

Trustees 2026

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 Craig Yetsko
 Corresponding Sec. – 2028
 Dave Garb – 2027
 Don Smith – 2028
 Bob Duthaler – 2026
 Gina Forbes – 2028

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General Meeting Schedule 2025-26

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
 Dec. 2 – TBA
 Presentation – TBA

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President's Message

Doug Seidel, President of Jersey Access Group

Welcoming New Faces



That's right, we have a new JAG president. Our much exalted (and exhausted) KING of JAG has been dethroned. Please, join me in thanking Bob Duthaler for 18 years of exceptional service and leadership as JAG president. These are big shoes to fill, and I hope to live up to the examples set by our past leaders.

For those who don't know me, here's a quick introduction. I began my journey with JAG in

East Brunswick as a part-time employee at EBTU in 2011 while working as a freelancer in reality television. That journey continued at Newark TV and earned an Emmy nomination as field producer for *Lake Life* on the DIY network. Since 2018, I have been at Piscataway Community TV (PCTV) and love being able to come home at a normal time most days.



I started my involvement with JAG by helping to set up pipe and drape for the annual JAG Conference. Not long after starting at PCTV I also joined the JAG Conference Committee and helped set up social media accounts for the annual conference. Soon after, I joined the External Relations Committee taking over the day-to-day operations of our website. It feels like it was just yesterday that I attended my first Executive Board meeting to pitch some ideas for website updates. Then, the next thing I knew, I was being voted in as Vice President and Chair of the Leadership Development Committee. Looks like JAG's leadership development plan worked for at least one member.

As I step into the position of President of JAG, I want to thank the trustees for their confidence in me to lead the organization. Enough about me, we also have some new faces on our board of trustees and executive board officers. Here's the updates.

• New Board Members.

- Gina Forbes, station manager at Woodbridge TV
- Craig Yetsko, station manager at North Brunswick TV

• Board of Trustees. Don Smith was welcomed back to the board

• Executive board officers.

- Mark Albala is our new Vice President
- George Fairfield is Recording Secretary
- Craig Yetsko is Corresponding Secretary
- Linda Besink has agreed to continue as JAG Treasurer as well.

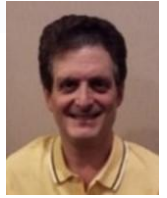
I look forward to working with this great group and hope you all greet them with enthusiasm at the next meeting. Also, with so many new faces on the board, it's an

exciting time to think about getting involved yourself. Each of our committees and sub committees are always looking for new members and we can always find a spot that matches your time constraints.





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 national and statewide—that include potential issues for JAG members, their communities, and their operations.



Revisiting ADA Title II Web and Mobility Access Compliance to the WCAG 2.1 Level AA Rules

To prepare us for the important ADA Compliance Rules that are quickly approaching (by which many of us will have to abide), we want to once again review some information offered during JAG's October General Meetings:

- Any video that is on government websites (or anywhere on the web) has to have closed captioning, whether it's VOD or live streaming.
- Videos (except for live streamed) are going to also need audio descriptions.
- This must be accomplished on April 26th, 2026, for communities with more than 50,000 residents and by April 26, 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 came forward, but even with the rulemaking that occurred in 2024, the ADA still didn't change in and of itself. But, the responsibilities that nonprofits and local governments have to the public are still maintained. This is really more about a quality issue as opposed to a yes or no question.

You must provide effective communication for the community based upon what people who need accommodations need. Captioning doesn't work with someone who's illiterate. What about people who are American Sign Language speakers? Would captioning 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. Below are some other key points:

- Beware that there's a private right of action by individuals under ADA. A state or local unit of government can be sued for not actually complying with ADA and not trying to examine the standards and trying to make a best effort to meet the standards for compliance. You have to make the best effort with your workflow to figure out how you could be providing these services in the community.
- Get accurate competitive quotes to provide those services and then you will need to make some budget decisions about how you can meet those standards or not. If it's an undue burden under ADA, the local unit of government has to make a determination. Regardless of whether or not you're a nonprofit contractor.
- We want to be able to provide services for the entire community, make the best accommodation possible, and where things are uneconomical, you state it responsibly. A local government can't shed their responsibility by subcontracting out services. It's their communication regardless of what site it's on and that could be anything from Facebook and YouTube to their own sort of streaming services that they may be operating directly on their website.
- 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. It's just moving forward past the deadline; you have to have a plan in place. If it presents an undue burden, there's a responsibility of local government to articulate that to the people under ADA.
- If your community has a disability rights commission, start thinking about them as a partner to be able to provide these types of services. Also, look at State Human Rights and Disability Rights Commission specifically, because they will often either have access programming grants or awards, or alternatively, 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're moving forward. And you've got a lot of folks 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](#), that highlights 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 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, so local governments and non-profits would be subject to legal liability if they fail to act appropriately.

Please contact us if you are in need of any further information.

Mike Wassenaar, President
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David Garb, Legislative Chair
Jersey Access Group
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Community media is vital for community communications and engagement

In a media landscape dominated by national headlines, streaming platforms, and fast-moving social media, it's easy to overlook the importance of local stories. Yet across New Jersey, community access television continues to play a vital role in keeping residents informed, connected, and engaged. Jersey Access Group (JAG) members stations and other local access stations serve as a reminder that the stories closest to home still matter deeply.



Community access television exists to give residents a voice. Unlike commercial networks, which are driven by ratings and advertising, access stations are built around participation and inclusion. They provide a platform for local events, municipal meetings, nonprofit initiatives, educational programming, cultural celebrations, and personal stories that reflect the diversity and character of New Jersey's communities. These are stories that may never reach a national audience, but they shape daily life for the people who live here.

One of the most important roles JAG plays is fostering civic awareness. By broadcasting town council meetings, school board discussions, and public forums, community access television helps residents stay informed about decisions that directly affect their neighborhoods. This transparency strengthens trust and encourages participation. When people can easily see how local government works, they are more likely to engage thoughtfully and responsibly in civic life.

Community access television also helps bridge gaps between generations and backgrounds. In New Jersey's diverse communities, access programming creates space for different voices to be heard respectfully. Seniors, students, educators, artists, volunteers, and first-time producers all have the opportunity to share perspectives and experiences. This inclusive approach helps build understanding and reinforces the idea that community is stronger when everyone has a seat at the table.

Education is another cornerstone of community access television. Many stations, including JAG, provide training and resources that allow residents to learn media production skills. From operating cameras to crafting meaningful stories, these opportunities empower individuals to move from passive viewers to active creators. For young people exploring career paths, adults developing new skills, or organizations seeking to share their mission, community access TV serves as a practical and welcoming learning environment.

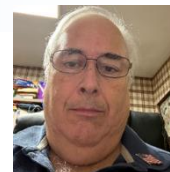
Preserving local history is yet another quiet but powerful function of community access television. Recorded interviews with longtime residents, coverage of community milestones, and documentation of cultural traditions create an archive that reflects New Jersey's evolving story. These recordings become valuable historical resources, capturing moments that might otherwise fade with time. In this way, community access stations help safeguard the shared memory of the towns they serve.

In our digital world, community access television complements online platforms rather than competing with them. While social media often prioritizes speed and popularity, access programming offers depth, context, and continuity. It allows conversations to unfold thoughtfully and provides reliable local information in a format that is accessible to viewers of all ages. This balance between traditional broadcasting and modern media ensures that local stories remain visible and relevant.

Perhaps most importantly, community access television reminds us that connection begins locally. Seeing familiar faces, recognizing neighborhood landmarks, and hearing voices from within the community fosters a sense of belonging. Shared experiences strengthen the social fabric and encourage residents to take pride in their community.



As media continues to evolve, Jersey Access Group and community access stations across New Jersey remain committed to their core mission: serving the public, amplifying local voices, and supporting informed and engaged communities. Their impact may not always be loud or viral in the national sense, but it is lasting. By focusing on people, participation, and place, community access television continues to be a powerful force—right here at home.



