

### Trustees 2025

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## President's Message

Bob Duthaler, President of Jersey Access Group



### Preparing for the new year.

JAG will be voting for three board positions at the general meeting Wednesday, December 3. Stephanie Gibbons and Rick Gearhart will not seek reelection. Don Smith will once again be running. Nominations are:

- **Don Smith**, Station Manager, Cranford TV 35
- **Craig Yetsko**, Station Manager, North Brunswick TV
- **Open seat**

Nominations will be accepted at the general meeting, December 3.

The election will be held when the nominations are closed.

In the event there are more nominations than seats available a ballot will be sent to all members.

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### General Meeting Schedule 2025-26

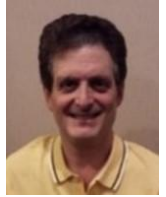
Dec. 3 – Woodbridge TV  
 Presentation – Switchboard  
 Jan. 28, 2026 – Zoom Meeting  
 Reorganization  
 Presentation – TBA  
 Feb. 25 – Bloomfield TV  
 Presentation – TelVue  
 Mar. 25 – Zoom Meeting  
 Presentation – TBA  
 Apr. 30 – Cranford TV  
 Presentation – DeSisti Lighting  
 May 13 and 14 – Location TBA  
 JAG Conference & JAG Awards  
 Jun. 24 – Zoom Meeting  
 Presentation – TBA  
 Sept. 30 – Varto Technologies  
 Presentation – TBA  
 Oct. 29 – Zoom Meeting  
 Presentation - TBA

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*The Jersey Access Group has represented the interests of municipal, educational, and community television for 25 years. Our efforts on behalf of our members have never been more important. JAG's Legislative Committee has kept a watchful eye on bills—both nationally and statewide—that include potential issues for JAG members, their communities, and their operations.*



## A Recap from the JAG General Meeting on October 29, 2025

### Special Section Dedicated to ADA Title II Web and Mobility Access Compliance to WCAG 2.1 Level AA Rules

On October 29th, the Jersey Access Group broke away from our normal general meeting and focused on the ADA requirements that all of us will most likely need to start providing. The following is important information from the meeting:

- Any video on government websites (or anywhere on the web) must have closed captioning, whether it's VOD or live streaming.
- Videos (except for live streamed) also need audio descriptions.
- This must be accomplished by April 26, 2026, for communities with more than 50,000 residents and by April 26th, 2027, for communities with less than 50,000 residents.

### From Mike Wassenaar, President-Alliance for Community Media (ACM)

- Certain rules about communication for state and local governments were a part of the DOJ order that occurred in 2024. The ADA didn't change, but responsibilities that nonprofits and local governments have to the public is being clarified. This is really more about a quality issue as opposed to a yes or no question.
- Community media must provide effective communication for the community based upon what people who need accommodations need. For example, captioning will not work for someone who is illiterate or for American Sign Language speakers. Captioning alone wouldn't meet their needs.
- This ruling came up with captioning as sort of a uniform quality standard for video, particularly to be able to meet as many needs as possible in a community.
- There's a private right of action by individuals under ADA. State or local government can be sued for not actually complying with ADA and not trying to examine the standards. Government entities must make the best effort to figure out how it can provide these services in the community.
- Get accurate competitive quotes to provide those services. Some budget decisions must be made about how to meet (or not meet) those standards. The local unit of government has to make a determination. it's an undue burden under ADA—regardless of whether or not it is a nonprofit contractor.
- We want to provide services for the entire community, make the best accommodation possible, and where things are uneconomical, state it responsibly. A local government can't shed its responsibility by subcontracting out services. It is the government entity's communication regardless of the site it is on—which could be anything from Facebook and YouTube to its own sort of streaming services that may be operating directly on its website.
- The good thing is that there's no requirement for backwards compatibility prior to the deadline. You don't have to go through 50 years of programming that you've got online, there's not a legal requirement to caption everything. Moving forward after the deadline you have to have a plan in place.
- If compliance presents an undue burden, local government is responsible for communicating that to the people under ADA.

- If your community has a disability rights commission, start thinking about them as a partner for providing these services. Also, State Human Rights and Disability Rights Commission will often have access to programming grants/awards or they could be your partner in advocating for money from the state specifically for these types of projects.
- Reach out to other colleagues here in New Jersey and across the country, because there are solutions that you can provide for your community as we move forward. There are a lot of people who are really interested in your success.

