

Trustees 2023

Bob Duthaler Pres. – 2023
 Doug Seidel VP – 2024
 Anthony Pagliuco
 Recording Sec. – 2025
 Linda Besink Treasurer– 2023
 Stephanie Gibbons
 Corresponding Sec. – 2025
 Dave Garb – 2024
 George Fairfield – 2023
 Don Smith – 2025
 Rick Gearhart – 2024

Inside This Issue

Legislation
 Changes Coming to Support ADA pg2
 Feature
 Weaving the Threads of Community:
 My Journey with PEG Media pg3
 Members Spotlight
 How Oakland, New Jersey became
 Altice’s test case for HD broadcast
 service pg5
 Communication pg7

General Meeting Schedule 2023-24

Sept. 27- TBD
 Presentation – TBA
 Oct. 26- ZOOM
 Presentation – TBD
 Dec. 6- ZOOM
 Presentation- TBA
 Jan. 31, 2024- ZOOM
 Reorganization
 Presentation- Cablecast
 Feb. 28- ZOOM
 Presentation- TBA
 Mar. 27- ZOOM
 Presentation- TBD
 Apr. 24- ZOOM
 No Presentation
 May 16
 JAG Conference
 Crown Plaza Hotel, Rt. 27, Edison
 Jun. 26- ZOOM
 No Presentation

FOLLOW US ON:



President’s Message

Bob Duthaler



Now Is The Time To Take Advantage of JAG – We Don’t Mind

Have you been paying attention to new and pending legislation that could affect our industry? Well JAG has, especially our legislative committee. That committee, under the leadership of Dave Garb, has been working with our partners at NATOA and the ACM to keep track of such legislation and are informing not only our members, but leadership throughout the state and the New Jersey League of Municipalities. I urge you to read our special legislative newsletter that has been sent out. You can also find it on the JAG website, or click on this link: <https://jagonline.org/2023-newsletters/>

Your board is also actively following pending legislation as well. Please go back in your email inbox and revisit the email I sent the membership on June 14, 2023. This email explains the pending legislation H.R. 3557 and why we, NATOA, ACM and dozens of other organizations oppose it. I urge you again to send the information cited in the email to your Mayor and Council, Planning and Zoning Boards, as well as your clerk and administration. There are elements in H.R. 3557 that will impact local government on many levels. While searching your email, please check on an email sent from Dave Garb on July 5, 2023 which includes a sample resolution which may be used as a template to oppose H.R. 3557. Again, I urge you to distribute that information as well.

The JAG Executive Board, along with the External Relations committee, under the direction of Geoffrey Belinfante, has been working with the New Jersey League of Municipalities to bring three different sessions to the League’s upcoming conference in November. One of the sessions will be on the Broadband Deployment Act. Learn how funding will be distributed, and what to expect for areas in which there is little to no broadband, along with areas that are underserved. The panel will consist of members from the New Jersey Broadband Deployment team, and broadband companies and attorneys who are closely following this on a national and local level. There will also be another joint session with the NJLOM and JAG on H.R. 3557. This will be a chance for local leaders to learn more about this legislation, the lack of local control in deployment and the threat to local franchises, fees and grants. Finally, JAG will present a session on moving beyond cable. Learn more about OTT, social media video trends and much more. In the upcoming months we will share more about these sessions when the exact times and dates are announced.

JAG membership has a few other ways to learn about several other items that will impact the way we operate our stations and distribute information to our communities. Some of these items include closed captioning, high-definition cable channels and streaming capabilities. Over the course of the next few months, we will explore these and more. Attend our monthly JAG Meetings (last Wednesday of each month), upcoming webinars, and special managers round table discussions. It is there that we will discuss these topics, explore solutions, and hear from specialists and from each other. These are “must-attend” events that JAG works hard to put together in order to educate and inform our members. Please take advantage of them. I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming meeting in September and at all future JAG events. Should you ever have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me directly at: bduthaler@jagonline.org



On the 33rd Anniversary of ADA, The Biden-Harris Administration is working to make it easier for people with disabilities to access public services. They are taking new steps to strengthen the ADA and improve online accessibility to state and local services for those with vision, hearing, cognitive, and dexterity disabilities.