The State of New Jersey has financial & technical assistance available to the communications arms of NJ communities

It's there, but not always easy to find to find

I'd love to tell you there is a consistent way of accessing advisory services and financing within the State of New Jersey for support of communications to the citizenry of New Jersey, but that is not the case. There is a wealth of services available, if you can find it. This article is not intended to be a one-size-fits-all answer to receiving technical and financial support for your public access channel or other means used to communicate to the citizenry of your municipality, but rather should serve as a guide to determine where to start identifying the sources you can use to bolster either financing or technologies that cross outside the domain of TelVue, Cablecast or other broadcasting platform your municipality utilizes.

While the focus of this article is financing available from governmental organizations, there are a variety of financing opportunities documented elsewhere and sourced outside of the governmental framework. Generally, these financing sources are only available to non-profits/. Many are documented through Candid.org, one of the largest nonprofit watchdog organizations in the United States. This is not the only source available for identifying grants. Many never reach a central publication. For technology grants, there is another source, TechSoup, which is available only to nonprofits. TechSoup works with technology firms to donate hardware, software and services for an administrative fee.

Sources of Advisory and Financing Services

This briefing tries to synthesize the resources available within New Jersey's public sector operations. It leans heavily on the state's critical infrastructure needs and strategic initiatives outlined in the Fiscal Year 2025 Seven-Year Capital Improvement Plan. The most intensive resources available are of peripheral interest to broadcasting concerns, as they are focused on the widespread need for capital investment to address aging and failing infrastructure across nearly every state department. While these initiatives are focused on physical structures and the power that is utilized by those structures, the electrical grid and networking needs of each municipality are included in these concerns, a topic that should have the interest of your broadcasting capabilities. The key initiatives which can be tapped for financial and technical support are disbursed across several core areas:

- 1. Infrastructure Preservation:** A substantial portion of requested funding is dedicated to replacing and modernizing fundamental building systems to prevent catastrophic failures, ensure operational continuity, and mitigate costly emergency repairs.
- 2. Health and Safety Compliance:** Significant investments are required to meet modern safety standards. This includes statewide initiatives for fire safety compliance, asbestos and lead abatement, ADA accessibility, etc. to maintain federal accreditation and funding.
- 3. Modernization and Expansion:** Beyond repairs, the plan details strategic investments in new facilities to meet growing demand and modern operational requirements. Notable projects include a new State Police station, expanded agricultural laboratories, and extensive construction and renovation across New Jersey's higher education institutions.
- 4. Specialized Programs and Funding:** The state leverages targeted programs to enhance public services. The State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) aims to bolster digital defenses, while entities like the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNJ) provide cost-effective technology purchasing for schools and municipalities. Furthermore, specific revenue streams, such as Public, Education, and Government (PEG) fees from cable operators, are strictly regulated for capital expenditures on public access channels. A particular focus has been placed on improving operations efficiency to assist municipalities to accomplish more with less.

Collectively, these initiatives represent a systematic effort to preserve state assets, enhance public safety and services, foster economic growth, and ensure the long-term fiscal health and operational integrity of the State of New Jersey.

NOTE: *I have taken the stance to include every technological investment available in the state, whether it has a direct consequence to public access television or not, mainly because there is not a clear picture of what would apply to your specific jurisdictional circumstances. For example, if you were implementing a new networking topology for support of your broadcasting needs, there may be venues potentially available for technical and financial support which would be obfuscated if the discussion was limited to only direct opportunities for advisory and financial support of communications.*

The level of consistency available from county organizations is relatively low. Bergen County and Essex County seem to be some of the more generous counties in the state, but navigating to the sources of this funding is an exercise in its own right. Within the Borough of Oakland, I am investigating what resources are available at the county level which the municipality can tap into. Any answers I surface pertinent to Bergen County will likely not be relevant in other counties

So, here is the capital improvement plan for the State of New Jersey, with the hope that this sparks some ideas of what avenues should be researched for advisory and financing sources within your community.

New Jersey's Seven-Year Capital Improvement Plan (FY 2025)

New Jersey's capital program is a comprehensive strategy for investing in short-term and long-term needs essential to its citizens. The plan prioritizes the preservation of existing assets, strategic investments in transportation and environmental systems, and the construction of modern facilities to generate economic growth and support public services.

