Your Municipal Communications Resource

Connecting Your Town to Your Residents



Newsletter

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> General Meeting Schedule 2023-24

May 18

JAG Conference Crown Plaza Hotel, Rt. 27, Edison Jun. 28- ZOOM **No Presentation** Sept. 27- Zoom Presentation – ENCO/Rushworks Oct. 26- at Varto Technologies Presentation –Varto Technologies Dec. 6- ZOOM **Presentation-TBA** Jan. 31, 2024- TBD **Presentation- DeSisti** Feb. 28- ZOOM Presentation- de Wolfe Music Mar. 27 at Bloomfield TV **Presentation- TelVue** Apr. 24- ZOOM **No Presentation**

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President's Message

Bob Duthaler

JAG To Honor Some of Its Own



By now you already know that Thursday, May 18th is the date you should

put all things aside and make plans to be at the JAG's annual conference and vendor day. If you haven't done so already, register now at <u>www.jagconference.com</u>. This is a must attend event if you are a member of JAG, support the organization or utilize any of its benefits.

Did you know that as part of JAG's conference, the organization recognizes members for their extraordinary work-for either the PEG community or the JAG organization. This year is no exception. Throughout the day, JAG will recognize some of its members, community leaders and others in their efforts to support PEG. It is important that we all gather on that day as both an organization and community to support those who helped support us. Register now to be part of this at <u>www.jagconference.com</u>.

Join us on Thursday, May 18th at the Crowne Plaza in Edison, NJ and be present at our keynote lunch which will take place in the exhibit hall area, at which we will award our **Community Recognition Award.** This goes to a member of a local Municipality/County (Elected or Employed by) that has helped JAG and its mission to support PEG access. We will recognize some of the local politicians from the Township of New Milford and their efforts to grow their local television station WM77. We ask that you be on hand as well to congratulate them. Register now at <u>www.jagconference.com</u>.

There are many organizational members that go above and beyond in their support of JAG and the JAG community. As part of our Keynote Lunch on Thursday, May 18th we will recognize them. I will have the honor of presenting the Vendor Appreciation Award during the luncheon. I urge you to be present at this event and show your appreciation to those who gave back to our organization. Please join me in thanking them by registering for our conference and being present during our keynote lunch at www.jagconference.com.

Be part of the evening's activities when JAG continues to recognize the great works of its members during our banquet. There will be several opportunities for the organization to accomplish this. We will begin the evening with the JAG Member Recognition Award. Each year we present it to a member that has contributed to the success of JAG. I am pleased to announce that this year's recipient is one of JAG's founding members, its second president and a board member from the beginning up through 2023. I ask you to join me to honor Lee Beckerman of the Woodbridge Channels. To do so, make sure you register now at www.jagconference.com.

The fun will continue when we announce the winners of this year's JAG Awards. The awards ceremony will take place during the JAG banquet. It is truly a great event as we watch clips of the great work our member stations have done during the year, present several stations with the JAG Excellence Award and honor all those that were nominated. Finally, before the evenings over, as the current President of JAG it will be my honor to present President's Ovation Awards to a member and/or board member of JAG in acknowledgement of their unrelenting commitment to the members of the Jersey Access Group and the operation of public, education, and government communication facilities. The only way you can participate in the day's activities, celebrations and learning experience is to register now for this year's JAG Conference and Vendor Exhibition – www.jagconference.com. See you there!



Increasing Broadband Service in Your Community Dave Garb, Legislative Committee Chair

Warning, it is all around you! There is nowhere to hide from it! And it is on its way to the 2023 JAG Conference. It's the B-word! BROADBAND!!!

Yes, It Is Everywhere, Be Prepared! or Be Left Out!

In 2021, the federal government passed the American Infrastructure Act which approved billions of dollars to improve broadband deployment throughout the country. That money will flow from the Federal Government and be distributed by each state in a major goal to build-out broadband everywhere, including in the rural areas.



On May 18th, during the JAG Conference Keynote Luncheon, we explore the ways all municipalities can access the money, and what to do with it once it arrives at the local level. Our panel of experts, Robert Boyle, CEO Planet Networks; , Marilyn Davis, Senior Director of Government Affairs, Altice Mike Wassenaar, President of the ACM; and Mike Lynch, Legislative & Regulatory Affairs Director for NATOA, the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, will guide you on a successful path to help you acquire a piece of this funding for your community.