During the pandemic the disparities in online access were made quite clear. Those with hearing issues or who were deaf could not understand video messages from their governors and mayors due to a lack of captioning and American Sign Language interpretation. This lack of accessibility has led to unequal access to critical services for millions of Americans such as voter registration, filing taxes, and accessing vital records.

The Department of Justice is advancing a proposed rule to strengthen web and mobile app access for people with disabilities. This rule will not only improve access for people with disabilities, but it will also simplify how public entities – primarily state and local governments – can meet their existing ADA obligations.

As state and local governments continue to move more of their programs and activities online, ensuring that people with disabilities have equal access to these same services is essential. When websites and mobile apps are not accessible, they can be difficult or even impossible to use. This can stop those with disabilities from easily accessing important government services and programs that others can quickly obtain.

So what does this mean to us here in community television? Be prepared!!! As I mentioned above, those with disabilities could not understand the video messages due to the lack of captioning. The Biden-Harris Administration along with the DOJ, wants equal access for all!!!

The DOJ has made it clear that all Government proceedings, ie. council meetings, board of education meetings, and other such events, will most likely need closed captioning. So we will all need to start planning accordingly, in case the need arises for us to comply. And if this news isn't enough for you to clearly see our future path, please continue.

Senator Markey of Massachusetts and Representative Anna Eshoo of California have reintroduced the Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility (CVTA) Act on July 25, 2023. S2494/HR 4858

This bill updates the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA) which had updated federal communications law to increase the access of persons with disabilities to modern communications.

<https://eshoo.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-eshoo-sen-markey-reintroduce-cvta-make-communication-technologies>

From NATOA (National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors):

- CVTA improves and expands closed captioning and audio description standards for television programming and online video streaming platforms to ensure people with disabilities have equitable access to the wide range of programming available to the general public.
- Update current requirements to ensure viewers can easily activate and select preferred settings for closed captions and audio description on their video programming devices, such as televisions, smart phones, laptops, and tablets.
- Improve access to video conferencing platforms for people with disabilities.
- Ensure people with disabilities have equitable access to 9-1-1 emergency services.
- Empowers the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure accessibility regulations keep pace with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and augmented or virtual reality platforms.

So as stated above, the writing is boldly on the wall. We may need to start preparing for closed captioning whether we are ready for it or not! More to come on this as things progress with the CVTA bill and the DOJ proposed rule.

In other news from the FCC: Chairwoman Rosenworcel proposes national goal of 100% access to affordable broadband.

Also Proposes to Increase Minimum Speed Standard to 100/20 Mbps & Set Gigabit Future Goal

WASHINGTON, July 25, 2023—FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel recently shared with her colleagues an updated Notice of Inquiry that would kick off the agency's evaluation of the state of broadband across the country, as required by Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act. Chairwoman Rosenworcel proposes that the Commission consider several crucial characteristics of broadband deployment, including affordability, adoption, availability, and equitable access, when determining whether broadband is being deployed in a reasonable and timely fashion to "all Americans."

"In today's world, everyone needs access to affordable, high-speed internet, no exceptions," said Chairwoman Rosenworcel. "It's time to connect everyone, everywhere. Anything short of 100% is just not good enough."

In addition to focusing on a universal service standard, the Notice of Inquiry proposes to increase the national fixed broadband standard to 100 megabits per second for download and 20 megabits per second for upload, and discusses a range of evidence supporting this standard, including the requirements for new networks funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The FCC previously set the broadband standard at 25/3 Mbps in 2015 and has not updated it since. The Notice of Inquiry proposes to set a separate national goal of 1 Gbps/500 Mbps for the future.



