



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

June 16, 2005

DA 05-1677
In Reply Refer to:
1800B3-CNZ

Augusta Radio Fellowship Institute, Inc.
c/o Jeffrey D. Southmayd, Esq.
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Patrick J. Vaughn, Esq.
American Family Association, Inc.
P.O. Drawer 2440
Tupelo, MS 38803

In Re: NEW (NCE FM), Lincolnton, GA
Facility ID No. 90987
BPED-19980619ME

NEW (NCE FM), Thomson, GA
Facility ID No. 90293
BPED-19980319MI

Applications for Construction Permits

Group No. 980309

Dear Counsel:

We have before us Group 980309 – two mutually exclusive applications for permits to construct new noncommercial educational (“NCE”) FM stations serving different communities. In such situations, the rules require the Commission to make a threshold determination of whether grant of any of the applications would further the goals enunciated in Section 307(b) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, for fair, efficient, and equitable distribution of radio service among communities.¹ For the reasons below, we determine that American Family Association, Inc. (“AFA”) is entitled to a decisive Section 307(b) preference.

An NCE FM applicant is eligible to receive a Section 307(b) preference if it would provide a first or second reserved channel NCE aural service (in the aggregate) to at least ten percent of the population, provided that this constitutes at least 2,000 people, within the proposed station’s 60 dBu contour.² If

¹ See 47 U.S.C. § 307(b); 47 C.F.R. § 73.7002(a).

² See 47 C.F.R. § 73.7002(b). With respect to population information, applicants were to use the 2000 Census data, if available by June 4, 2001. See “Supplements and Settlements to Pending Closed Groups of Noncommercial

more than one applicant in a mutually exclusive group qualifies for a preference, we compare first service population coverage totals.³ An applicant will receive a dispositive fair distribution preference by proposing to serve at least 5,000 more potential listeners than the next highest applicant's first service total.⁴ If no applicant is entitled to a first service preference, we will consider combined first and second service population totals and apply the same 5,000 listener threshold.

In the present group, AFA would serve Thomson, Georgia, and Augusta Radio Fellowship Institute, Inc. ("Augusta") would serve Lincolnton, Georgia. Each applicant claims that it would provide a new first or second service to 10 percent of the population within its respective service area, and therefore, that it is eligible for a fair distribution preference.⁵ Each applicant also asserts that it is entitled to a first service preference because its proposed facility would provide a first service to at least 10 percent of the population (and at least 2,000 persons) within its respective 60 dBu contour.⁶ Based on the applicants' submissions and calculations, it appears that AFA qualifies for a comparative preference, because it would provide a new first service to at least 5,000 more persons than Augusta. Accordingly, pursuant to Section 73.7004 of the Commission's rules, we identify AFA as the tentative selectee. Group 980309 thus will not proceed to a point hearing.⁷

Accordingly, it is ordered that American Family Association, Inc. is TENTATIVELY SELECTED to be awarded a construction permit (File No. BPED-19980319MI) for a new NCE FM station in Thomson, Georgia. Petitions to deny the tentative selectee are due within thirty (30) days

Educational Broadcast Applications Due by June 4, 2001," *Public Notice*, 16 FCC Rcd 6893 (MB Mar. 22, 2001). Applicants were also to base their "fair distribution" analysis on the "snap shot" date of June 4, 2001, which is applicable unless the applicant subsequently makes engineering changes that would diminish its comparative position. *Id.* In this case, neither of the applicants has made such engineering changes. In addition, each applicant timely supplemented its application with a Section 307(b) showing; each purports to be based on 2000 Census data and a "snap shot" date of June 4, 2001.

³ See 47 C.F.R. § 73.7002(b). See also "Deadline for NCE Settlements and Supplements Extended to July 19, 2001; Date for Calculating Comparative Qualifications Remains June 4, 2001," *Public Notice*, 16 FCC Rcd 10892, 10893 (MB May 24, 2001).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ AFA's 60 dBu contour encompasses 83,184 people. AFA's claimed aggregated first and second service is 34,995 people. Augusta's 60 dBu contour encompasses 15,228 people. Augusta's claimed aggregated first and second service is 13,823 people.

⁶ AFA claims to provide 28,866 people with new first service. Augusta claims to provide 11,752 people with new first service.

⁷ See 47 C.F.R. § 73.7002(b). The Media Bureau has delegated authority to make 307(b) determinations in NCE cases. See *Reexamination of the Comparative Standards for Noncommercial Educational Applicants*, 15 FCC Rcd 7386 (2000), partially reversed on other grounds, *NPR v. FCC*, 254 F.3d 226 (DC Cir. 2001) ("NCE Order"). See also 47 C.F.R. § 0.283. In the *NCE Order*, the Commission concluded that "[i]n examining the fair distribution issues, we will use the general process set forth in the Section of our Competitive Bidding proceeding that addressed Section 307(b) considerations for AM stations." See *NCE Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 7397 (citing *Comparative Bidding for Commercial Broadcasting and Instructional Television Fixed Services*, 13 FCC Rcd 15920 (1998) (delegating authority to the staff to conduct Section 307(b) analyses with respect to AM applications prior to conducting auctions of competing applications)). In contrast, the *NCE Order* noted that the point system analysis conducted when Section 307(b) is not determinative is considered a simplified "hearing" for purposes of 47 U.S.C. § 155(c)(1). See *NCE Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 7420.

following the issuance of a subsequently issued public notice announcing the tentative selection of this application.⁸

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter H. Doyle", written over the printed name.

Peter H. Doyle
Chief, Audio Division
Media Bureau

⁸ See 47 C.F.R. § 73.7004. If any applicant previously raised issues against the tentative selectee, it must refile its objections within this thirty (30) day period.