For any of you who are thinking about what chance your municipality has at obtaining some of this funding, your chances are pretty good. Congress has made broadband a major priority and wants everybody in the US to have it. To make this agenda come to fruition, the House's Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology held a hearing this past April 19th, entitled *"Breaking Barriers: Streamlining Permitting to Expedite Broadband Deployment."*

According to the Committee's Majority Staff Memo, <u>https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF16/20230419/115750/HHRG-118-IF16-20230419-SD094.pdf</u> the hearing took up more than 30 additional bills aimed at what are described as the 'Federal Barriers', 'State and Local Government Obstacles', as well as, 'Pole Attachments (Access to Poles)' to help streamline these regulations. This is essential in order to encourage and expedite the broadband infrastructure deployment throughout the United States.

A set of questions was posed for these hearings included:

- Is attaching telecommunications equipment on municipally or cooperatively owned poles more difficult or expensive than on other poles?
- What challenges exist at the federal, state, and local levels that delay or burden broadband deployment?
- How can Congress help expedite or streamline the process for broadband deployment?

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce even wrote an article highlighting what Congress must do to take action in order to accelerate the process for ensuring all Americas have access to the latest innovations in connectivity. https://www.uschamber.com/technology/broadband/4-actions-congress-must-take-to-accelerate-access-and-adoption-ofsmart-broadband-programs.

These 4 Actions are:

- Permitting Reform: To ensure our infrastructure, especially broadband, is ahead of the ever-evolving technological landscape.
- Interagency Coordination: The Government Accountability Office noted that 15 federal agencies collectively administer over 100 programs to expand access to broadband. Congress should focus on effectively implementing existing federal broadband programs and ensuring taxpayer dollars are utilized wisely.
- Affordable Connectivity Program Funding: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act established the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) to provide a monthly benefit to low-income Americans. However, the IIJA only provided a temporary amount of funding for the ACP, which is expected to run out in 2024. Congress must act and provide sufficient appropriations to provide certainty for program beneficiaries and participating internet service providers.
- Prevent Overregulation: Congress must ensure that all federal broadband programs avoid ancillary and harmful public policies such as preferences for unions, costly Buy America mandates, and patchwork networks.

If this wasn't a lot to digest, *The Community Broadband Act of 2023* was reintroduced on both sides of the Capital. New Jersey Senator Cory Booker sponsored <u>S.1197</u>, while Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (D-CA) sponsored <u>H.R.2552</u>.

This legislation will empower local governments to ensure their residents have equitable broadband access by removing roadblocks for public-private partnerships and locally-owned broadband providers. It will also improve internet and broadband access across the country by removing roadblocks prohibiting local communities from building their own broadband networks.

These Acts have been endorsed by NATOA.

Confusing? Maybe a little. But, as you have read, Congress is investing heavily in order to bring broadband to all Americans. It's just a matter of how to go about it correctly and spend the money wisely.

Please join us on May 18th, at the Crowne Plaza in Edison, NJ, <u>www.jagconference.com</u>. Find out where you can secure the funds to 100% connect your community and prepare everyone for the future of Broadband.



The Conference is Waiting for You Don Smith, Vice Chair, Conference Committee

We are only 2 weeks away from the JAG Conference! The conference committee has been working hard to bring an informative, networking, and fun conference to the members and supporters of JAG. Tell all your members to mark down May 18th and we will see you there. For details and to register visit our website <u>www.jagconference.com</u>

Conference Schedule

- 8:00 am 8:50 am- TelVue User Group Breakfast Ultra-affordable All-in-One Playout, Integrated Streaming, Editing, and CBB, Live Caption Translation, New Viewer Analytics, and more!
- 9:00 am 11:30 pm- Exhibitors Meet and Greet Visit the Exhibitors supporting JAG TelVue/ Varto Technologies/ Cologna Productions/ DeSisti Lighting/ de Wolfe Music/ NewTek/ LiveU MyCaseBuilder, NJ Film Commission, US Broadcast Distribution
- 9:00 am 9:50 am- Varto User Group Breakfast TriCaster & NDI User Group: NAB Highlights & Interactive Forum
- 10:00 am 11:15 am-Workshop: News from Capitol Hill and Around the Country, and What It Means to New Jersey PEG Stations
- 11:30 am 1:20 pm- Keynote Lunch Sponsored by Planet Networks

Presentation: Community Recognition Award

The Jersey Access Group is pleased to present the West Milford Town Council, and in particular Mayor Michele Dale and Council liaisons Ada Erik and Marilyn Lichtenberg for their continued support of their municipal channel WM77.

