiding Judge has not found this timing to present difficulty in previous cases, but, because it appears to be a problem here, she is revisiting her prior decision and will now require that all documents in this proceeding be filed by 7:00 PM Eastern. In accord with section 1.47(b), service is to be completed on or before the day a document is filed in ECFS. Documents not filed by 7 PM on the due date and/or not served on the opposing party the same calendar day will be considered untimely.

Discussion of Motion for Summary Decision

13. The Guel Motion for Summary Decision obliquely acknowledges many of the facts alleged in the *HCCN/Guel HDO*, and it could be efficient to accelerate this proceeding by granting it, which would enable the rest of this proceeding to focus on the appropriate legal ramifications of Mr. Guel's actions. But the Enforcement Bureau is correct that the record of this proceeding as it stands does not provide a basis for granting summary decision as requested by Mr. Guel. As the Enforcement Bureau points out, section 1.251(a)(1) of the Commission's rules provides that, "[t]he party filing the motion may not rest upon mere allegations or denials but must show, by affidavit or by other materials, subject to consideration by the presiding officer, that there is no genuine issue of material fact for determination in the hearing proceeding." This case is unusual in that the party alleged to have violated Commission rules is the one seeking summary decision by effectively conceding the violations prior to completion of discovery. As the Commission envisioned in promulgating summary decision procedures, "[n]ormally, but not

³⁶ EB Motion to Strike at para. 6. *See also* EB Reply to Guel Opposition to the Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Enlarge, *infra*, at n.3.

³⁷ Antonio Cesar Guel, Motion for Clarification, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 18, 2024). As with the Guel Supplement, Mr. Guel filed his Opposition to the Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Enlarge, *infra*, late at night on January 8 and did not serve it until January 9; the Presiding Judge received her courtesy copy at 1:11 AM.

³⁸ Enforcement Bureau's Opposition to Guel's Motion for Clarification, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 23, 2024).

³⁹ Hispanic Christian Community Network, Antoinio Cesar Guel, and Jennifer Juarez, Initial Case Order, MB Docket No. 23-267, FCC 23M-11, 2023 WL 5970766 (ALJ Sept. 12, 2023) at para. 5.

⁴⁰ 47 CFR §1.210 ("A courtesy copy of all submissions shall be contemporaneously provided to the presiding officer, as directed by the Commission").

⁴¹ 47 CFR § 1.251(a)(1).

necessarily, the motion would be filed after discovery and prehearing procedures, whereby the parties have obtained materials and information used in support of the motion."⁴²

- 14. Because the Guel Supplement has been struck from the record, the Motion for Summary Decision lacks any affidavit to support the factual statements asserted therein. The motion, quite correctly, does not attempt to suggest that there has been sufficient discovery completed at this early stage of the proceeding to constitute "other materials" that could, under section 1.251(a)(1), provide a basis for concluding that no genuine factual issues remain to be determined. As the Enforcement Bureau observes, the Motion for Summary Decision reads more like an offer of settlement than a motion for summary decision and the Commission's rules prohibit settlement of character issues.⁴³ At best, the motion rests on the kinds of "mere allegations and denials" that are inadequate under the governing rule. It therefore must be denied.
- The point of summary decision is to obviate a "useless hearing" and more narrowly focus the proceeding by removing those issues for which no genuine issue of material fact exists.⁴⁴ Mr. Guel's motion, by its language, is not sufficiently definitive to justify such a conclusion. For example, instead of clearly conceding issue 1, that HCCN and/or Mr. Guel was the real party in interest for the captioned applications, Mr. Guel equivocates, indicating, "in weighing the overall involvement of Juarez in the overall preparation, filing, and prosecution of the captioned applications against the overall involvement of Guel in the preparation, filing, and prosecution of the captioned applications, and the monies owed to HCCN and/or Guel for the assignment of the Stations to Juarez which only would be paid in the event the captioned applications were granted, based upon the Commission's criteria for what constitutes a 'real-partyin-interest,' it is requested that to this extent, that it be determined that (i) Antonio Cesar Guel was a real-party-in-interest to the captions [sic] applications for the Stations and (ii) by summary decision this Issue be resolved adversely to Antonio Cesar Guel."45 The motion uses similar language regarding issue 2 as to whether there was a de facto transfer of control of the licenses, and references it in discussing issue 3 as to de facto control over the stations, although it does concede that Mr. Guel remained in control of the stations after the Commission granted transfer of the licenses from HCCN to Ms. Juarez. 46 Such language, possibly useful in the context of settlement, is hardly a definitive statement sufficient to demonstrate that that there are no genuine questions of material fact with respect to how Mr. Guel violated the Commission's rules as described in the HCCN/Guel HDO.
- 16. Moreover, the Guel Motion for Summary Decision neglects to recognize some of the other allegations against Mr. Guel. In discussing issue 5 regarding misrepresentations to and lack of candor with the Commission, the motion indicates that "[i]t is not disputed that Antonio Cesar Guel has made inaccurate representations and lacked candor to the FCC with respect to his United States citizenship during the years from (i) the time he found out about his lack of US citizenship and the effect it would have upon his [sic] up until (ii) May 2014, and provided inaccurate information in applications filed with the FCC during that period of time."⁴⁷ Not only is

