



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

June 12, 2020

WVTM Hearst Television Inc.
P.O. Box 1800
Raleigh, NC 27602

Re: Request for Extension of
Construction Permit
WVTM-TV, Birmingham, AL
Facility ID No. 74173
LMS File No. 0000111552

Dear Licensee,

On April 6, 2020, WVTM Hearst Television Inc. (Licensee), the licensee of Station WVTM-TV, Birmingham, Alabama (the Station), filed the above captioned application seeking an extension of the Station's construction permit expiration date. For the reasons below, we grant Licensee's application and extend the Station's construction permit expiration date 180 days to December 30, 2020.

Background. Pursuant to Section 73.3700(b)(5) of the Commission's rules, a station may request a single extension of its construction permit deadline of up to 180 days to complete construction of its post-auction facility.¹ Grant of an extension of the construction permit deadline does not alter the deadline by which a station must cease operating on its pre-auction channel. A station anticipating the need for an extension must submit an extension application using FCC Form 2100, Schedule 337, not less than 90 days before the assigned construction permit deadline.² For Phase 10 stations, such application was due by April 6, 2020. The application must demonstrate that the station is unable to complete construction on time due to circumstances that were either unforeseeable or beyond the station's control.³

The Station was repacked from channel 13 to channel 7 and was assigned to transition Phase 10, which has a phase completion date of July 3, 2020. All repacked stations for Phase 10 were issued a construction permit with an expiration date of July 3, 2020. The Station pledges to cease operation on its pre-auction channel by the phase completion date and operate an auxiliary facility on its post-auction channel while it completes construction of its permanent post-auction facilities.⁴

¹ See 47 CFR § 73.3700(b)(5). All subsequent requests for additional time to construct are subject to the Commission's tolling provisions, 47 CFR § 73.3598(b).

² 47 CFR § 73.3700(b)(5)(iv).

³ The *Incentive Auction R&O* provides examples of six circumstances that might justify an 180-day extension of a station's post-auction construction permit: (1) weather related delays; (2) delays in construction due to the unavailability of equipment or a tower crew; (3) tower lease disputes; (4) unusual technical challenges; or (5) delays caused by the need to obtain government approvals, such as land use or zoning approvals, or to observe competitive bidding requirements prior to purchasing equipment or services; and (6) financial hardship with sufficient supporting evidence. See *Expanding the Economic and Innovation Opportunities of Spectrum Through Incentive Auctions*, GN Docket No. 12-268 et. al., Report and Order, 29 FCC Rcd 6567,6804-05, paras. 581-2 (2014) (*Incentive Auction R&O*); 47 CFR § 73.3700(b)(5)(ii) and (iii).

⁴ See LMS File No. 0000109767.

Licensee states that the Station's existing tower requires extensive modifications in order to house the Station's post-auction channel facilities. Such modifications include the use of a helicopter to install the Station's top-mount antenna. Licensee states that the vendor performing the helicopter services will not have completed the operation until after the Phase 10 completion date. Further delaying construction is the COVID-19 pandemic⁵ which caused delays with the Station's tower services vendor. In light of these facts, Licensee requests a 180-day extension.

Discussion. Upon review of the facts and circumstances presented, we find Licensee's request to extend the construction permit deadline to construct the Station's post-auction facility meets the requirements for a construction permit extension. Licensee has demonstrated that an extension is needed because of construction delays. We also find that grant of this extension request is not likely to negatively impact the overall transition schedule. The Station will cease operations on its pre-auction channel by the Phase 10 completion date and will operate an auxiliary facility on its post-auction channel. To the extent some viewers are unable to receive the Station's signal while it operates its auxiliary facility, we believe that Licensee has every incentive to ensure viewers are fully informed about the Station's transition plan.

We remind Licensee that pursuant to the Spectrum Act, the Station is eligible for reimbursement from the TV Broadcast Relocation Fund (Fund) of costs "reasonably incurred . . . in order for the licensee to relocate its television service from one channel to the other."⁶ Additional expenses incurred, for instance, as a result of the grant of changes in the Station's transition plan that are not related to the post-incentive auction channel change, may not be reimbursable from the Fund.

The above facts considered, WVTM Hearst Television Inc.'s application for extension of construction permit expiration date **IS GRANTED**. The construction permit (LMS File No. 0000034568) for WVTM-TV, Birmingham, Alabama, **IS EXTENDED 180 days to December 30, 2020**. Grant of this extension does not permit the Station to recommence operation on its pre-auction channel after ceasing operation or after July 3, 2020, whichever occurs first. We also remind Licensee that any subsequent requests for extension of its construction permit deadline will be subject to the Commission's tolling provisions.⁷

Sincerely,

/s/

Barbara A. Kreisman
Chief, Video Division
Media Bureau

cc (via electronic mail): Stephen Hartzell, Esq.

⁵ The World Health Organization has classified COVID-19 as a pandemic and the President declared it a national emergency.

⁶ 47 U.S.C. § 1452(b)(4)(A)(i). *See also Incentive Auction R&O*, 29 FCC Rcd at 6821, para. 622 ("The appropriate scope of 'costs reasonably incurred' necessarily will have to be decided on a case-by-case basis.").

⁷ *See* 47 CFR § 73.3700(b)(5)(i) (referencing 47 § CFR 73.3598(b)).