A. Governance and Planning Process

The capital planning process is managed by the New Jersey Commission on Capital Budgeting and Planning, established in 1975. This 12-member advisory body provides a systematic focus on the investment of limited capital resources.

- **Commission Composition:** The Commission includes the State Treasurer, three other Executive Branch members, two members each from the General Assembly and Senate, and four public members with expertise in public finance.
- **Responsibilities:** The Commission is tasked with preparing the annual State Capital Improvement Plan, reviewing all capital projects, forecasting future needs, making recommendations on maintenance and debt, and ensuring proposals are consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
- **Process:** State agencies evaluate their facilities, determine priorities, and submit seven-year capital requests. The Treasurer and Governor's Office provide funding targets and policy guidance. The Commission reviews these requests, hears testimony from agencies, and makes final recommendations.
- **Funding Sources:** Capital funding is derived from multiple sources, including constitutional dedications of motor fuel taxes, a portion of the sales tax, petroleum products gross receipts tax, contributions from toll road authorities, and debt issued by entities like the Transportation Trust Fund Authority. The fiscal 2025 plan also recommends \$38.721 million from the Debt Defeasance and Prevention Fund for non-recurring capital expenditures.

B. Core Investment Themes and Recurring Needs

Analysis of the departmental requests reveals several consistent and urgent themes, underscoring the systemic challenges facing the state's physical assets.

1. **Infrastructure Preservation and Modernization.** A dominant theme is the critical need to repair and replace aging core infrastructure. Many state buildings, constructed between the 1960s and 1980s, operate with original systems that have far exceeded their useful lifecycles. This includes physical facilities, HVAC needs for these facilities and power and networking facilities of these organizations.
2. **Health, Safety, and Compliance.** A substantial portion of capital requests is driven by the need to comply with federal and state regulations and to ensure the safety of employees, the public, and individuals in state care. This includes fire safety, environmental remediation, Ligature Risk abatement, Dam Safety but also ADA compliance.
3. **Security Enhancements.** Modernizing security systems is a priority across multiple agencies to protect state assets, personnel, and the public. This includes integrated systems, with a focus on law enforcement, and correctional facilities, but also includes public address systems including those pertinent for emergency communications.
4. **Energy Efficiency and Sustainability.** In line with the State Energy Master Plan, departments are seeking to upgrade facilities with energy-efficient technologies to reduce operating costs and carbon footprint. This includes lighting, renewable energy and other energy assurance initiatives. This potentially could include power assurance that is critical to broadcasting.

Higher Education.

Universities across New Jersey have submitted extensive capital requests for new construction, major renovations, and deferred maintenance to support growing student enrollment and research initiatives, including Rowan University, Rutgers, Montclair State University and Kean University. Many of these funds can benefit municipalities.

Cross State Cybersecurity Initiatives.

The State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) is a New Jersey initiative designed to improve the cybersecurity posture of state and local government organizations. The program is structured around four key objectives:

1. **Governance and Planning:** Establish governance structures and develop or revise cybersecurity plans to improve incident response and ensure continuity of operations.
2. **Risk Assessment:** Enable agencies to understand their current cybersecurity posture through continuous testing, evaluation, and structured assessments.
3. **Security Implementation:** Implement security protections that are commensurate with identified risks.
4. **Workforce Development:** Provide cybersecurity training for personnel, tailored to their level of responsibility.

Cable Communications PEG FEES

Under the federal Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984, local governments (franchising authorities) can collect fees from cable operators to support local Public, Education, and Government (PEG) channels. The use of these funds is strictly regulated.