PEG Media Changed My Life

A long time ago, in 1990, I lived as a young man in my twenties who didn't know what to do career-wise. I wasn't affluent, drove a really beat-up car, lived in my mom's basement, and fixed electronic equipment on the side. I had the potential of youth, although like many twenty-somethings, I didn't even realize that until later. I applied for the FBI as a communication specialist but didn't take the job once it was offered. It wasn't for me. I wanted to help build the future of America's energy and was hoping to work on the superconducting supercollider project in Texas, which promised to be the basis of fusion reaction technology.



In 1991, as a favor to the Mayor of Edison, Sam Convery, I recorded a segment for a PEG TV Show, using archaic video equipment. The show was produced by a young David Garb, who worked for TKR Cable Company. It was a short segment that told the story of a local artist that did artwork using soda cans. Not the type of segment that any of the mainstream channels would bother with. But at the time, PEG and Public Access stations were the true social media in town. David Garb was very kind to me and said, "You're pretty good at this, why don't you make this your career?" In an almost Forrest Gump kind of way, I gave it some thought and said, "Okay." I started to find a direction and opportunities in life that I never imagined. It was people like his co-worker, Doug Gist, his wife Debbie Gist of PCTC, together with Peter and Leo, then Sandy and Cindy of East Brunswick, Lee Beckerman of Woodbridge, and many others about which I could write many other stories. And volunteers like Herb Sudzin, Carl Sylvester, George RED Ellis, Eric and Chris Rasmussen, Mirjana Pekovic, Stephanie Gibbons, and last but certainly not least, Richard Desimone.

The people mentioned and many more helped me, and we helped each other.

We shared equipment and resources and even worked for free, spending our own money without thought of reward to cover parades and create shows. Radio Shack, Tops Appliances, and Comp USA were where my money went because the towns weren't eager to spend any money. Plus, when we needed something, such as a device, video tape, a connector, 100 feet of Video cable... we needed it at the moment and not weeks later after three quotes and the lowest bidder was provided. The towns loved the coverage but didn't want to pay or understand what was required. Funny how situations haven't changed over time. Nil novum in Latin.

PEG and Public Access shows were no-budget magical moments that told the stories local people truly cared about from Council Meetings to local festivals and ribbon-cuttings. There was no social media as we know it today -- there was no YouTube with technology such as cell phones that could record video and audio. We did this with videotape and the wiring required to put the TV shows together, which looked like experiments in the basement of a mad scientist. To edit a council meeting sometimes would cost over \$1,000 at a company called Video Corporation of America in Somerset, NJ. I learned editing by watching other editors. Spending that kind of money convinced the Edison government to eventually invest in their own video equipment. In 1993, I started doing videos for Edison's Fire Department. I was loaned a fire suit and a red helmet to distinguish me from the other training firefighters so I could go into the training buildings of the Middlesex County Fire Academy. I also did videos for the Edison Police Department such as SWAT ERT training, council meetings, parades, and events of all types.

In early 1994, George Spadaro became Mayor of Edison. Hewas supportive of the operation, and started funding it more. During his first month in office, newly elected President Clinton visited Edison.



In March of 1994, after a long day that ended recording a council meeting at almost 11:00 p.m., I started driving away from the Edison municipal building in my 1966 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme, and in the rearview mirror, I noticed the sky turned orange. It took me a while to realize it was a giant fire not far away. I drove back to the building, got a Panasonic AG-455 super VHS camcorder, and drove to the site. This was later known as the Durham Woods explosion, which was caused by the rupture of the Texas Eastern Pipeline. Because of my fire suit and minor training, I was the only

professional camera person allowed to enter and record the catastrophe. I provided the footage free of charge to the networks. I was offered money for the footage, but my response was, "I can't profit from a tragedy." My friend who owned a recording studio, Tony Bongiovi, half-jokingly called me an idiot for that, yet he soon got me to do some work on Late Night with David Letterman (The number one late-night talk show at the time) as well as do forensic work on the OJ Simpson trial for famous attorney F Lee Bailey. Tony owned Power Station Recording Studios, funded Jon Bon Jovi's career, and produced many other artists. He became my mentor. I started doing freelance work, getting paid really good money during the day as an editor for Prudential television, and still working my full-time job as the station manager of Edison TV. Clocking 90 and 100-