Mike Wassenaar and the ACM have also shared with us a slideshow [ACCESSIBILITY RULES EVERY PEG CHANNEL SHOULD UNDERSTAND](#) highlighting everything you need to know about these rules, as well as the following list of key takeaways to remember about disability access with your channels and services:

- You are probably exempt from FCC rules regarding captioning. ACM is recommending starting next July 1, you should list a point of contact for consumer questions to the FCC.
- If you provide captions, but they are not transmitted by a cable operator on your channels, tell the FCC as this is against the law. Email [dro@fcc.org](mailto:dro@fcc.org) or use the link <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/closed-captioning-television>
- You are NOT exempt from ADA requirements. They require all non-profits and local governments to assess the costs of providing effective communication for residents. Solutions must be based on what residents need. You may not be required to provide that service if it fundamentally changes what you do or it presents an undue economic burden. Guidelines are at <https://www.ada.gov/resources/effective-communication/>.
- Starting April 24, 2026, local governments serving more than 50K people must provide online communications that meet a minimum WCAG standard. This rule applies to all governments starting April 24, 2027. This includes captioning for live video online, and descriptive audio for pre-recorded video online. You should determine the costs for compliance with the new rule and plan either to meet the standards for your online presence or to make the case that compliance with one or more elements presents an undue burden. In either case, decision makers with local government need to be involved.
- Regardless of the Federal Government's enforcement of the ADA, these rules can be enforced through private legal action; local governments and non-profits would be subject to legal liability if they fail to act appropriately.
- Technology and pricing change; you should be prepared to assess costs for compliance regularly.

If you need more information, contact:

- Bob Duthaler, President, Jersey Access Group [bduthaler@jagonline.org](mailto:bduthaler@jagonline.org)
- Mike Wassenaar, President, Alliance for Community Media [mwassenaar@allcommunitymedia.org](mailto:mwassenaar@allcommunitymedia.org)
- David Garb, Legislative Chair, Jersey Access Group [davegarb@paps.net](mailto:davegarb@paps.net)



# Smarter Workflows for Community Stations: Switchboard Live's Year of Updates.

Rudy Ellis, President, Switchboard

Technology

Dear JAG members,

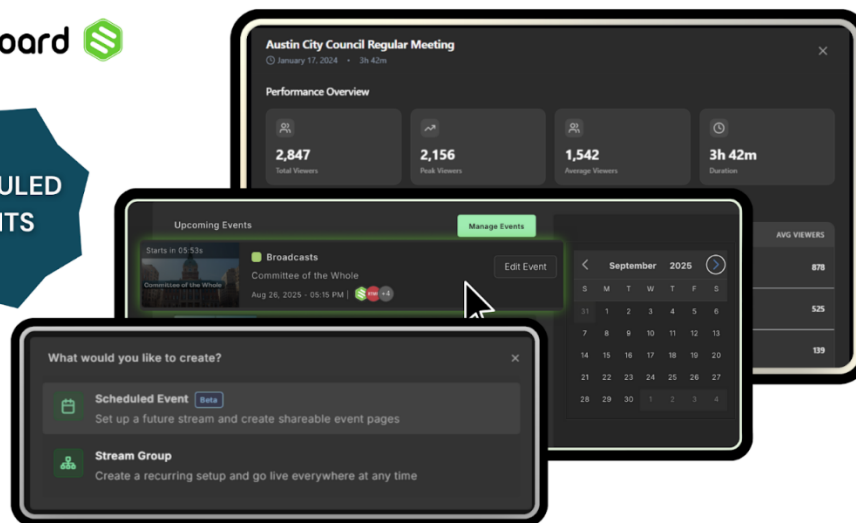
As we reflect on this past year, we want to speak directly to you: the PEG stations, city teams, and community media communicators who make local transparency possible every **single day**. At Switchboard Live, our mission has always been to simplify live streaming so you can focus on what matters most: keeping your communities informed, connected, and confident. This year, we've introduced several important updates to help you do just that:



**Scheduled Events** is the go-to tool to plan ahead with confidence. Whether it's a council meeting, a press conference, town hall, Friday night football game, or election night coverage, you can set up streams in advance and know they'll go live exactly when needed, to all the channels your audience regularly visits.

switchboard 

SCHEDULED  
EVENTS

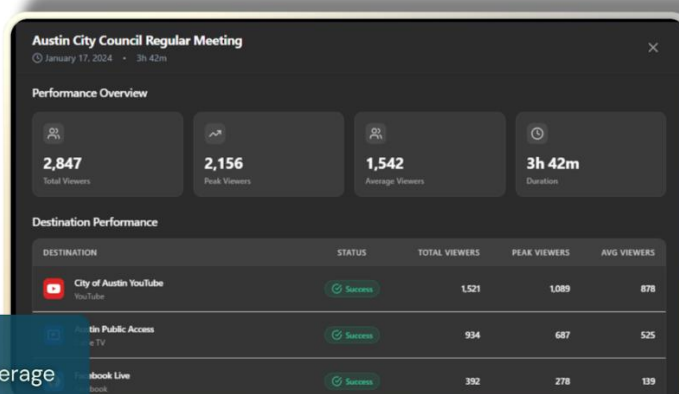


With **Analytics**, you can measure what matters. Track viewership across platforms, see which channels resonate most with residents, and use those insights to strengthen communication strategies.