- **Franchise Fees:** Cable operators may be required to pay up to 5% of their gross revenues in franchise fees, which are designated for the general fund and can be used for any purpose.
- **PEG Fees:** In addition to franchise fees, operators may be required to pay PEG fees (e.g., 1% of gross revenue) as financial support for PEG channels.
- **Usage Restrictions:** PEG fees may only be spent on capital costs for PEG facilities and equipment. They may not be used for operating costs.
- **Capital Costs:** Acquiring or improving a specific capital asset, such as channel capacity, facilities, and equipment for the use of such capacity.
- **Operating Costs:** Expenses incurred in running the day-to-day business of the PEG channel, such as employee salaries or the cost of hiring an outside audiovisual company to broadcast meetings.
- **Compliance:** If PEG fees are improperly spent on operating costs, they are reclassified as franchise fees. Cable operators may then offset future franchise fee payments by deducting the amount that was misspent. The Act also allows for audits of a local government's use of PEG fees.

State-wide organizations fostering the financing and advisory services to public access broadcasting initiatives are the Jersey Access Group, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, specifically their Office of Cable Television and Communications and the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium.

Other State Capital Improvement Opportunities

As outlined in the Capital Improvement Plan, the state relies on a variety of dedicated revenue streams and financing mechanisms to fund its capital program. These include providing capital funds from funds derived from motor fuel taxes, sales and use taxes, transportation related authorities, Motor vehicle registration fees, debt servicing on state issued bonds and the Debt Defeasance and Preservation Fund.

Coordinated Programs that Differ in Administration Across the Counties of New Jersey

Coordinated programs are those that are either driven by federal, state or county guidance but administered differently across the counties of New Jersey.

Shared Services Adoption

Many of New Jersey's counties have adopted a shared services model to offer advisory and financial support to municipalities and to non-profits that support municipalities. For example, in Bergen County, Bergen Cares has taken the mandate to be the central spoke to delivering technical advisory and financial support programs in addition to other mandates. In Monmouth County, the Monmouth County Improvement Authority has a similar mandate.

Generally, the major initiatives of these initiatives are focused on technology modernization and in particularly deploying Ai for resident engagement, cyber-security as directed through the New Jersey Cybersecurity and Communications

Integration Cell (NJCCIC), which has as part of its mandate to disburse \$263 million via the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program.

Additional focus areas are to utilize technologies to improve the optimization of taxpayer dollars by disbursing federal and state grant opportunities and advising on the adoption of best practices through practices like centralized eProcurement, strategic disposal of surplus assets and other intents as documented in the NJSTART initiative and other initiatives intended to achieve AAA credit ratings throughout the state, including initiatives focused on public safety and improving the quality of public services at a reduced overall cost. Statewide initiatives are also being deployed through coordination through the Division of Consumer Affairs and the Division of Local Government Entities to administer grants through the System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE) initiative all focused on achieving an elevated efficiency of local government.

County-Level Shared Service Models

Finally, the county specific programs, which are devised to assist both municipalities and, in many cases, only through nonprofits supporting those municipalities through programs like Bergen Cares, the Monmouth County Improvement Authority, the Union County Division of Information Technologies, the Middlesex County Ai for Resident Engagement initiative, the Piscataway based Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNJ) and the Rutgers' Center for Urban Policy Research. Each county within the state of New Jersey is administered differently and navigating the complex of weaves, while difficult, can be softened with the aid of the New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC) and its national counterpart, the National Association of Counties (NACO).

About Mark Albala

Mark Albala is semi-retired and serves as president of two companies, InfoSight Partners and Albala Press, serves on the board of directors of two start-ups, Singularity Media and Beyond Ai, and serves on several disciplines associated with communicating to the citizenry of Oakland, New Jersey. Mark has recently turned his attention to authoring works of science fiction and has been helping other budding artists navigate the weave of challenges complicating the ability to publish their works. Prior to semi-retirement, Mark ran several technology profit centers for consulting firms, has served as a trusted advisor to many global corporations, instituted the solution architecture department for several consulting firms and served as a driving force in information, technology and information architecture for clients across a variety of industries.



JAG General Meeting

Jan. 28, 2026 @ 12:00pm

Zoom only

**Presentation: Preparing for ADA Title II Web and Mobile Accessibility Compliance
(Closed Captioning & Audio Description)**

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 is 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 2026

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

December 2 at 12pm: General Meeting, Location TBD, Presentation scheduled TBA

Organizational Members



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