⁴² Summary Decision Procedures, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 27 F.C.C.2d 426, 427 (1971).

⁴³ EB Opposition to Summary Decision at para. 6 (citing 47 CFR § 1.93(b)).

⁴⁴ Summary Decision Procedures, Report and Order, 34 F.C.C.2d 485, 487 (1972) (internal citations omitted).

⁴⁵ Guel Motion for Summary Decision at 4-5 (internal citations omitted).

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 5-6.

⁴⁷ *Id*. at 9.

this statement confusingly worded, but the *HCCN/Guel HDO* alleges additional misrepresentations. Those include falsely indicating that the asset purchase agreement for the stations embodied the full agreement between HCCN and Ms. Juarez, that Mr. Guel was not related to Cesar Guel, his son, and that Mr. Guel was the sole officer and director of HCCN when state records show otherwise.⁴⁸ The *HCCN/Guel HDO* also alleges the Mr. Guel made several misrepresentations in a declaration to the Commission in 2018, submitted under penalty of perjury, which is referenced above regarding the unauthorized Guel Supplement.⁴⁹

- 17. Considering these omissions, as well as the uncertainty raised by the Enforcement Bureau over the current status of HCCN as to inform issue 4, and the lack of detail in the discussion of Mr. Guel's alleged abuse of the Commission's processes (issue 6), the Guel Motion does not go far enough to show that there is no genuine issue of material fact remaining with respect to issues 1-6. As a result, even though Mr. Guel appears prepared to face the penalties envisioned in issues 7 and 12, cease and desist and forfeiture, respectively, there is not enough information in the record to determine the proper scope of those penalties, which necessarily hinges on an exact determination of the nature and extent of the FCC rules violated. Nor is there sufficient information to assess Mr. Guel's qualifications to be a Commission licensee under issue 11 independently from his lack of citizenship. This is important, as the Enforcement Bureau contends, because a non-citizen may retain up to 20 percent ownership in a licensee pursuant to section 310 of the Communications Act.
- 18. Mr. Guel would have this proceeding narrowed to consideration of two general questions -- the scope of the Commission's authority to impose the penalties described in issues 8-10 and the amount of any forfeiture imposed. The result of his failure to clearly address the designated issues in play in this proceeding, however, is that summary decision must be denied at this juncture. As streamlining of this hearing proceeding could benefit all concerned by avoiding unnecessary expenditure of time and resources, the Presiding Judge does not foreclose Mr. Guel from filing a new Motion for Summary Decision that satisfies the Commission's rules in light of the concerns raised herein. Any such motion must include an affidavit from Mr. Guel, filed in accord with section 1.16 of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR § 1.16, that specifically references the designated issues and sets forth facts that fully demonstrate each alleged violation necessary to resolve those issues.

The Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Enlarge

Pleadings

19. In its December 18, 2023, Motion to Enlarge, the Enforcement Bureau contends that discovery produced by Mr. Guel in this proceeding has raised questions about whether he has the same type of arrangement with two other Commission licensees as he had with Jennifer Juarez. Those companies are Mekaddesh Group Corporation (Mekaddesh) and Hispanic Family Christian Network (HFCN), which are both owned by members of Mr. Guel's immediate family.⁵⁰ The Bureau submits that in response to interrogatories, Mr. Guel described his role with stations owned by HFCN and Mekaddesh in the same way that he described his involvement with stations licensed to Ms. Juarez, stations that he conceded in his Motion for Summary Decision were in fact

10

⁴⁸ HCCN/Guel HDO at paras. 103-106.

⁴⁹ *Id.* at paras. 107-111. Because this Order grants the Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Strike the Guel Supplement, the 2018 declaration is not currently part of the record of this proceeding.

⁵⁰ See Guel HDO at n.246.

under his control.⁵¹ In addition, the Enforcement Bureau indicates that Mr. Guel has held himself out as the point of contact for HCFN and that the Guel Family Trust, which holds all of the voting and equity interests of Mekaddesh, is funded by Mr. Guel and his wife.⁵² The Bureau acknowledges that section 1.229 of the Commission's rules provides that motions to enlarge the issues in a hearing proceeding are to be filed within 15 days of the date that the hearing designation order is published in the Federal Register, and that the *Guel HDO* appeared in the Federal Register on August 23, 2023.⁵³ It contends, however, that because Mr. Guel did not produce some of the requested discovery promptly or in the correct format, good cause exists to entertain the Motion to Enlarge outside of the 15-day period. It also asserts that because the issues raised by Mr. Guel's involvement with HFCN and Mekaddesh inform the issues designed in this case, its motion introduces issues of substantial public interest importance, which also justifies acting outside of the specified filing period.⁵⁴

- 20. Mr. Guel argues in his Objection to the Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Enlarge that there is no basis to enlarge the issues in this proceeding to explore whether he exercises de facto control over Mekaddesh and HFCN. He contends that his provision of identical services for those licensees as he provided to Jennifer Juarez, "without more, does not constitute existence of *de facto* control over either Mekaddesh or HFCN."55 Moreover, he contends, the Commission has recognized that there may be significant ties between family members that might appear to raise real-party-in-interest issues absent a familial relationship but do not do so when family members are in business together. Mr. Guel additionally introduces a declaration, made under penalty of perjury, by Mr. Guel's daughter, Maria C. Guel, recounting her duties as current President of HFCN and Mekaddesh. Mr. Guel contends that her declaration and supplemental information attached thereto shows that she, and not Mr. Guel, controls the finances, programming, and personnel of HFCN and Mekaddesh. Mr. Guel further asserts that the Bureau's Motion to Enlarge is based on speculation rather than an accurate description of his involvement with the licensees supported by evidence.
- 21. On January 10, 2024, the Enforcement Bureau submitted a Motion for Leave to File a Reply to Mr. Guel's Opposition, as well as that Reply.⁶⁰ The Bureau argues that its Reply seeks to correct the record, as Mr. Guel has misstated the legal standard for adding issues to the

⁵¹ EB Motion to Enlarge at paras. 6-7.

⁵² *Id.* at para. 8.

⁵³ Hispanic Christian Community Network, Antoinio Cesar Guel, and Jennifer Juarez, Order to Show Cause Why a Cease and Desist Order Should Not be Issued, Order to Show Cause Why an Order of Revocation Should not be Issued, Hearing Designation Order, Notice of Opportunity for Hearing, and Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, MB Docket No. 23-267, DA 23-678, 88 Fed. Reg. 57450-01 (Aug. 23, 2023).