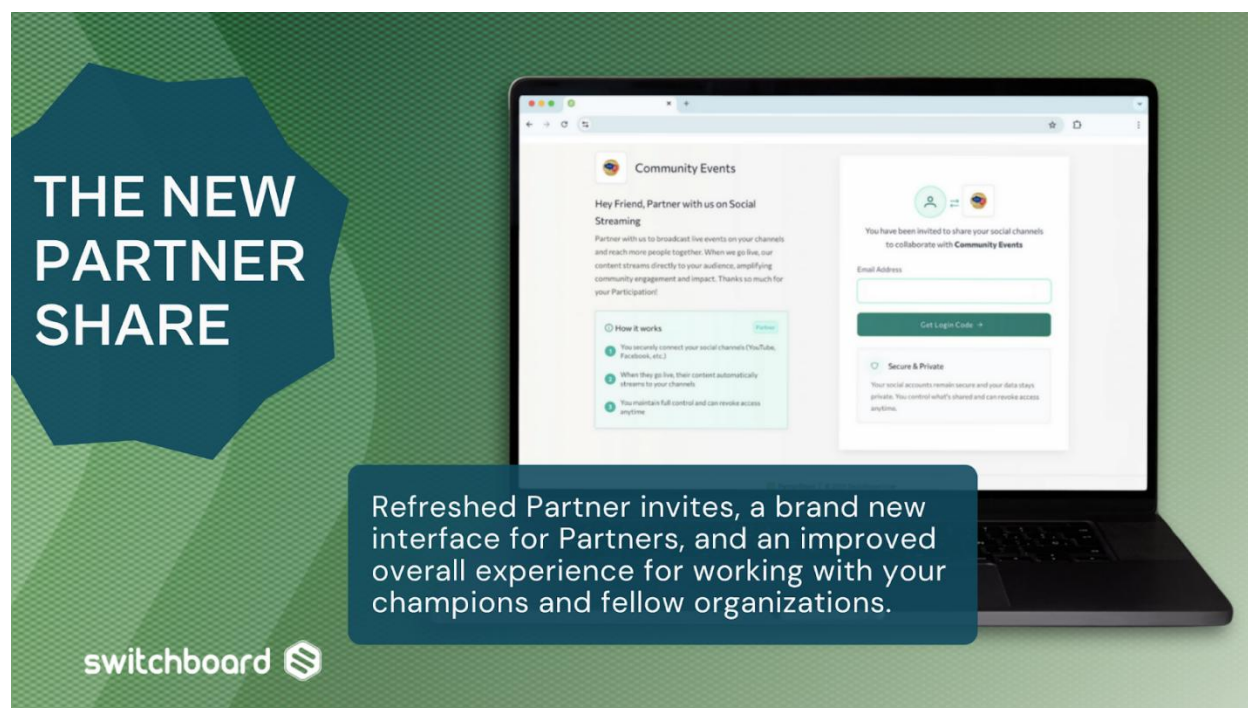
switchboard 

ANALYTICS  
DASHBOARD

At a glance stats for  
destination views, average  
viewers, and more.



And with the recent launch of **PartnerShare**, collaboration has never been easier. Emergencies or large, city-wide events often require coordination across agencies, departments, and community partners. PartnerShare lets you share livestreams directly with trusted partners, ensuring that critical information reaches residents across multiple platforms without adding complexity for your staff.



Together, these updates mean smoother workflows, stronger collaboration, and broader reach for local TV stations. They're built with your realities in mind: limited staff, tight budgets, and the need to do more with less while still delivering reliable, transparent communication.

### **Our Commitment to JAG**

Outside of these application improvements, we are also proud to have deepened our involvement with JAG this year. From attending the annual conference last May, to hosting two exclusive webinars on relevant topics to the community and being available as a resource on multi-streaming and public-sector communication when needed. Every conversation with you helps us improve. We're grateful for the chance to learn alongside such a dedicated community.

### **We're not stopping here**

On **December 3**, we'll be joining you in person for a special presentation to JAG members. We look forward to sharing more about these updates, answering your questions, and continuing the conversation about how live streaming can strengthen public trust and community connection.

Looking ahead, Switchboard Live remains committed to building tools that make live streaming easier, smarter, and more resilient for public sector teams. We're excited to continue this journey with JAG and look forward to another year of collaboration and innovation. Together, we'll keep building stronger connections and more transparent communities.

Remember, you can always reach out to us at [success@switchboard.live](mailto:success@switchboard.live) or directly at [ruby@switchboard.live](mailto:ruby@switchboard.live), we'll be happy to connect—it's what we're all about!





