



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

June 12, 2019

KSTC-TV, LLC
Ed Smith
3415 University Avenue, West
St. Paul, MN 55114

Re: Request for Modification and
Waiver of Phase Assignment
KSTC-TV, Minneapolis, MN
Facility ID No. 38843
LMS File No. 0000073779

Dear Licensee,

On May 30, 2019, KSTC-TV, LLC (Licensee), the licensee of KSTC-TV, Minneapolis, Minnesota (KSTC-TV or Station), filed a *Request for Modification and Waiver of Phase Assignment* requesting to modify the post-incentive auction transition phase assigned to the station in the *Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice* from Phase 3 to Phase 4.¹ For the reasons below, we grant the Licensee's request for waiver and modify the Station's phase assignment to Phase 4, as conditioned herein.

Background. Pursuant to the *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, individual stations may request waiver and modification of their phase assignment.² A waiver is appropriate where the particular facts would make strict compliance inconsistent with the public interest and deviation from the general rule would relieve hardship, promote equity, or produce a more effective implementation of overall policy on an individual basis.³ The Media Bureau (Bureau) has stated it will evaluate such requests on a case-by-case basis to assess the impact on the transition schedule, including the impact on other broadcasters as well as viewers, in order to facilitate a timely and orderly transition.⁴ The Bureau determined that it would view favorably requests that are compliant with the Commission's rules and

¹ See *Incentive Auction Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice: The Broadcast Television Incentive Auction Closes; Reverse Auction and Forward Auction Results Announced; Final Television Band Channel Assignments Announced; Post-Auction Deadlines Announced*, Public Notice, 32 FCC Rcd 2786 (WTB & MB 2017) (*Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice*). See LMS File No. 0000069670, Exhibit 1 - Request for Waiver/Change of Phase Assignment from Phase 3 to Phase 4 (Waiver Request).

² See *Incentive Auction Task Force and Media Bureau Adopt a Post-Incentive Auction Transition Scheduling Plan*, MB Docket No. 16-306 and GN Docket No. 12-268, Public Notice, 32 FCC Rcd 890, 912-14, paras. 47-52 (MB 2017) (*Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*).

³ See *Northeast Cellular Telephone Co. v. FCC*, 897 F.2d 1164, 1166 (D.C. Cir. 1990); *WAIT Radio v. FCC*, 418 F.2d 1153, 1159 (D.C. Cir. 1969); 47 CFR § 1.3 (waiver for good cause shown). See also *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 913-14, para. 51 and n.171.

⁴ See *id.* at 912-14, paras. 49-52. See also *Incentive Auction Task Force and Media Bureau Announce Procedures for the Post-Incentive Broadcast Transition*, Public Notice, 32 FCC Rcd 858, 881-82, para 73 (MB 2017).

have little or no impact on the transition schedule.⁵ Requests that the staff determines would be likely to delay or disrupt the transition schedule will be viewed unfavorably.⁶

KSTC-TV is currently licensed to operate on channel 45. The Station was reassigned to channel 30 in the *Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice* and assigned to transition Phase 3, which has a phase testing period start date of April 13, 2019, and a phase completion date of June 21, 2019. The Station is located in the Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, Designated Market Area (Minneapolis DMA). A total of three stations, including KSTC-TV, were repacked in the Minneapolis DMA. One station transitioned in the period prior to Phase 1 and the other two stations, including KSTC-TV, were assigned to transition Phase 3. The Licensee was recently informed by its tower crew, Tower King II, Inc., that the necessary tower work, including removal and replacement of the Station's transmission line and antenna, will not be completed by June 21, 2019.⁷ The Licensee anticipates that its construction work will be complete in July 2019. As a result, the Licensee requests that KSTC-TV be moved from Phase 3 to Phase 4, which has a testing period start date of June 22, 2019, and a phase completion date of August 2, 2019.⁸

The Licensee states that because the Station is currently operating in the 600 MHz band this phase change will not create any new linked-station sets or result in increased pairwise interference greater than two percent during the transition period.⁹ KSTC-TV also states that "to the extent the change in phase may require an additional re-scan in certain portions of the DMA, the Licensee is prepared to take additional steps beyond standard viewer [] requirements, including additional crawls and other notifications during its local news programs as well as additional guidance on its website...."¹⁰

