

Trustees 2024

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General Meeting Schedule 2024-25

Sept. 25- LIVE @ Varto Technologies
 Presentation- Varto
 Oct. 30- TBA
 Presentation- TBA
 Dec. 4- TBA
 Presentation- TBA
 Jan. 29, 2025- TBA
 Reorganization
 Presentation- TBA
 Feb. 26- LIVE-TBA
 Presentation- TelVue
 Mar. 26- TBA
 Presentation- TBA
 Apr. 30- LIVE TBA
 Presentation- DeSisti
 May 14- @ Crown Plaza, Edison
 JAG Conference
 Presentation- TBA
 Jun. 25- TBA
 Presentation- TBA

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President's Message

Bob Duthaler



Face to Face ... Getting Back Together Again.

You listened and we heard. After polling our membership and receiving emails from some others, a majority of our members are looking to meet once again in person, having lunch with vendor presentations, and at different locations. With that thought in mind, several stations have already volunteered to host meetings at their location, wanting to show off their operations, station and studio upgrades.

What was once the norm, JAG general membership meetings were always held in person with different stations taking a turn hosting in which both lunch and a vendor presentation were part of the meeting. COVID 19 changed all that, cancelling all face-to-face meetings and making way for virtual participation via Zoom. Over the course of this year, we have seen the amount of Zoom participants dwindle during virtual meetings and an increase of member participation at the limited in person meetings. With everyone participating in numerous online meetings and events, it seems that "Zoom Fatigue" is setting in.

Just like everything else, the success of this relies heavy on member participation. JAG has always been a networking and social organization at its core. To continue that tradition, we will once again count on our membership to show support for the organization and come out in full force during our transition back to normal. The board and all the supporting committees will endeavor to make each meeting a unique experience, a valued educational experience and a chance for members to network and exchange ideas.

Coming off our summer hiatus, JAG will begin to reestablish the process of having live, in-person meetings. Our next meeting is scheduled for: Wednesday, September 25th at Varto Technologies in East Rutherford. Lunch will begin at 11:30am followed by the meeting kicking off at noon. There will be a vendor presentation (TBA) along with a tour of Varto Technologies studio and control room. Come for the food and company, stay for the educational experience. Please come prepared to share your questions, thoughts and insights with other JAG members during the meeting's membership Q&A. We urge all JAG members to extend this invitation to all their staff, volunteers and advisory board members. See everyone in September!



As the summer slowly winds down, movement in the Capitol is in full swing and the Legislative Committee is working hard to stay on top of the latest developments.



From NATOA:

A few weeks ago the FCC released two items that deal with closed captioning. The first one, Docket No. 12-108, requires device manufacturers and multichannel video programming distributors (MVPD) to make closed captioning display settings “readily accessible” to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The second one, Docket No. 05-231, will be of great importance to PEG operators. This proposal would exempt certain video programming providers from its closed captioning registration and certification requirements if they provide programming to public, educational, and governmental access channels (PEG) or to non-broadcast networks for distribution by a cable operator or other MVPD if the PEG channels or the network are exempt from or have certified compliance with the captioning rules.

Nearly 8 years ago, the Alliance for Community Media (ACM) filed a petition in this matter requesting that the closed captioning registration and certification requirements be waived for program producers that provide programs exclusively over PEG channels. At that time, NATOA and a number of communities and access organizations supported ACM's petition.

ACM Rational in 2016: *Although PEG programming is not categorically exempt from captioning, ACM states that the vast majority of PEG channels fall within one or more of the Commission’s closed captioning exemption categories, e.g., because the channel produces annual revenue less than \$3,000,000. Therefore, ACM reasons, requiring PEG programmers to register and certify would be “needless” if they are exclusively distributing programs on channels that are exempt from captioning under the Commission’s rules. According to ACM, more than 1.2 million volunteers and more than 250,000 community groups provide PEG programming in local communities across the United States. These include “ordinary citizens and organizations—Cub Scouts, gospel choirs, political candidates, and community groups of every possible type.” Requiring each PEG program producer to register and certify compliance for its video programming on channels that are themselves exempt, ACM argues, would impose a significant and unnecessary burden on such programmers and needlessly clutter the Commission’s registration system.*

The FCC published a Final Rule in the Federal Register on August 23, 2016 that imposed new reporting requirements on public, educational and governmental access programming with respect to the closed captioning of video programming on television. These obligations included:

- (1) New requirements to certify compliance with or exemption from the FCC’s closed captioning rules;
- (2) Introduction of a “burden-shifting” model for the resolution of complaints about closed captioning; and
- (3) Introduction of a new “Video Programmer Registration” system in which PEG access stations will have to provide contact information into the FCC’s website.

