

Request for Extension of WFMZ-TV Channel Sharing Construction Permit

Maranatha Broadcasting Company, Inc. (“MBC”), licensee of digital television station WFMZ-TV, Allentown, Pennsylvania, hereby requests an extension of its outstanding construction permit (LMS File No. 0000038348) authorizing facilities to implement its channel sharing arrangement for WFMZ-TV. The CP is set to expire on December 31, 2018 (see extension LMS File No. 0000058399). While the channel sharing was implemented in July, the parties to that sharing agreement sought this construction permit to move to a better location on the tower formerly used by WFMZ-TV (“the WFMZ Site”).

MBC is a party to a Channel Sharing Agreement with Sonshine Family Television, Inc. (“Sonshine”), licensee of WBPH-TV, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, which is the sharer station, and Lehigh Valley Public Telecommunications Corp. (“LVPTC”), licensee of WLVT-TV, Allentown, Pennsylvania, another sharee station. LVPTC’s second noncommercial educational television station, WPPT(TV), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is also a sharee station in this four-way channel sharing arrangement. Each of these stations commenced channel sharing on, or prior to, the July 23 deadline. They are utilizing transmission facilities on the nearby tower owned by Sonshine (the “Sonshine Site”), authorized by the Commission for the Sharer in LMS File No. 0000055342. Both WBPH-TV and WPPT(TV) have been licensed at the Sonshine Site (which will become an auxiliary for all four stations when the new facilities authorized by the outstanding construction permit are completed), and their construction permit to move to the WFMZ site was for three years. While the Commission acknowledged in the current extension that WFMZ-TV and WLVT-TV are operating from the Sonshine Site, their construction permits for the WFMZ Site expire on December 31, 2018.

In the amended extension request filed August 28, 2018 (LMS File No. 0000058399), it was noted that the extension of the construction permit was required because last minute questions arose about tower loading at the WFMZ Site, due to a need to move the current FM antenna from the mast to a panel antenna wrapped around the tower. A tower analysis showed a tremendous increase in loading from the panel antenna that required re-engineering and adding additional height to the mast, allowing the FM antenna to remain. This additional height required FAA approval. A request for additional tower height was filed in July 24, 2018, but was not approved until November 15, 2018, and does not become effective until December 15, 2018. Upon receiving preliminary approval for the increased tower height from the FAA on November 15th, the antenna manufacturer was contacted for a delivery date for the antenna, which they estimate will be by March 2019. Thus, MBC is requesting an extension of the current construction permit. While MBC expects that the construction can be accomplished in April, it is requesting an additional 6 months, though June 30, 2019 to accommodate coordination of the tower crew, weather conditions and any other unanticipated issues that may arise.

Additional information concerning any of these matters can be provided at the request of the Commission.