



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

September 11, 2020

WTVH License, LLC
Carl Lane
Granite Broadcasting LLC
747 Third Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10017
carllane@granitetv.com
(via electronic mail)

Re: Request for Tolling Waiver
WTVH(TV), Syracuse, NY
Facility ID No. 74151
LMS File No. 0000121157

Dear Licensee,

On September 3, 2020, WTVH License, LLC (Granite), the licensee of WTVH(TV), Syracuse, New York (WTVH or Station), filed the above-referenced request for waiver of the Commission's tolling provisions and tolling of the Station's construction permit expiration date. For the reasons below, we grant Granite's request and toll the expiration date of WTVH's construction permit 120 days to January 7, 2021.

Background. Pursuant to section 73.3700(b)(5) of the Commission's rules (Rules), a station that was assigned a new channel as a result of the Commission's incentive auction and repacking process may request a single extension of its construction permit deadline of up to 180 days to complete construction of its post-auction facility.¹ All subsequent requests for additional time to construct are subject to the Commission's tolling provisions of section 73.3598(b) of the Rules.² The Commission's tolling provisions provide that a construction permit deadline may be tolled under specific circumstances such as acts of God, delays due to administrative or judicial review, or construction that is delayed by any cause of action pending before a court of competent jurisdiction relating to any necessary local, state, or federal requirement for the construction or operation of the station, including any zoning or environmental requirement.³ If a station does not qualify for tolling under these criteria, good cause may exist to waive the Commission's tolling provisions and tolling may still be warranted where the licensee can demonstrate that "rare and exceptional circumstances" prevented construction by the station's construction permit expiration date.⁴

¹ See 47 CFR § 73.3700(b)(5).

² See 47 CFR § 73.3700(b)(5)(i) citing 47 CFR § 73.3598(b).

³ *Id.*

⁴ See 1998 Biennial Regulatory Review -- Streamlining of Mass Media Applications, Rules, and Processes, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 14 FCC Rcd 17525, 17542, para. 42 (1999) (recognizing that there may be "rare and exceptional circumstances" beyond the control of the licensee that do not fall under the tolling provisions, but "which would warrant the tolling of construction time." The Commission concluded that in such "limited circumstances," it would entertain requests for waiver of its "strict tolling provisions"); *Northeast Cellular Telephone Co. v. FCC*, 897 F.2d 1164, 1166 (D.C. Cir. 1990) and *WAIT Radio v. FCC*, 418 F.2d 1153, 1159 (D.C. Cir. 1969), *cert. denied*, 409 U.S. 1072 (1972); 47 CFR § 1.3 (waiver for good cause shown).

Granite requests waiver of the tolling rule and tolling of its construction permit for its post-incentive auction channel facilities 120 days to January 7, 2021. WTVH is currently operating on its post-auction channel using an interim facility while it completes construction of its post-auction channel facilities.⁵ WTVH was previously granted a construction permit extension through September 9, 2020.⁶

Granite states that construction of the Station's post-auction channel facilities was delayed because the Station was not able to complete construction at the site specified in its construction permit because the tower would not pass current construction building codes. Rather than working to modify the existing tower, Granite has filed an application for modification of its construction permit which would enable it to construct its post-auction facilities on a different tower at a nearby site.⁷ Upon grant of that modification, Granite will commence work to construct its post-auction channel facilities at the nearby tower site. Therefore, in light of these circumstances, Granite requests tolling of the Station's construction permit 120 days to January 7, 2021.

Discussion. Upon review of the facts and circumstances presented, we find that sufficient circumstances exist to waive section 73.3598(b) of the Rules and to toll the expiration date of the Station's construction permit to January 7, 2021.⁸ Granite has demonstrated it has been unable to complete construction of its post-auction channel facilities due to construction delays. We also find that grant of Granite's waiver and tolling request is not likely to negatively impact the overall transition schedule and will not cause interference to other stations. WTVH has already ceased operation on its pre-auction channel and is operating from an interim facility on its post-auction channel. To the extent some viewers are unable to receive WTVH's signal while it operates using its interim facility, we believe that Granite has every incentive to ensure viewers are fully informed about the Station's transition plan. Ultimately, we conclude that the public interest will be served by grant of waiver and tolling of the Station's construction permit.

We remind Granite 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."⁹ Additional expenses incurred, such as expenses resulting from changes in a Station's transition plan that are not related to the post-incentive auction channel change, may not be reimbursable from the Fund.

We further remind Granite that the Commission has stated that the Bureau may announce a deadline for the submission of final expense documentation for reimbursement well before the statutory deadline of July 3, 2023.¹⁰ Thus, we strongly encourage the Station to diligently pursue satisfaction of the

⁵ See LMS File No. 0000121155. WTVH was repacked from channel 47 to channel 18.

⁶ See LMS File No. 0000107300.

⁷ See LMS File No. 0000119614.

⁸ 47 CFR § 73.3598(b).

⁹ 47 U.S.C. § 1452(b)(4)(A)(i). See also *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, 6821, para. 622 (2014) (*Incentive Auction R&O*), aff'd, *Nat'l Ass'n of Broadcasters v. FCC*, 789 F.3d 165 (D.C. Cir. 2015) ("The appropriate scope of 'costs reasonably incurred' necessarily will have to be decided on a case-by-case basis.").

¹⁰ See *id.* at 6567, para. 616; *LPTV, TV Translator, and FM Broadcast Station Reimbursement; Expanding the Economic and Innovation Opportunities of Spectrum Through Incentive Auctions*, MB Docket 18-214 and GN Docket No. 12-268, Report and Order, 34 FCC Rcd 1690, 1739, para. 105 (2019). See also *Incentive Auction Task Force and Media Bureau Report on the Status of the Post-Incentive Auction Transition and Reimbursement*

current deadlines to improve the chances that there will be sufficient funds available to reimburse the Station for its legitimate repacking expenses, and we encourage Granite to submit eligible invoices as soon as practicable.

The above facts considered WTVH License, LLC's request for waiver of the Commission's tolling provisions **IS GRANTED**. The construction permit (LMS File No. 0000094502) for WTVH(TV), Syracuse, New York, **IS TOLLED to January 7, 2021**. Grant of this tolling waiver does not permit WTVH to recommence operation on its pre-auction channel. We also remind Granite that any subsequent requests for tolling of its construction permit deadline will be subject to the Commission's tolling provisions.¹¹

Sincerely,

/s/

Barbara A. Kreisman
Chief, Video Division
Media Bureau

cc (via electronic email):
Paul Cicelski, Esq.
Christina H. Burrow, Esq.

Program et al., MB Docket No. 16-306 and GN Docket No. 12-268, Public Notice, 34 FCC Rcd 304, 312, para. 23 and n.35 (IATF/MB 2019).

¹¹ See 47 CFR § 73.3598(b).