Community engagement is critical for local TV stations to remain relevant and valuable to their audiences in 2025. As people increasingly turn to diverse digital sources, local TV must deepen connections by creatively serving and involving their communities. The following are some strategic approaches designed to boost community engagement effectively and sustainably.



### Community-Centric Content Creation

Local TV stations should focus on producing content that reflects the identity and interests of their communities. This includes spotlighting local heroes, businesses, cultural events, and pressing local issues through human-interest stories and documentaries. By telling stories that resonate on a personal level, viewers feel recognized and develop loyalty toward the station, reinforcing their role as a vital community voice.

### Multi-Platform Interaction and Creator Economy

To engage audiences, especially younger demographics, stations must harness social media and emerging digital spaces actively. This includes not only distributing vertical video formats on TikTok and Instagram, but also experimenting with platforms like Twitch, Discord, and Reddit for unique community interactions. Collaborating with local influencers and content creators blends authentic voices with the station's brand, expanding reach and relevance beyond traditional broadcast viewers.



### Hybrid In-Person and Virtual Community Events

Bringing viewers together through events, both virtual and live, fosters personal connections that deepen engagement. Local TV can host workshops, studio tours, community forums, and celebration events that offer interactive experiences. Hybrid models—combining in-person and streaming options—ensure inclusivity, allowing broader participation irrespective of physical constraints.



### Transparent and Inclusive Communication

Stations should prioritize clear, consistent, and transparent communication with their communities. This means providing timely updates on local projects, news, and emergency alerts using a blend of channels such as newsletters, mobile alerts, social media, and the station's website. Offering multilingual content and partnering with community organizations helps reach diverse populations, enhancing trust and participation.

### Partnerships and Collaborations

Forging partnerships with local businesses, civic groups, educational institutions, and cultural organizations can enhance programming and community ties. Co-branded events, sponsorships, and cooperative content creation amplify local relevance and mutual promotion, driving higher engagement and shared value creation.

### Leveraging Technology and Data Insights

Utilizing data to understand audience preferences and testing content across platforms allows stations to tailor stories and initiatives that resonate. Exploring generative AI tools can create personalized content experiences and optimize engagement strategies, making outreach more efficient and responsive. Data-driven creativity ensures that programming remains aligned with evolving community interests.



### **Interactive Contests and Participation**

Audience participation can be increased by inviting viewers to contribute through contests, polls, and talent showcases. Encouraging user-generated content generates excitement and social sharing, reinforcing community bonds while increasing the station's digital footprint.



### **Audience Development and Membership Programs**

Long-term engagement can be cultivated through membership initiatives, subscriptions, or donation programs that offer exclusive content or community benefits. These programs build a dedicated viewer base invested in the station's success and ongoing impact in the community.

In conclusion, local TV's strength in 2025 lies in radical imagination and embracing a multi-dimensional approach to engagement. Combining compelling, community-focused content with innovative technology, transparent communication, and inclusive events positions local TV stations as indispensable hubs for connection, information, and civic pride. These strategies foster deeper community bonds and help local stations thrive in a converging media landscape.

This approach, rooted in listening to and serving the community, will enable local TV to grow relevance, reach, and impact in meaningful ways, driving sustained viewer loyalty and engagement in the coming years.



## JAG General Meeting

Dec. 3, 2025 @ 12:00pm, Lunch 11:30am

at The Woodbridge Chancels, Woodbridge Borough Hall

Presentation: Rudy Ellis, President, Switchboard



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](mailto:dseidel@piscatawaynj.org) for review.

The JAG Job Board is currently being populated with opportunities. New password is needed after June 1.

Contact Linda Besink [lbесink@gmail.com](mailto:lbесink@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 2026

January 28 at 12pm: General Meeting, ZOOM, Presentation scheduled TBA

February 25 at 12pm: General Meeting, Bloomfield TV, Presentation by TelVue- Jesse Lerman, President/CEO

March 25 at 12pm: General Meeting, ZOOM, Presentation scheduled TBA

April 29 at 12pm: General Meeting, Cranford TV, Presentation by DeSisti Lighting- Paul DeStefano, Sales

May 13 & 14: JAG Conference: A Technology Forum and Production/Management Symposium & JAG Awards

June 24 at 12pm: General Meeting, ZOOM, Presentation scheduled TBA

September 30 at 12pm: General Meeting, Varto Technologies, Presentation scheduled TBA

October 28 at 12pm: General Meeting, ZOOM, Presentation scheduled TBA

## Organizational Members



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

[www.jagonline.org](http://www.jagonline.org) [JAGinfo@jagonline.org](mailto: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 Editor: Betsy Robin Schwartz

Staff: Bob Duthaler, Geoffrey Belinfante, Dave Garb, John Morley

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