Presentation: Vendor Appreciation Award- Launch- JAG Streaming Channel: Rushworks streaming equipment and TelVue streaming service.

The Jersey Access Group recognizes the support of Rushworks for their donation of the Streamster a hardware/software combination for managing and streaming JAG's own Internet TV channel.

The Jersey Access Group recognizes the support of TelVue in providing the streaming service that makes it possible for the JAG Internet TV channel to be seen on a number of different social media platforms.

Discussion: Where's The Money? — From Washington to Trenton, Accessing Broadband Money from the American Infrastructure Bill Over a year ago the federal government approved 65 billion dollars to improve broadband deployment. That money flows from the Federal Government to the states for distribution. Where are we now? How can municipalities have access to funds? What are broadband and cable companies doing to help deployment of broadband? Our panel will talk about this and other issues, plus answer your questions. Panelists: Robert Boyle, CEO Planet Networks, Marilyn Davis, Senior Director of Government Affairs, Altice, Mike Wassenaar, President & CEO, Alliance for Community Media and Mike Lynch, Legislative Director, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, (NATOA)

- 1:30 pm 2:15 pm- Workshop: Is A PEG Cable Channel All You Need?
- 2:30 pm 3:15 pm- Workshop: Innovative Technology Tools Revolutionizing the Broadcast Industry- Sponsored by Varto Technologies
- 3:30 pm 4:15 pm- Workshop: DAMN..... I need a little SOMETHING. How to light properly when you have almost NOTHING! Sponsored by DeSisti
- 4:30 pm 5:15 pm- Workshop: Using Video to Enhance your Municipality's Social Media Presence Sponsored by TelVue
- 5:30 pm 6:30 pm- Cocktail Social with Exhibitors- Sponsored by DeSisti
- Closing event with networking opportunities and providing time to thank the vendors that have supported the conference.
- 6:30 pm 11:00 pm- JAG Banquet sponsored by Varto Technologies
 A celebration of all that JAG has accomplished to advocate, promote, and preserve the right to media production, distribution, civic engagement, and education in support of diverse community voices, through Public, Educational and Government access facilities and other forms of media.

JAG Recognition Awards: Lee Beckerman is one of the founding members of JAG from its first meeting to serving on the executive board for over 18 years. Lee was involved with the writing of JAG's first mission statement, goals and policies and procedures. Lee served as the 2nd president of JAG and has been on the production committee from the beginning. Lee has dedicated thousands of hours in the last 30+ years, serving to the betterment of this organization and the PEG TV industry. Lee is the Station Manager of the Woodbridge Channels that is one of the first municipal stations in New Jersey.

Entertainment: Entertainment sponsored by Cologna Productions

Simon Mandel returns to JAG's Banquet. Simon Mandal is one of the most in demand illusionists in the world today. Simon combines incredible feats of skill with hilarious interactive routines that bring the house down, and make the volunteers he brings on stage look like and feel like stars.

JAG Awards: The JAG Awards are annual awards, facilitated by the Jersey Access Group, that honor excellence in local & regional Public Education Government (PEG) programming. Categories cover a variety of programming including, among others, community events, documentaries, talk shows, sports, and entertainment. The Jersey Access Group is very proud of the programming all PEG Stations produce and is honored to host the JAG Awards each year.

President's Ovation Awards: Bob Duthaler, the President of The Jersey Access Group will present the President's Ovation Award to a member and/or board member of JAG in acknowledgement of their unrelenting commitment to the members of the Jersey Access Group, and the operation of public, education, and government communication facilities.