hour work weeks was common, and I loved every moment. I admit that sometimes the people that I worked with were hard to work for, but the job itself was amazing. My own brother, Fabio, a Marine and Combat Videographer, joined me and worked full time for a while in Edison with me. But my youth and arrogance were too much for him, so he continued on a different path. It is still one of the biggest regrets of my life because there is no one more loyal than him. Now he is a firefighter in Hoboken, and who knows how many lives he saved and helped. The universe has a funny way of putting different paths and choices in front of us.

It was around the year 2000 that JAG was formed.

I was invited by Rich Desimone to become one of the founding member TV stations, and without hesitation, I said yes. I didn't ask for permission from the Edison Township Administration because I knew that was going to delay things. Sometimes it is better to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission. It was a few years after that that this group called JAG grew, and when Verizon tried to get a bill passed that would defund the franchise fees for the PEG access TV stations, it was because of JAG that many mayors came to the state house to protest, and that line of legislation was removed from the proposed bill.



Fast forward to the year 2020, and during the pandemic, while a lot of people were staying home, my video production team and I were providing coverage to mayors, governors, CDC officials, etc. It was interesting being on the front line of coverage. Sometimes it's not good to have a good memory, because I saw how the narrative changed from trying to protect the people to trying to control the people, and suppress information that wasn't in the political and economic agenda. It seemed hardly anyone wanted to speak about natural immunity to SARS COVID-19, although many knew it to be very effective. The narrative one day said that masks were only reserved for frontline workers,

and then suddenly everyone had to wear them. Then social distancing became obligatory. Being the PEG manager of several TV stations, I saw the difference between mainstream coverage and the local coverage where mayors wanted to save local lives and they didn't have a hidden agenda. Mayor Baraka of Newark, Mayor Atkins of Roselle, and subsequently Mayor Shaw, Mayor Mahr of Fanwood, and Mayor Lanky of Edison.... I saw how they cared and depended on their PEG Channels to help save their constituents. They cared.

As we are in the middle of the year 2023, PEG stations need to evolve, so they don't become extinct. Social media, in general, has become unsocial. Local stories are not being told assuming that because anyone with a Facebook account can tell their story, it should be enough, but it isn't. YouTube and Facebook can suppress any videos posted and find any reason to do so. It doesn't matter if it's monetized content or not. We must keep PEG alive. Bring the stories to people, show the council, zoning, planning, library board meetings, and talk about your very local road closures or floods. Be prepared for the next tragedy or pandemic. I hope it never does, but it always is a question of when more than if.

With traditional newspapers gone, we are the ones that can truly inform the public, not some TikToker dancing or videos about cats. We are Public, we are Educational, and we are Government storytellers. We have to keep those three letters alive and well in media.

Towards the end of the pandemic, I started a new platform called NJGOVTV, that does not have censorship because unfortunately, cable companies again are trying to find ways of defunding us, hence making us extinct. I am looking for ways to fund the NJGOVTV platform by adding special features so as to not burden municipalities and still keep us alive and relevant without commercial advertising. I will have a booth at this year's NJLM in Atlantic City where I will showcase the platform.

The end of PEG Stations as part of Cable TV is nigh.

This offers us an opportunity to grow bigger, better, and stronger. We need to keep telling these stories and find different places to distribute them. And do it better. From the creation of shows like Dick Craig's "Not Just Rock and Roll", "On the Loose", and "Uncle Floyd's Show" all the way up to award-winning coverage of Council Meetings and documentaries, content creators must band together and not give up telling the stories that really matter to us, the locals in our respective communities.