⁵⁴ EB Motion to Enlarge at paras. 11-14.

⁵⁵ Guel Opposition to Motion to Enlarge at 5.

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 5-6.

⁵⁷ *Id.* at Attachment 3 (Declaration of Maria C. Guel, Jan. 8, 2024).

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 6-7.

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 8-9.

⁶⁰ Enforcement Bureau's Motion for Leave to File a Reply, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 10, 2024); Enforcement Bureau's Reply to Guel's Opposition to Motion to Enlarge, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 10, 2024) (EB Reply).

hearing by implying that the Bureau is required to prove de facto control before the scope of the case can be enlarged. Rather, the Bureau contends, not only has it shown good cause why it could not have brought its motion earlier, but its Motion to Enlarge raises questions of decisional significance and substantial public interest importance, which is justification for enlarging the issues under section 1.229(c).⁶¹

22. Separately, the Bureau attaches to its Reply a document from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) that it recently discovered reflecting the acquisition of Mekaddesh by JPX Global, Inc. in 2023.⁶² The Bureau submits that the SEC document appears to indicate both that Mr. Guel has an ownership interest in JPX Global and that he was considered to be one of the sellers of Mekaddesh.⁶³ It also notes that the document, which includes an accounting of the broadcast stations being conveyed in the transaction, lists two stations that are licensed to HFCN rather than Mekaddesh, calling into question the degree of control that Mr. Guel has over HFCN.⁶⁴ The Bureau points out that there do not appear to be any FCC filings concerning this apparent sale. 65 Mr. Guel filed an opposition to the Bureau's Motion for Leave to File a Reply on January 17.66 His opposition contends that the SEC filing included with the Bureau's Reply represents a potential transaction that has not closed, as regulatory approval from state and federal securities authorities has not yet been received, and avers that FCC approval will be sought prior to closing.⁶⁷ Mr. Guel further contends that the document has no relation to the current proceeding and does not indicate any ownership interest in Mekaddesh by Mr. Guel.⁶⁸ He also argues that the Enforcement Bureau should have submitted the document earlier and notes that it has been publicly available for some time.69

Discussion of Motion to Enlarge the Issues

23. Section 1.229(b)(2) of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR §1.229(b)(2), provides that motions to enlarge the issues based on newly-discovered facts are to be filed within 15 days after such facts are discovered. The information that the Enforcement Bureau relies on to support its motion was produced by Mr. Guel in his November 9, 2023, response to the Bureau's first round of interrogatories. The Enforcement Bureau did not submit its motion until December 18, 2023, more than five weeks later. Section 1.229(c) of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR §1.229(c), provides that if good cause for late filing is not shown, a motion to enlarge will be considered "if (and only if) initial examination of the motion demonstrates that it raises a question of probable

⁶¹ EB Reply at paras. 4-7.

⁶² Id. at Exhibit 1 (Acquisition Agreement Between JPX Global, Inc, and Mekaddesh Group Corporation).

⁶³ *Id.* at paras. 8-10.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at para. 10.

⁶⁵ *Id.* at para. 11.

⁶⁶ Antonio Cesar Guel, Opposition to Enforcement Bureau's Motion for Leave to File a Reply, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 17, 2024) (Guel Opposition to Motion for Leave to File); Antonio Cesar Guel, Supplement to Opposition to Enforcement Bureau's Motion for Leave to File a Reply, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Jan. 18, 2024).

⁶⁷ Guel Opposition to Motion for Leave to File at 3.

⁶⁸ *Id.* at 4-5.

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 2, 3-4.

⁷⁰ EB Motion to Enlarge at Exhibit 1 (Antonio Cesar Guel, Responses to Interrogatories, MB Docket No. 23-267 (filed Nov. 9, 2023)).

decisional significance and such substantial public interest importance as to warrant consideration in spite of its untimely filing." It is not accurate, as Mr. Guel appears to imply, that the Bureau is required to prove de facto control before the issues that it proposes can be added.

