

Comments RE: MM Docket No. 99-25 (Creation of a Low Power Radio Service)

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February 5, 1999

As a potential community broadcaster, I would like to provide comments on the proposed Low Power FM service from my background as a former broadcast engineer (held the old "FCC First Class" license) and as a current amateur radio operator (Advanced Class).

The FCC's proposed power levels, antenna heights and station separation parameters all appear to be based on sound engineering judgment. For LP100 and microstations, the low power levels and small service areas should negate any need for 2nd or 3rd-adjacent channel considerations. While there may be some validity to concerns for LP1000 station 2nd-adjacent channel separation, improvements in receiver technology nullify this concern and the benefits of the new service far outweigh the unlikely exceptions.

However, new LP1000 stations should be required to protect existing co-channel and 1st-adjacent channel LP100 stations.

Channels 201-220 (88-92 MHz) should be reserved for noncommercial educational broadcasters, including community and religious organizations. Channels 221-300 should be available to both commercial and noncommercial entities.

Use of radio broadcast auxiliary frequencies for STL needs should be allowed, especially for LP1000 stations who may not be able to locate studios near their transmission facilities.

As for future digital services, the more aggressive bandwidth utilization of IBOC by existing broadcasters may be more likely to cause interference to LPFM rather than the reverse, and it appears that current broadcasters are using the "interference argument" as a part of their effort to thwart introduction of a LPFM service.

Proposed transmitter certification, using existing standards, would insure correct operation and minimal harmonics. Additional masking or bandwidth restrictions would prove unnecessary given the limited power ranges of the new service. However, sacrificing LPFM subcarriers should not be detrimental to the overall goals of establishing the service.

If necessary, a compromise regarding bandwidth that would not impact transmitter costs could be achieved by limiting the modulating frequencies above 12 KHz. This could be achieved economically by attenuating frequencies over 12 KHz in the audio processing stage, and would still provide acceptable stereo audio fidelity.

As for programming, LPFMs should be able to use a network service at their discretion. Particularly in a startup mode, a broadcaster may need to rely more on such programming to allow time to develop and increase the level of local programming.

No specific regulations regarding public interest programming should be imposed on LP100 or microstations. Similarly, other service rules shouldn't be imposed on the smaller stations.

LP100 and microstations should be able to renew their licenses at specific intervals (e.g. 8 years). In many metro areas, only a few LP100 stations may be technically feasible and those who make a concerted effort to serve their community and/or fight against the odds to become commercially successful should not be faced with losing their license simply because other voices may want the frequency.

Commercial transmitters currently available for a 100-watt facility costs approximately \$5,500 and a 30 meter tower costs in the range of \$3,000 installed. This means getting an LP100 station on the air can easily cost \$10,000, depending on the facilities and other equipment. Broadcasters taking these risks of time and money should not be penalized with the uncertainty of being able to keep their license. Unless they have failed to meet stated service requirements, a "renewal expectancy" is most appropriate in this situation.

Electronic filing of applications makes sense, but auctions don't. Bidding by commercial applicants could conceivably exceed construction costs. A lottery method would be preferable, giving small broadcasters the opportunity to put limited resources into their station facilities rather than the rights to the frequency. To resolved mutually exclusive applications, there is merit to the "first-come" processing method during a specified application window.

I appreciate this opportunity to comment, and hope my next communication will be a license application!

Cordially,

Walter Molony