I will finish this article with a final anecdote. I spoke to two Assemblymen, and I heard of bills they are proposing to make our lives better, but after their presentations, they said to me privately that getting mainstream coverage is almost impossible. This tells me that, as JAG stations, we need to up our game and cover more things and not fall into complacency and just do the minimum. Station Managers: If you're too tired to do this, then recruit some young blood... get some volunteers who will eventually become paid full-timers, but don't let the fire of your PEG station go out. Remember what it was like when you started doing this. We need to pass that flame to new generations or your efforts will have no legacy.

This year 2023, for the first time, I was able to sponsor a little bit of the JAG conference. It was a small way to say thank you to all of you. So here I reiterate: thank you members of JAG for safeguarding PEG Stations.

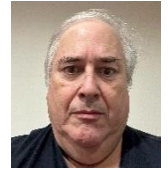


How Oakland, New Jersey became Altice's test case for HD broadcast service

Members Spotlight

By Mark Albala, Vice Chairman, TV Committee, Oakland, New Jersey

Many of you do not know that the borough of Oakland was the test case for Altice's HD service for municipal broadcasts. The purpose of this article is to present the two-year journey of the dedicated team of volunteers, who partnered with Oakland's elected officials and ultimately obtained permission from Altice to broadcast HD quality municipal coverage over Altice.



While municipal broadcast service was available via Oakland TV historically, our mission to upgrade our broadcast to HD quality began in 2020 with the first rollout of HD quality service being achieved over Verizon FiOS in June 2021 and enabling HD broadcast of YouTube and LocalBTV streaming services shortly thereafter. But it was not until November 2022 that broadcast service was upgraded to HD on Altice's cable network.



Oakland TV booth equipment racks, August 1

This journey was taken because, as Ryan Schwerfeger, Chairman of the Oakland Communications Commission said, "In this current day, I think all local access channels would agree that HD should be the minimum broadcast quality going out to the public. The linchpin for driving this decision was complaints from residents about the lackluster quality of municipal broadcasts available on the cable carrier covering the municipality of Oakland, namely Altice. While I am grateful that the effort required to garner assistance from Verizon to help the community broadcast in HD was not herculean, that effort was not as straightforward when discussing our journey with Altice. I am proud of our volunteers' patience, persistence, and perseverance to see this to fruition, in addition to the elected officials that helped lead the charge in our quest."

Grant Van Eck, council member of the borough of Oakland stated, "I am overjoyed for the community to finally have the Altice community access channel broadcasting at the industry standard of high definition. It was a vision I did my best to give leadership to in my capacity as an elected representative of the residents in Oakland. Without going into details, I can say it was quite a turbulent journey, but the Communications Commission and TV committee volunteer team were unwavering in their commitment to see this stretch goal come to fruition. As the great President Calvin Coolidge intelligently said, "Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." The team did just that, united for the benefit of our local audience, and the result is truly fantastic!"

Jim Barry, Chairman of the TV Committee stated, "It was astonishing to observe the dogged determination of my colleagues partnered with elected officials to ultimately navigate the bureaucracy from the carriers and finally complete our transition to HD by delivering the much-needed upgrade of service carried by Altice."

The key to obtaining Altice's granting authority for Oakland, NJ to broadcast municipal coverage in HD ultimately came down to the persistence demonstrated by the members of the TV committee and the elected council members who joined together to lead this important charge. "The Borough is grateful for Altice USA's pilot program for our local Access Television Channel", said Oakland Mayor Linda H. Schwager. "We hope that the switch to HD continues to increase our viewership and promote community involvement".