Discussion. Upon review of the facts and circumstances presented, we find that the Licensee's request to modify the phase assignment for KSTC-TV to transition to its post-auction channel in Phase 4 satisfies the requirement for a waiver and is in the public interest. We find that the change to the Station's transition phase should not have an adverse impact on the overall transition schedule or a negative impact on other stations or viewers. Staff has confirmed that the phase change will not create any new linked station sets or direct dependencies. Although the total number of rescan periods in the Minneapolis DMA will increase from two to three, which is one more than the two rescan periods per DMA limitation used in the tool adopted by the Bureau in the *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice* to assign stations to transition phases,¹¹ the Licensee has committed to taking additional steps beyond what is required by Commission consumer education rules to notify viewers of its change in phase, including through use of its local newscasts and the Station's website.¹² We believe that the Station has diligently pursued

⁵ *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 912-13, para. 49 and n.163.

⁶ *Id.*; see *Incentive Auction Task Force and Media Bureau Remind Repacked Stations of Certain Post-Auction Transition Requirements and Deadlines*, Public Notice, 33 FCC Rcd 8240, 8244-45, para. 14 (IATF & MB 2018) (*Transition Reminder Public Notice*).

⁷ Waiver Request at 1 and 3 (Letter from Tower King II, LLC).

⁸ *Id.* at 1.

⁹ *Id.* at 2. See *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 897, para. 16 (allowing temporary increased pairwise (station-to-station) interference of up to two percent during the transition period).

¹⁰ Waiver Request at 2.

¹¹ *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 898-99, paras. 20-21.

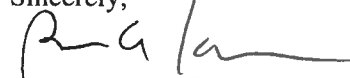
¹² See *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 898-99, paras. 20-21 (establishing a two rescan periods per DMA limitation when assigning stations to transition phases).

vacating its pre-auction channel, but delays beyond its control related to replacement of the Station's transmission line and antenna have resulted in the Station being unable to meet its phase completion date. In the absence of a phase change, the Station would have to go dark, and over-the-air viewers would lose access to KSTC-TV. Modifying KSTC-TV's transition phase will ensure that the Station is able to continue to serve its viewers without interruption. As a result, we find the facts and circumstances discussed above outweigh any viewer burden caused by an additional rescan period in the Minneapolis DMA or a short delay in access by wireless licensees to the Station's pre-auction channel.

We remind the Licensee 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." 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.

Accordingly, we **GRANT** KSTC-TV, LLC's *Request for Modification and Waiver of Phase Assignment* and modify the transition phase assignment for KSTC-TV **from Phase 3 to Phase 4**, subject to all the commitments made in its waiver request and compliance with all Commission rules applicable to transitioning stations.¹³ Testing on the Station's post-auction channel **may not begin until 12:01 am local time on June 22, 2019**, and KSTC-TV is required to cease operating on its pre-auction channel **no later than 11:59 pm local time on August 2, 2019**.¹⁴ The Station's construction permit expiration date will also be modified to correspond to its new phase completion date.¹⁵

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Kreisman
Chief, Video Division
Media Bureau

Cc: (via electronic mail):
Bill LeBeau, Esq.

¹³ See generally 47 CFR § 73.3700 and *Transition Reminder Public Notice*, 33 FCC Rcd 8240.

¹⁴ Each transition phase has a designated testing period on which a station in that phase may begin testing equipment on its new channel and a designated phase completion date when a station must cease operation on its pre-auction channel. The phase completion date is the date that will be listed in that station's construction permit as its construction deadline and is the date the station must cease operation on its pre-auction channel. See *Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 2806, para. 64. A station that commences testing on its post-auction channel before the beginning of its assigned testing period will be operating in violation of Commission rules.

¹⁵ *Id.* ("The phase completion date is...[also] the date listed in each station's construction permit as its construction deadline"). If a station must commence operations on its post-auction channel at variance from the parameters authorized in its construction permit, it must file for and be granted special temporary authority prior to commencing operations. See 47 CFR § 73.1635. A station that needs additional time to complete construction of its post-auction facility beyond its construction permit expiration date must file for a 180-day extension of its construction permit in accordance with Section 73.3700(b)(5)(iv). Stations needing additional time to construct after a 180-day extension is granted, will be subject to the Commission's tolling provisions. 47 CFR § 73.3700(b)(5)(iv). Grant of an extension of time to construct does not relieve a station of the requirement that it ceases operation on its pre-auction channel by its assigned phase completion date.