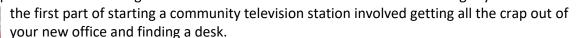


Building and Managing a Municipal Access Cable StationMembers SpotlightLee Beckerman, Station Manager, Woodbridge Channels

In the mid-1980s, Woodbridge Township was contemplating starting a cable TV channel of its own. They had secured a channel on Suburban, set up a governing board and had purchased a random assortment of equipment. And then...nothing happened. At some point they decided it was time to bring on a person to manage the station and move the project forward. I was fresh out of college with a degree in video production. Doing freelance and having a hard time finding fulltime work in



my field, I jumped at the opportunity. It was not my dream job, but I thought it might be an adequate place holder to build my resume, and, lacking other options, I took it. I was eventually shown to a packed projection room/closet, told it was my new office and to have at it. No further instructions were forthcoming. No one had apparently thought past the idea of having a TV station and considered what to do with it. I rightly deduced that



One major advantage was that no one (including me) knew what a municipal cable station was supposed to be. There was a vague feeling that it might be a good addition to a forward-thinking town and should probably include some programs. The rest was up to me. I was trained in video production but I did not know any more than they did about what a municipal TV station should be. I set out to find the answer. What follows are some insights gained along the way.

Networking

You can't do everything by yourself. With no knowledge of what to do with my channel, I reached out to the two thriving community stations in the area, Piscataway's PCTC and East Brunswick's EBTV. Debbe Gist and Cindy O'Connor helped immensely in getting the station up and running and gave me ideas I could build on. They also connected me with the Alliance for Community Media. The Township allowed me to attend their conference in Tampa, Florida. All this gave me a starting point.

It was Debbe who first brought the idea of creating JAG to all of us, probably because she was one of the people all the other stations turned to for ideas. Cindy became our first President and so began one of the most valuable resources for running a local access television station. Woodbridge Television could not have come as far without JAG's support.

Audience

Access cable audiences are small. If we're lucky, we get a few hundred to a few thousand viewers for a big event and often less than that. But the numbers are cumulative. The people who are watching the council meeting are



not the same people watching your local sports; who are not the same people watching your concert coverage and your parades and business openings and school recitals etc... When added up, you can reach a large, diverse section of your population. For our mayor, announcing local sports is a passion, but for hundreds of kids in our town, and their parents, they know the name of the mayor because he is the local sports announcer.

As a side note, it is the talent that usually gets the direct feedback. The politicians and show hosts certainly knew before we did that we were building an audience. When we started, without access to metrics, this turned out to be a very important point.

Different platforms

In the beginning we had a cable TV channel, and all was good with the world. We put our programs out there and over time, word started leaking out to the powers-that-be that people were watching. (Hey, I saw you on the channel last night and you're nuts). There were no metrics or any way to measure or define an audience. In came

Princeton Server Group (now TelVue) whose file-based server systems completely revolutionized how we worked. Their streaming video service offered us a video-on-demand platform that let us push our shows out in a different way. (An interesting side note. JAG got involved with the Princeton Server group because Steve George's son played soccer with my son in middle school and we got to talking on the sideline, which led to a tour and a meeting with the president, Jesse Lerman.)



After a while we began to use their metrics, and for the first time, to see the numbers. We next added YouTube and because of the popularity of the platform, once people realized we were there, they started looking for us instead of us seeking them out.

I'm at the tail end of the boomer generation. I'm not going to be the guy to lead the charge on alternate social media platforms. But I know a good thing when I see one. The town had started using Facebook to shout out to residents, so we set up our own page to push out our content. Younger staff began sending out tweets and doing Instagram posts as we set up and shot programs to tease the content. We also started getting conversations going on social media during events like games and concerts, including announcers interacting with fans in real time, creating buzz.

Relationships

Community Television is about...community. Getting to know your community and establishing relationships gains you access. Early on I created a relationship with our local arts center. We began by covering a few of their concerts, but as they came to know and trust us as professionals, that blossomed into several joint grants for documentaries which won many awards and ended up, along with several of our concerts, being featured on Metro-Arts in NYC to audiences of millions. That gets the name of your town out there!

When I first tried covering high school sports it was a bit of a disaster. What I failed to do was get buy-in from the athletic directors and the school administrations. (We have three high schools). It took a long time to build that trust, but it was essential to successfully covering local sports.



