



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

July 10, 2020

Nexstar Broadcasting, Inc.
Elizabeth Ryder
545 E John Carpenter Freeway
Suite 700
Irving, TX 75062
(via electronic mail)

Re: Request for Tolling Waiver
WETM-TV, Elmira, NY
Facility ID No. 60653
LMS File No. 0000116905

Dear Licensee,

On July 2, 2020, Nexstar Broadcasting, Inc. (Nexstar), the licensee of Station WETM-TV, Elmira, New York (WETM or Station), filed the above-referenced request for waiver of the Commission's tolling provisions and tolling of the Station's construction permit. For the reasons below, we grant Nexstar's waiver request and toll WETM's construction permit to 180 days to January 11, 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

WETM requests waiver of the tolling rule and tolling of its construction permit for its post-incentive auction channel facilities to January 11, 2021. WETM is operating an interim facility on its

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).

post-auction channel.⁵ WETM was previously granted a construction permit extension through July 15, 2020.⁶

Nexstar states that the Station's post-auction channel antenna has been installed but the requisite transmitter installation is not yet complete. Nexstar states that weather delays and other intervening conditions, such as restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic,⁷ have impacted the Station's construction schedule. Given these delays, Nexstar requests tolling of the Station's construction permit 180 days to January 11, 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 11, 2021.⁸ Nexstar has demonstrated it did not complete construction of its post-auction channel facilities due to construction delays. We also find that grant of Nexstar's waiver and tolling request is not likely to negatively impact the overall transition schedule and will not cause interference to other stations. WETM has already ceased operation on its pre-auction channel and is operating on its post-auction channel from an interim facility. To the extent viewers are unable to receive WETM's signal while it operates from its interim facility, we believe that Nexstar 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 Nexstar 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 Nexstar 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 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 Nexstar to submit eligible invoices as soon

⁵ See LMS File No. 0000116904. WETM was repacked from channel 18 to channel 23.

⁶ See LMS File Nos. 0000096235.

⁷ The World Health Organization has classified COVID-19 as a pandemic and the President declared it a national emergency.

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 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).

as practicable.

The above facts considered, Nexstar Broadcasting, Inc.'s request for waiver of the Commission's tolling provisions **IS GRANTED**. The construction permit (LMS File No. 0000029984) for WETM-TV, Elmira, New York, **IS TOLLED to January 11, 2021**. Grant of this tolling waiver does not permit WETM to recommence operation on its pre-auction channel. We also remind Nexstar 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 mail): Christine Reilly, Esq.

¹¹ See 47 CFR § 73.3598(b).