

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF DIGITAL CONSTRUCTION PERMIT

Venture Technologies Group LLC (“VTG”), licensee of low power television station KRPE-LP and applicant for digital low power television station KRPE-KD (the “Station”), respectfully requests a 180-day extension of its construction permit to allow it to complete construction of its digital facility through and including January 10, 2022.¹ VTG timely included a request for extension of its construction permit as an attachment to KRPE-LP’s then pending digital flash cut application, but the Bureau did not address VTG’s request.² Although the present circumstances satisfy either standard, VTG requests that the Bureau consider this request under the criteria for an extension rather than for tolling.

In the *LPTV DTV Third R&O*, the FCC established a fixed construction deadline/expiration date for all valid outstanding digital construction permits held by analog LPTV and TV translator stations on the date twelve months after the completion of the 39-month Post-Auction Transition Period.³ At the same time, the Commission indicated that LPTV and TV translator stations may seek one last extension of time of up to six months to complete construction.⁴ In seeking an extension, stations must show that the delay was due to circumstances that were either unforeseeable or beyond their control or due to financial hardship and that they have taken all reasonable steps to resolve the problem.⁵

Since that time, a number of factors that were unforeseeable and beyond VTG’s control have contributed to VTG’s inability to complete the buildout of the Station’s digital facilities. First, COVID-19 has wreaked havoc both on the end of the 39-month Post-Auction Transition Period and the supply chain for digital LPTV equipment.⁶ As a result both of the delays in the full power transition and COVID-19 related issues, equipment suppliers have experienced unexpected backlogs. In the meantime, LPTV stations operating on channel 6 have remained in limbo awaiting guidance from the FCC about whether they can “operate analog FM radio type services on an ancillary or supplementary basis”—an issue first raised in a 2014 notice of proposed rulemaking.⁷

¹ 180 days from July 13, 2021 is January 9, 2022, a Sunday. VTG will endeavor to complete the Station’s digital facilities well before the new deadline, but seeks the maximum allowable time for administrative convenience.

² See File No. 0000138843.

³ See *Amendment of Parts 73 and 74 of the Commission’s Rules to Establish Rules for Digital Low Power Television and Television Translator Stations*, Third Report and Order and Fourth Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 30 FCC Rcd. 14927 ¶ 9 (2015) (“*LPTV DTV Third R&O*”).

⁴ *Id.* ¶ 12.

⁵ *Id.*; see also *Media Bureau Reminds Low Power Television and Television Translator Stations of July 13, 2021, Digital Transition Date*, DA 21-260 (MB rel. Mar. 4, 2021).

⁶ In a March 17, 2020 Public notice, the Commission recognized that “construction and delivery delays that are occurring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as efforts undertaken by the stations themselves to protect the health of their employees and their families, result from circumstances outside of a station’s control.” See *Guidance for Stations in Phase 9 of the Post-Incentive Auction Transition as a Result of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic*, Public Notice, 35 FCC Rcd. 2720 (IATF & MB 2020). The Commission subsequently granted a waiver to extend the Phase 10 completion deadline to several full power stations based on, among other things, COVID-19 related work stoppages and supply chain issues. See *Post-Incentive Auction Transition Request for Waiver of Cox Television Jacksonville LLC*, 35 FCC Rcd. 6826 (2020).

⁷ See *LPTV DTV Third R&O* ¶ 4 n. 12 (“We intend to issue a decision on whether to permit digital LPTV stations to operate analog FM radio type services on an ancillary or supplementary basis at a later date.”); *Media Bureau*

As to the specific circumstances affecting the Station, VTG filed an application for a digital companion channel on April 18, 2019, that the Commission never granted. LMS File No. 000072004. VTG recently withdrew that application and instead requested to “flash cut” to ATSC 3.0. See LMS File No. 0000138843. By converting directly to ATSC 3.0, VTG will avoid the “double build” scenario that the Commission has recognized would otherwise be problematic for LPTV stations.⁸ However, the FCC did not adopt its rules incorporating the ATSC A/322:2017 standard until November 2017,⁹ and compatible transmission systems have only recently become available. The initial focus of manufacturers was on UHF applications, and manufacturing of low band ATSC 3.0 transmission systems remains extremely delayed.

The Station is currently on pace to complete its conversion to digital by the July 13, 2021 deadline. However, VTG seeks this extension out of an abundance of caution. The extension is in the public interest because it will allow the Station to achieve the Commission’s goal of providing digital service to viewers in the Station’s service area.

Seeks to Update the Record on the Operation of Analog Radio Services By Digital LPTV Stations As Ancillary or Supplementary Services, Public Notice, 34 FCC Rcd. 11162 (MB Dec. 4, 2019).

⁸ See *LPTV DTV Third R&O* ¶¶ 9, 16.

⁹ See *Authorizing Permissive Use of the “Next Generation” Broadcast Television Standard*, 32 FCC Rcd. 9930 (2017).