Relationships with municipal departments and local non-profits are also important. We've put out content for our police department, libraries, youth theater, historical society, and senior services to name a few. But having strong ties with public works

and parks and rec is equally critical. I had a day where we were shooting our exercise show in a park. I scouted a perfect location with the Outerbridge Crossing in the background. On shoot day we arrived to set up and someone had parked a giant dumpster in the middle of my shot! However, because I had built relationships within the town, I had phone numbers of people who knew who I was and I had a truck pull out the dumpster within a half an hour.

Quality

Programming quality is essential. If an audience can't see and hear a program, you have wasted your, and your viewers' time. Among the first complex programs I started doing were art center concerts. I insisted that they hire a professional audio engineer. I knew I could deliver the video but if the sound wasn't great, what was the point?



Eventually they added an audio engineer to all their concert grants. Video quality is likewise important. Your audience may not know how to create great programming, but they have watched a lot of it, and they understand what it's supposed to look like. They might forgive quality issues for something they are crazy into, but unless you have a marketing genius on board you cannot build an audience that way. The look of your shows matter. We try to get very creative with sets and looks on a very limited budget. I designed my own sets, and we were able to find someone in the Parks Department who could build them. With my set design I strove to create sets that shared production elements, maximizing utility and minimizing space constraints. When we were doing Seniorsize, I looked at the township roller rink and realized they already had a great lighting system and I just had to add key lights to make a dynamic show with less set-up time. We also did a season at the Woodbridge Mall (another great partnership) that gave us a cool and dynamic background with minimal additional effort (at least as far as the look was concerned.)

Recently, we are doing more things with green screen. This offers huge flexibility and is great for many applications. The sets, however, especially for multicamera shoots, do have a very digital look especially at our price point. I'm sure there will be new innovations going forward.

People

You need to hire good people! OK, obvious. Finding good people is hard with our budget limitations, especially in a tight labor market. But people choose jobs for different reasons. I did not intend to stay in my job for more than a few years, but I found I liked the relative freedom, the ability to be creative and I liked building something. In



addition to our regular fare of sports and concerts we have made narrative films, documentaries, short comedies with special effects and big location shoots. My staff gets some leeway to create and produce shows on their own for the station. Turned out it was a good gig. I think these are good selling points. I should mention that two out of three of my most recent hires came from JAG stations/ recommendations. When I look at new people, I always hire them as freelancers first so I can get a sense of their work ethic and how they gel with the crew.

Getting creative with staff is also essential to any small operation. Many of the events we cover are at night or on weekends so in order to have staff available we have two members who work 4 days on/4 days off from late morning into the evening. The days are 10-hours so they are available to cover evenings and weekends. We take advantage of interns to help cover larger events and, of course, freelancers for the biggest productions. This is something we had to build up to and we started with volunteers like everyone.

Bosses and Politicians

I had some early run-ins with bosses and politicians. Much of this had to do with my misunderstanding of our relationship. When I was working from the model of public access, I would often fight battles about public access issues. The truth, however, is I work for them in the municipal access model. There are exceptions.

Open meetings rules mean I never edit any public meetings and I have never been asked to or have we in 35 years. We do not allow talk about elections or candidates during election season (outside of debate coverage), and do not endorse any candidates, at any

time, on the channel. That aside, the channel has a mandate to be the video face of our town and government, including its leaders, along with highlighting our events civic organizations, nonprofits, schools, citizens and everything our township has to offer.

Reputation

As a municipal department I started to notice different departments have different reputations. This stood out for me when the deputy police chief kept bringing guests by to see the station. I asked him why this was and he said, "I love coming in here because everyone's always working, all the time." I liked that. I try to make it a point for people to understand we take the work seriously and are willing to work hard to make it as good as we can. They don't always understand what we're doing but if they show up at an event and see our cameras everywhere and everyone humming like a well-oiled machine, it makes an impression. We also do not stand on our laurels but always try to innovate in small ways and push things forward. I find it is easier to ask for things if people believe you are working hard and believe you will put what you ask for to good use. The motto I've adopted is to under promise and over deliver.