- 24. The Enforcement Bureau has raised questions that may be of decisional significance and substantial public interest importance. The Presiding Judge is, however, reluctant to enlarge the issues as requested at this time. That is because it appears from the HCCN/Guel HDO that the Media Bureau is considering additional circumstances related to Mr. Guel and his family but chose to limit this proceeding to the stations listed in the caption that were licensed to Mr. Guel's niece, Jennifer Juarez. The Media Bureau specifically refers to its prerogative to investigate further, stating, "Actions taken as a result of this proceeding do not preclude the Commission from taking other actions stemming from the facts presented herein."⁷¹ Similarly, the Media Bureau indicates that it is considering other transactions related to HCCN that "may result in future hearing or show cause proceedings."72 In the context of discussing whether HCCN is the alter ego of Mr. Guel, the HCCN/Guel HDO points out that HFCN and Mekaddesh are also closely tied to Mr. Guel and use the same street address in their filings as HCCN.73 If there are related investigations ongoing, it may be optimal to proceed with this hearing as designated to allow the Media Bureau more time to complete those investigations and determine whether to designate additional issues for hearing.
- 25. On the other hand, the possibility of an unauthorized transfer of control of the Mekaddesh licenses and some HFCN licenses to JPX Global has brought to light a number of troubling incongruities. The Enforcement Bureau, as Exhibit 1 to its Reply to Mr. Guel's Opposition to its Motion to Enlarge, provides an Acquisition Agreement between JPX Global and Mekaddesh that was filed with the SEC projecting a closing date of May 2023. The title page of the Acquisition Agreement identifies the buyer as JPX Global and the seller as Mekaddesh Group Corporation "including: Kuldip Singh, Antonio Cesar Gruel [sic], Jagandeep Kaur and Maria Guel – 100% owner & management of the Merger-Target." The Bureau's Reply also refers to an Offering Circular submitted to the SEC regarding a proposal by JPX Global to offer shares of common stock. The Offering Circular, dated September 27, 2023, indicates that Alpharidge Capital, LLC, the previous owner of JPX Global, on March 9, 2023, "agreed to sell and transfer control of JPEX to Kuldip Singh, Antonio Cesar Gruel [sic], Jagandeep Kaur and Maria Guel (together referred to as 'Mekaddesh Group')."⁷⁴ The same language was used in a Semi-Annual Report that JPX Global filed with the SEC on November 16, 2023.75 This language is at least ambiguous as to whether Mr. Guel is considered an owner of Mekaddesh. Moreover, while Maria Guel indicates that, "[e]ven after the transaction is completed, my father, Antonio Cesar Guel will not have any ownership interest in the merged company, and will not be an officer or director of

⁷³ *Id.* at n.246.

⁷¹ HCCN/Guel HDO at n.1.

⁷² *Id.* at n.8.

⁷⁴ JPX Global, Inc., Regulation A Offering Circular (Form 1-A/A) (Sept. 27, 2023) (Offering Circular) at 16, available at https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1506814/000190359623000752/jpx_regaa.htm. The SEC qualified the JPX Global stock offering on September 29, 2023. JPX Global, Inc., Notice of Qualification (Sept. 29, 2023), available at https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1506814/999999999423000332/xslQUALIFX01/primary doc.xml.

⁷⁵ JPX Global, Inc., Semi-Annual Report (Form 1-SA) (Nov. 16, 2023) at 4, available at https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1506814/000190359623000903/jpx 1sa.htm.

the merged company,"⁷⁶ he apparently will have a crucial role. As JPX Global has indicated to the SEC:

Our success is heavily dependent upon the continued active participation of our current management team, Kuldip Singh, Antonio Cesar Gruel [sic], Jagandeep Kaur and Maria Guel. The loss of any one of these individuals could have a material adverse effect upon our business, financial condition, or results of operations.⁷⁷