Oakland TV committee members taping the Memorial Day Parade 2023

The persistence is easily demonstrated through the following:

- Many senior citizens and others within the community, who are subscribers to Altice for cable television, raised concerns that the quality of the signal and the poor mono audio of the signal made it virtually unwatchable. Many of the senior members of our community who raised these concerns do not have access to the other venues in which the municipal broadcasts are made available.
- The committee enlisted the assistance of our town liaison, Grant Van Eck, who was instrumental through the entire two-year journey. Grant initiated the council resolution requesting Altice to enhance the video made available to the community to HD broadcast service. This resolution was passed twice because of the elapsed time required to enable HD service.
- The Communications Commission garnered the participation of Robert Auth, one of our two state representatives serving Oakland, New Jersey.
- The Communications Commission made it a point to consistently reach out to Altice to continually stress the importance of this HD service to the Oakland community at-large.
- The assistance of the Jersey Access Group was obtained after challenges garnering Verizon's agreement to broadcast in HD. We used a properly worded request similar to the one utilized in Oradell, New Jersey as provided by Jersey Access Group members to request HD service broadcast over Verizon FIOS, which ultimately was successful. While provisioning HD service from Verizon was likely a contributing factor in Altice's agreement to grant HD service, there is no way to assess the impact Verizon's decision to provision HD service to Oakland had on Altice's decision.
- The availability of an all-fiber network within Oakland. Altice stated that having a fiber backbone was a prerequisite for considering an upgrade to HD service. While Altice has accelerated this upgrading of their fiber broadband network to their full complement of serviced communities, a request for HD service will only be successful in communities where Altice has upgraded their network to fiber. Because Altice is physically located in the Oakland Industrial Park, Oakland, New Jersey was included in the earlier phases of the Altice's strategic rollout of their all-fiber broadband network.
- According to Ryan Schwertfeger, the Chair of the Oakland Communications Commission, "While I'm sure we were an easy choice for Altice for Oakland to serve as the test community for broadcasting HD, what it really came down to was out concerted and continued pressure that led to Altice's decision to enable Oakland's municipal broadcast in the HD roster of channels."



*Oakland TV Committee taping the Council Meeting,
February, 2023*

The fact that we had been able to broadcast HD over Verizon and other venues within Oakland raised complaints that marginalized consumers of Altice's service because others had HD available to them, which helped fuel our mission to upgrade all broadcast venues to HD. JAG was instrumental in wording our request to Verizon properly so that we could deliver HD to the other cable subscribers of Oakland (Verizon FiOS), which, once enabled, added fuel to the mission for an Altice HD broadcast.

In closing, Ryan mentioned how we have learned a lot from other communities within JAG family of communities who helped us envision the many ways we could improve the service we provide to the community. Per Ryan, "I can't tell you how proud I felt walking around this past conference and hearing Oakland's name being dropped by a few people as a community doing something right or being ahead of the curve on the topic. I hope we can keep our momentum going with our all-volunteer crew and I hope we can help all the JAG member communities out like all of you have helped our station."





JAG General Meeting

Sept. 27, 2023 @ 12:00pm

For more information and access to the meeting email JAGinfo@jagonline.org

JERSEY ACCESS GROUP

[facebook.com/pegtv](https://facebook.com/pegvtv) linkedin.com/company/jersey-access-group
instagram.com/jersey_access_group

New Content on JAG YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXLftoB5ZC4>

Piscataway Summer Concert Tequila Rose – PCTV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1ldgPuYROU>

American Russian Ballet - Fair Lawn TV

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAHC_QD-BYc

2023 Mayor's Summer Concert: "Gypsy" Fleetwood Mac Tribute – WoodbridgeTV

Do not forget to check out our YouTube channel. Have something you want on our YouTube channel?
Send a link to dseidel@piscatawaynj.org 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. <https://jagonline.org/jag-award-winners/>

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

Managers Roundtable 2023 Schedule

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

Thursday, November 9th at 2pm: TBA

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: bduthaler@jagonline.org

Organizational Members



Jersey Access Group, PO Box 164, Metuchen, New Jersey 08840

www.jagonline.org JAGinfo@jagonline.org

New Jersey Chapter of NATOA, Organizational Member of the ACM, and New Jersey League of Municipalities Affiliate
Editor-in-Chief: Rich Desimone Social Media Manager Doug Seidel Feature Editors: Stephanie Gibbons & Cindy Hahn
Staff: Bob Duthaler, Geoffery Belinfante, Dave Garb