Equipment

It is essential that you keep current with equipment to the best extent possible. Early on I communicated to my town that I was not trying to build CBS -that the equipment I was buying was appropriate for the application. But I also tried to get the best quality equipment that met our needs. I got push back when we became an early AVID adopter, or when we decided we needed to build a mobile production unit, but I was able to give them detailed and expansive reasons why I wanted them and what I was planning to do with them and how they would benefit

the town. When they got tired of listening, they let me have what I need if I would just go away. Well not really. I had some protracted arguments about some of this, but I did have my facts. As I stated before, your audience watches video, they know what to expect and if you are not delivering it, they have another reason to turn away. This was obviously why we fought so hard for an HD channel. When the show looks bad, they assume it's you and you have given them an excuse not to watch.



Cross Pollination

It's important to have the people you partner with on shows, guests, talent, performers etc, help push out the content on their own social media accounts. This is something I wish we did more in my time and something I think the new staff will be thinking about. If you do a show with a local organization or business, make sure they get a link and put it on their website, which leads back to your social media which brings in people who may not have been aware of you. We also share our shows and posts to the mayor's social media which has a much larger footprint than ours.

Local TV

Easy to forget sometimes but we should be the voice of our town. I always felt it was my mandate to emphasize the Township of Woodbridge as much as possible. We take in very few outside shows, mostly things from



Middlesex County government and a few other exceptions, but I always try to keep a Woodbridge twist on everything. With the demise of our bulletin board Channel (We had to give it back in exchange for our HD channel) we started to make all the bulletin board notices into PSAs with voice-overs and motion and graphics to replace the old Ad Council PSA's. Once again, if you turn on Woodbridge TV you should instantly get a dose of Woodbridge, which is what I consider the essence of Municipal Access Television.

In Conclusion

I got lucky in many ways. First, Woodbridge is a large community with a population of over 100,000. I had a few years in the beginning with little scrutiny, in which to build a foundation. When Mayor Joseph DeMarino went on trial for corruption (he was acquitted) we were able to provide the first gavel-to-gavel coverage of a trial in New Jersey. The whole township tuned in, with watch parties at many bars. This raised public awareness of the station and government officials became aware of the potential of the medium.

When new officials were elected, we were already a going concern and the new Mayor, Jim McGreevey, was anxious to use and build on it. The station continued to grow under Mayor Pelzman. But Woodbridge Township Television really blossomed under Mayor McCormac and this current administration who have supported and encouraged us in so many ways. My staff, new station manager Gina Forbes, assistant manager, Joe Fernandes, Emil Brandafi, Samantha Roth, Erin Zirpolo, new producer Valentino Lamotta and Bruno Martins from the Woodbridge Township School District as well as my longtime boss, John Hagerty, have all helped build and support the station.



All the great people at JAG including Bob Duthaler and Rich Desimone have had a great impact. I understand my experience may not be your experience and we all have different models and mandates. What we have at The Woodbridge Channels was built very slowly over a long period of time, starting with one person in a basement closet thinking big.

Communications



JAG General Meeting (ZOOM) Apr. 26, 2023 @ 12:00pm For more information and access to the meeting email <u>JAGinfo@jagonline.org</u>

JERSEY ACCESS GROUP

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New Content on JAG YouTube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxYD91dqyo8 Woodbridge 49th Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade - March 12, 2023

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-sJ626z4RY Women Talk 2302 What Do You Do In Your Spare Time

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3bbVd13W4w Aging Insights 137: Traveling After 60

Do not forget to check out our YouTube channel. Have something you want on our YouTube channel? Send a link to <u>dseidel@piscatawaynj.org</u> for review.

> New Content on JAG Members Only Section The JAG Job Board is currently being populated with opportunities.

New Password as of June 1- Contact Linda Besink lbesink@gmail.com for access

New Content on JAG Web Site List of the 2022 JAG Award recipients. <u>https://jagonline.org/jag-award-winners/</u>

Share the value of Jag's newsletter with your elected officials, cable committee, station volunteers, associates, and friends. Send this invitation: <u>https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/B7EMU1R/JAGnewsletter</u>

Managers Roundtable 2023 Schedule

Thursday, September 14th at 2pm: "Sports Coverage"

Thursday, November 9th at 2pm: Topic To Be Announced. Do you have a specific topic you would like to discuss? Please reach out to JAG President Bob Duthaler and discuss your ideas on topics you would like to discuss. Contact information: <u>bduthaler@jagonline.org</u>



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