The Alliance for Community Media, the national association of PEG programmers and stations, filed a *Petition for Waiver* from the new reporting rules for all PEG access programmers. The waiver sought for video programming producers would exempt programmers that are not PEG access stations from both the compliance certification and the registration requirement. The petition for waiver didn't seek to change compliance certification and registration requirements for PEG stations so much as it is seeking an exemption for those who produce.

You can read the recent Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Closed Captioning of Video Programming Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Petition, CG Docket No#: 05-231, at: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-24-80A1.pdf>.

Exactly what this means to PEG if this decision passes is still to be determined. There is still the DOJ's ruling from this past April that states we all will need to be captioning in the very near future. So be ready for a flood of possibilities.

In the meantime, at the JAG conference this past May, we held a session on the DOJ's ruling Titled: [ADA Compliance-Updates on the DOJ Rulings and Closed Captioning for Municipal Websites and PEG Channels](#). It relates what we must start preparing for in the very near future. Either way it turns out, start budgeting for it **now!**

From the NTIA - National Telecommunications and Information Administration:

The NTIA Notice of Funding Opportunity (**NOFO**) on the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program (DECGP) is out!

Congress and President Biden have designated around \$90 billion in funding—spread across a plethora of initiatives through the Infrastructure Act (IIJA) and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) — to close the digital divide. On July 24, the federal government rolled out one of those programs. NTIA announced that more than \$910 million is now available under the Digital Equity Act's Competitive Grant Program which is part of Biden's "Internet for All" initiative.

From NATOA:

NATOA believes that the NTIA is interested in multi-jurisdictional, multi-state projects. Our member communities and PEG access centers are uniquely positioned to submit a coalition grant application. The mission of our PEG operations and cable departments has always been to outreach to the disenfranchised. PEG centers already provide training and programming for Seniors, Veterans, People Living with Disabilities, rural residents, low-income residents, ethnic and linguistic minorities. Our collective experience as local Public Educational and Government (PEG) Access organizations and local government cable programs has us uniquely qualified to address the needs of the unserved and under-served in our communities. We've been doing it for decades for cable and broadband! PEG centers are uniquely positioned to offer Digital Equity & Inclusion activities for "Covered Populations."

Who are considered "Covered Populations"?

As defined in Section I.C. of the **NOFO**, Covered Populations are:

1. Individuals who live in covered households (<=150% of poverty).
2. Aging individuals (60 and above).
3. Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility.
4. Veterans.
5. Individuals with disabilities.
6. Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners; and have low levels of literacy.
7. Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group.
8. Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

The Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program is a \$1.25 billion grant program for five years to implement digital equity projects. [Building Your Digital Equity Capacity](#). Indeed, those whom the Digital Equity Act describes as Covered Populations are what we know to be our constituents, our audience.

We know that many PEG centers already pursue training opportunities for their communities and offer their public access centers as training centers for a/v editing, digital programming production, online video and social media video production.

Don't look now, but you're already running a "public access computing center!" The alignment of your current mission to one that addresses digital Inclusion is a modest step forward. As part of a proposal you could add:

1. Training programs similar to OATS or TGH in participating communities
2. Video-delivered trainings
3. Government channel programming for outreach, assistance, etc.
4. All PEG channels – creation of video content
5. Grassroots outreach
6. Local government staff training as digital navigators
7. PEG centers as training as digital navigators
8. Local solutions are the best solutions
9. Covered populations
10. Target smaller communities, as well
11. A local replacement to the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

Because of the importance of this grant program and how it could help our individual communities, NATOA is putting forth a coalition to ask that a portion of this money go to PEG stations in need who meet any of the requirements. In order for you to be in consideration, NATOA has as created [Special Application, to be a part of this coalition](#).

This grant program has a fast deadline and if anyone is interested, you must act now. For more information on this grant opportunity please visit: [Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program](#). Remember, this grant program needs a quick turnaround for anyone is interested in attempting to acquire a portion of this grant. More information on this program will be coming to you shortly.

JAG (Jersey Access Group) constantly advocates, analyzes and addresses emerging issues in areas such as: local government communications and internet policy. JAG promotes, and preserves 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.



There has been a phenomenon throughout the United States with many municipalities reducing communication costs through the advocacy of a municipal broadband network. In 2024, Oakland, New Jersey joined the ranks of over 400 communities nationwide which have taken the initiative in managing the tax burden of residents for the necessary communications infrastructure by completing the implementation of the borough's private fiber broadband network.



While most communities engaging in this initiative are larger than Oakland, Oakland (like its brethren communities) has made the decision that enough is enough. Instead of pleading with internet service providers (ISPs) to better manage taxpayer expenses for the connectivity required, they have decided to invest in themselves. Several companies have emerged capable of assisting municipalities on this journey. Oakland selected Millennium Group which has helped Oakland turn an aspirational journey into reality.