- 26. In addition, while Mr. Guel's pleadings and Maria Guel's declaration provide that the transaction between JPX Global and Mekaddesh has not yet occurred, the SEC documents indicate otherwise. The Offering Circular states that "JPX Global Inc. acquired Mekaddesh Group Corporation in February 2023 as a wholly owned subsidiary" and describes the operations of JPX Global as if it has acquired and is operating Mekaddesh.⁷⁸ The Offering Circular identifies Maria Guel as President, CEO, and Director of JPX Global since April 2023, and Maria Guel signed both the Offering Circular and the Semi-Annual Report on behalf of the company,⁷⁹ The Offering Circular also includes a letter from counsel for JPX to "Maria Gruel" [sic] as CEO of JPX.80 Maria Guel, however, declares that "JPX has absolutely no control over Mekaddesh or any of its radio and television properties."81 Adding to the confusion is the statement of Attorney Frank I. Igwealor, provided by Mr. Guel, that, "[a]t the present time, JPX and its principals or present officers, directors, or stockholders, have absolutely no control over Mekaddesh, its sister company Hispanic Family Christian Network, or any their [sic] radio and television properties."82 Yet in his Opposition to the Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Enlarge, Mr. Guel explains at length how Maria Guel controls both Mekaddesh and HFCN.
- 27. It is the duty of the Presiding Judge to conduct proceedings before her "as will best conduce to the proper dispatch of business and the ends of justice." There are obvious efficiencies to be realized from limiting this proceeding to the issues designated by the

⁷⁶ Antonio Cesar Guel, Opposition to Enforcement Bureau's Motion for Leave to File a Reply, MB Docket No. 23-267 (Jan. 17, 2024) at Attachment A (Declaration of Maria C. Guel).

⁷⁷ EB Reply to Opposition to Motion at n.19 (quoting Offering Circular at 10).

⁷⁸ See, e.g. Offering Circular at 8 (indicates under "Business Overview" that JPX Global is "a Nevada Corporation, which operates primarily through its subsidiary, Mekaddesh Group Corporation. Mekaddesh is a Dallas, Texas based operator of several TV and Radio Stations"), 21 ("Following the acquisition of Mekaddesh Group Corporation, the Company pivoted its business plan to that of Mekaddesh, Radio & Television Stations operations. The Company operates 100% through Mekaddesh Group Corporation which was formed to acquire TV and radio stations for Hispanic programming").

⁷⁹ Offering Circular at 30.

⁸⁰ *Id.* at Exhibit 12.1 (Legal Opinion and Consent).

⁸¹ Declaration of Maria C. Guel.

⁸² Antonio Cesar Guel, Supplement to Opposition to Enforcement Bureau's Motion for Leave to File a Reply, MB Docket No. 23-267 (Jan. 18, 2024), at Attachment B (Declaration of Frank I. Igwealor). Not only is this not an authorized pleading, but it was filed on January 18, 2024, which is past the January 17 due date. The pleading explains that counsel for Mr. Guel received the statement minutes after the filing deadline and contends that good cause exists for acceptance of the supplement. Mr. Guel has provided no grounds to support that assertion, but the Presiding Judge will accept the late-filed, unauthorized Supplement on her own motion because it provides additional information regarding the JPX Global transaction.

^{83 47} CFR § 1.243(n).

HCCN/Guel HDO since Ms. Juarez has waived her right to a hearing, the renewal application has been withdrawn, and the subject licenses have been surrendered. Granting the Motion to Enlarge would add parties, licenses, and potentially applications, which, in turn, would significantly delay resolution of the issues already designated. The potential lack of candor demonstrated by Mr. Guel, Maria Guel, and others before the Presiding Judge, however, is ripe for immediate consideration and is relevant to whether the Motion to Enlarge should be granted. Mr. Guel has submitted an ownership report into the record of this proceeding as proof that Maria Guel is in control of Mekaddesh, yet that document makes no mention of JPX Global despite being filed with the Commission as recently as December 26, 2023.⁸⁴ He also filed in the record a statement from Maria Guel that appears to omit material facts and to conflict with statements made over her signature in filings with the SEC, as well as a statement from an outside attorney that similarly appears to conflict with statements made in those same SEC filings.⁸⁵

