

WUNM-TV Transition Plan Progress Report

The University of North Carolina (UNC-TV), Licensee of WUNM-TV, Jacksonville, 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 WUNM-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 (third quarter 2018) transition report, UNC-TV's project designer, McKim & Creed, Inc., has completed the space plan and construction drawings package for the WUNM-TV site. The construction drawings include necessary electrical and mechanical modifications. That package has been submitted to SCO for review. As previously indicated, SCO approval is required under the law of the State of North Carolina before construction can 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 soon after January 2019.

Pursuant to the applicable State of North Carolina project guidelines, UNC-TV is in the process of bidding the general contractor work that's outlined in the project package developed by McKim & Creed. The opening of bid responses is scheduled for January 15, 2019 with construction expected to begin in early February 2019, weather permitting.

A number of implementation challenges have recently been identified related to the WUNM-TV transition. The first implementation challenge is an HVAC issue. The current HVAC system is insufficient for the post-transition building heat load. Replacement of the current system is required to resolve this problem.

The second implementation challenge relates to transition coordination. The WUNM-TV transmission site is a multi-broadcast user site at which WUNM-TV is a tenant. Another tenant of the site, WYDO (FCC Facility ID #35582), is assigned to transition phase 5, the same as WUNM-TV. There is also a link dependency between WUNM-TV and WYDO that requires WUNM-TV to transition before WYDO can transition. UNC-TV is attempting to coordinate its transition plan / schedule with the tower owner and the WYDO transition project manager in order to minimize off air time and optimize effort to achieve as favorable an outcome for all parties as is possible under the circumstances. However, as of this filing, neither party has been willing to communicate with UNC-TV to coordinate these efforts. UNC-TV may need to request the assistance of the assigned Regional Coordinator to facilitate these efforts in the coming months.

WUNM-TV has a purchase contract with Dielectric Inc. for the acquisition of the antenna. The tower owner and WYDO have already contracted with Stainless Tower to perform any necessary structural modifications and antenna installation work at the site. As a result, WUNM-TV is also attempting to contract with Stainless Tower to perform the required antenna / tower work necessary for the successful transition of WUNM-TV. This will allow the WUNM-TV work to be performed in coordination with the other stations and, it is hoped, will minimize WUNM-TV's off-the-air time. As of the date of this filing, however, UNC-TV and Stainless Tower have not yet entered into an agreement for these services.

UNC-TV will be submitting additional budget updates for FCC Form 399. Among other things, these updates will reflect the general contractor costs, revisions for transmitter installation costs, costs associated with the HVAC challenges, and revised professional services pricing. Further budget adjustments may be necessary as this project continues.

We believe, as of this early January 2019 filing, that the Phase 5 September 6, 2019, transition deadline remains achievable for WUNM-TV. The WUNM-TV transition plan is still quite vague. This is primarily due to the lack of communications with the tower owner and the WYDO project manager. Attempts to contact them have not been successful so far. Hopefully, within the next few weeks they will respond and a transition plan for the site can be solidified.

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.