WUNJ-TV Transition Plan Progress Report

The University of North Carolina (UNC-TV), Licensee of WUNJ-TV, Wilmington, North Carolina, is a governmental agency entity of the State of North Carolina. As a state entity, it is legally required to comply with certain state requirements, restrictions, and policies regarding construction projects and the purchasing of goods and services. UNC-TV's repack transition project for 11 full-power television stations is no exception, and UNC-TV will be required to abide by the applicable construction, contracting, and purchasing requirements, restrictions, and policies for all 11 stations, including WUNJ-TV. Significantly, as UNC-TV has previously reported—and bears reiteration here—while UNC-TV's project is considered 11 different projects by the FCC, to the State of North Carolina and its representative agencies it is considered one project. The two state government agencies that are extensively involved in UNC-TV's repack (the State Office of Purchasing and Contracts ["P&C"] and the State Construction Office ["SCO"]) are requiring UNC-TV to bundle together all 11 station repack transitions as one unitary project request to them.

To update the previous transition report, UNC-TV's project designer, McKim & Creed, Inc., has completed the field portion of the site survey. The resulting report will confirm the scope of work required for the project. As previously reported, the designer will be responsible for creating a construction drawing package for WUNJ-TV's portion (and each of UNC-TV's other 10 stations' respective portion) of the project. These drawings include any modifications to the building including (but not limited to) those required for the electrical system to feed the new transmitters. Also included in the designer's "jurisdiction" will be the tower structural analysis showing that the tower still meets minimum structural specifications after the proposed load changes and tower modifications are performed. The designer's drawings will have to be reviewed by SCO, and only after receiving SCO's approval will construction be authorized under the law of the State of North Carolina to proceed. (The design/SCO review process is similar to a county or city planning / permitting process, but it occurs at the state level because these are state facilities. With this SCO process, city and county permitting is not necessary.) UNC-TV expects to receive SCO's approval in or around January 2019. Even without SCO's approval, however, other parts of the project can proceed, including the acquisition of certain equipment.

During the period since the last Transition Progress Report was filed, significant progress has been made on the project, including activities relating to the acquisition of certain equipment, including the transmitters and antenna systems. Following the State of North Carolina's required purchasing guidelines, an Invitation for Bid (IFB) was released by UNC-TV on March 9, 2018, for all 11 of UNC-TV's repacked stations for the purchase of transmitters and installation services for the new transmitters, as well as removal and disposal services for the old (current, pre-transition) transmitters. The bid responses will be opened on April 24, 2018, with a purchase contract likely issued in mid-May 2018.

Another IFB is planned for the antenna systems, and UNC-TV hopes that it will be released in April with a planned bid response opening in June. UNC-TV hopes that the antenna system purchase contract can be issued in July.

After the contracts are awarded, UNC-TV plans to update FCC Form 399 so that it contains the correct manufacturer, model number, and pricing for the equipment being purchased. The intent is to incorporate all of these changes in to one submission.

While off to a slow start, as is inherent in the mandatory legal state procurement/design/construction process, we believe, as of this early April 2018 filing, that the Phase 5 August 2019 construction deadline remains achievable for WUNJ-TV. UNC-TV has already put a lot of planning into the repack transition for its 11 repacked stations, but, as referenced above, UNC-TV only controls a limited portion of the overall process.

In short, UNC-TV's compound, complicated lodestar for this entire repack enterprise is timely completion of the repack with full compliance of all applicable state and federal regulation while—most importantly—keeping the station operating with as much coverage areas as possible with the least possible negative impact to viewers.