This journey started almost six years ago, when Eric Kulmala, then an employee of Verizon and a council member of the community had the idea when he witnessed the complexities of installing some conduit needed for lighting the community's recreation fields. When this journey started six years ago as a way to reduce the costs to the community while enabling the increasing complexity of broadband communications—creating a private fiber broadband network was far from commonplace. The vision and dogged determination of the now mayor of Oakland, Eric Kulmala saw the availability of such a network brought on-line in 2024. Eric associates the vision and expertise afforded to the borough with the engaging Millenium Broadband Solutions to convert the vision into reality. As reported by Broadbandnow, only 47 communities nationwide have had the tenacity and discipline to successfully implement such a program and 16 states currently disallow such initiatives.

Jim Barry, Chairman of Oakland TV stated, "I'm glad the mayor and council had the vision to see this network through. It gives us tremendous capabilities to service the citizens of Oakland. There is great potential here for broadcasting Oakland's sporting venues and other events in real time for everyone wherever they are located".

While this initiative was tackled (similar to other municipalities) to control costs associated with the necessary increasing complexity and capabilities of internet connectivity, the accessibility of such a broadband network opens many capabilities with which the borough can enlighten it's residents through Oakland TV. Oakland TV is operated by the borough and is managed through the Oakland Communications Commission as an all-volunteer TV broadcast facility.

Mark Albala, the Vice Chairman of Oakland TV, has begun researching and costing for possible ways to devise a remote broadcasting studio. This studio might consist of a control board and cameras powered by the ethernet connectivity that is connected directly to the fiber network. Without the existence of this private fiber network, the cost of implementing broadcasting capabilities to any of the municipal facilities in which events are held was quite high and needed dedicated facilities for each of these locations.

The advent of this broadband network facilitates the ability to have a relocatable TV broadcasting studio that can be set up at any of these sites in a couple of hours at a fraction of the cost. It requires only one or two relocatable studios instead of one dedicated to each location. To date, the locations that are candidates for such broadcasting capabilities are the senior center, the library, the schools within town, the recreation fields and other venues with viability. Albala stated, "As long as the network is available at the site, we can broadcast with

no additional expenditure once the relocatable broadcasting studio is acquired.” Mark had the idea of extending our recording and broadcasting solutions through ideas communicated by sites like ChurchFront, which provides insight into low cost setups for religious broadcasting needs. Mark has begun discussions with a support partner of Oakland TV, OutreachFX, who validated the viability of this approach and validated the ability to greatly reduce the costs associated with enabling remote broadcasting as a result of the broadband fiber network.

As of this writing, Jim Barry, the Chairman of Oakland TV, has already begun discussions with the opportunity for sports broadcasting within the town. Jim said, “We have received several quotes to extend our broadcasting capabilities starting with the senior center. The expense of live broadcasting within town was proving to be significant at each location that we wanted to include as a potential broadcasting venue. This new networking capability changes everything.”

“While there is still much work to be done and aspects to investigate, Mayor Kulmala has always been forward thinking, practical and innovative in his efforts to move Oakland into the 21st century while at the same time, looking for ways to save the Borough money and increase services for residents,” said Oakland Communications Chairman Ryan Schwertfeger. “Use by Oakland TV was not the initial intended use or goal for this project, but we are grateful that we will be able to benefit from this new fiber loop in our efforts to expand our types of programming, increase transparency in government, and do so while being fiscally responsible. I personally want to thank the Mayor for thinking of this project, persisting to see this project through and thinking of the OCC and the Television Committee while unleashing the fiber loop's full potential.”



The newly implemented fiber network was made possible by a significant amount of focus and the expertise of Millenium Broadband Solutions. It provides 10 Gigabit connectivity at a greatly reduced cost to the community at all locations included in the municipal network.



JAG General Meeting

September 26, 2024 @ 12:00pm, at Varto Technologies, Lunch at 11:30am

Presentation: Yervant Keshishian, Sales Engineer, Authorized Trainer & Technical Director,
Varto Technologies

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

Don't forget to check out our YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/@jagjerseyaccessgroup>

Have something you want on our YouTube channel? Send a link to dseidel@piscatawaynj.org for review.

The JAG Job Board is currently being populated with opportunities. New password needed after June 1.
Contact Linda Besink lbesink@gmail.com for access

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>

EVENT SCHEDULE 2024

Oct. 30th at 12pm: General Meeting (TBA) Presentation scheduled TBA

Dec. 4th at 12pm: General Meeting (TBA) Presentation scheduled TBA

Organizational Members



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