28. Given that Mr. Guel has admitted engaging in extensive misrepresentation and lack of candor before the Commission with respect to the Juarez stations, the Presiding Judge has an obligation to seek additional information about the JPX Global matter and will use that additional information in determining whether to grant the Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Enlarge, in whole or in part. She accordingly directs Antonio Cesar Guel to submit on or before February 13, 2024, a full and honest account of the history and status of the acquisition of Mekaddesh by JPX Global, including his role in the transaction, a description of his association to both companies, and an explanation of why HFCN licenses were identified as owned by Mekaddesh in documents filed with the SEC. He is also directed to explain the discrepancies identified herein between the SEC documents and the statements of Maria Guel and Frank I. Igwealor that he has provided in this proceeding. The Enforcement Bureau may file a responsive pleading by February 20, 2024. No reply submissions will be accepted. Upon receipt and consideration of those additional pleadings, the Presiding Judge will rule on the Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Enlarge.

Ordering Clauses

- 29. Accordingly, **IT IS ORDERED** that the Motion for Summary Decision filed by Antonio Cesar Guel on November 9, 2023, **IS DENIED**.
- 30. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Enforcement Bureau's Motion to Strike Unauthorized Supplement, filed on January 4, 2024, **IS GRANTED**, and the Supplement to Motion for Summary Decision filed by Antonio Cesar Guel on December 22, 2023, **IS STRUCK FROM THE RECORD OF THIS PROCEEDING**.
- 31. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Enforcement Bureau's Motion for Leave to File a Reply, filed on January 10, 2024, to the Opposition to Motion to Enlarge Issues filed by

⁸⁴ Guel Opposition to Motion to Enlarge at Attachment 2 (Commercial Broadcast Stations Biennial Ownership Report (FCC Form 323) (dated Dec. 26, 2023)).

⁸⁵ In addition to his stated role as securities counsel, Mr. Igwealor has a financial stake in the JPX/Mekaddesh transaction and stock offering. The Offering Circular states that Mr. Igwealor controls 9.57% of the common stock of JPX. Offering Circular at 32. It also appears that Mr. Igwealor controls Alpharidge Capital, LLC, which sold JPX to the Mekaddesh Group consisting of Mr. Guel, Maria Guel, and others, and holds a convertible promissory note from JPX in the amount of \$475,000. *Id.* at 19-21. The convertible promissory note can be converted into common stock of JPX after January 31, 2024. *Id.* at Exhibit 6.1 (Promissory Note), Article 1.1. The Offering Circular also references what appears to be a different convertible note held by Mr. Igwealor. *Id.* at F-12.

Antonio Cesar Guel on January 8, 2024, IS GRANTED.

- 32. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT** the Motion for Leave to File Errata to Supplement to Motion for Summary Decision filed by Antonio Cesar Guel on January 18, 2024, **IS DISMISSED AS MOOT**, and the Supplement to Motion for Summary Decision Errata filed by Antonio Cesar Guel on January 18, 2024, **IS STRUCK FROM THE RECORD OF THIS PROCEEDING**.
- 33. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT** the Motion for Clarification filed by Antonio Cesar Guel on January 18, 2024, **IS GRANTED TO THE EXTENT INDICATED HEREIN AND IS OTHERWISE DENIED**.
- 34. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT** Antonio Cesar Guel **SHALL FILE**, on or before **FEBRUARY 13, 2024**, the information regarding the JPX Global transaction described above. The Enforcement Bureau **MAY FILE** a responsive pleading on or before **FEBRUARY 20, 2024**.
- 35. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT** all future submissions in this proceeding **SHALL BE FILED BY 7 PM EASTERN** on the due date and served in accord with Section 1.47(b) of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR § 1.47(b).

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Jane Hinckley Halprin Administrative Law Judge