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Fierce Cable
Massachusetts official backs Comcast cable over fiber for rural expansion project

USA Today
Viacom's future is as murky as management turmoil

Bloomberg
Brexit Pounds Some Technology Companies

USA Today
Hiring Lewandowski is a smart move for CNN

Washington Post
The British are frantically Googling what the E.U. is, hours after voting to leave it

Philadelphia Daily News
Politics of the pending state budget

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review
Another big-time Pa. pol convicted of corruption

Philadelphia Inquirer
Editorial: Pa. budget

A company with cable interests as far south as Fallingwater in Mill Run is stretching its radio holdings north of the Kiskiminetas River.

In an agreement signed a week ago and filed with the Federal Communications Commission, Laurel Highland Total Communications Inc. or LHTC is buying WAVL-910 in Apollo and the construction permit for a low-power Latrobe FM station for $301,500 from Colonial Radio Group Inc. of Bradford, Pa., and Olean, N.Y.

LHTC has cable, telephone and Internet operations with offices in Stahlstown, Westmoreland County, and Indian Head in Saltlick Township, Fayette County. Company CEO Jim Kail estimates that there are 2,000 cable, Internet and telephone customers in areas including Saltlick and Springfield townships in Fayette County.

Since the fall of 2014, it also has owned WCNS-1480 in Latrobe, which it bought from longtime broadcaster John Longo. Recently it flipped the WCNS format from syndicated adult contemporary music to conservative news-talk including several local and regional shows. Kail said he will have a talk format on the new WAVL similar to that on WCNS.

Colonial Radio Group pulled the plug on a WAVL simulcast of “we play anything” contemporary music from “The Mountain,” WXMT-106.3 in Smethport. Kail said he hopes to return it to the air by the end of August on AM 910 as well as an FM translator or low-power station at 93.3 in Latrobe. Colonial owner Jeff Andrulonis moved an

compromises look oddly like progress	Olean, N.Y., low-power FM station he owned to Latrobe under a window of opportunity established for daytime AMs and stations in certain classes of AM stations by the FCC. Andrulonis could not be reached for comment. Other AM classes such as those including WCNS and Uniontown's WMBS-590 are eligible for low-power FMs under a window opening this summer, but Kail said he probably won't seek a translator for WCNS. – ***Uniontown Herald-Standard*** ——————————————————————— The start of Pennsylvania state government's 2016-17 fiscal year is just four days away and key budget legislation remains under negotiation behind closed doors. Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf and leaders of the Republican-controlled Legislature have reported no agreements on spending or how to pay for it, and have not unveiled a bipartisan budget package. Negotiations continued through the weekend, and lawmakers were to return to the Capitol on Monday, virtually ensuring that a budget will not meet the fiscal-year deadline. Negotiators are tight-lipped, while rank-and-file lawmakers who must vote on it say they are being told little by caucus leaders. There are discussions about a variety of tax increases to help fill the gap between spending and about $30.4 billion that the governor's office projected in tax collections, after refunds. Discussion revolves around increasing excise taxes on cigarettes by up to $1 per pack, from $1.60 per pack currently, and a reviving a gross receipts tax on natural gas that utilities sell to consumers. It was a 5 percent tax — or an estimated $55 per household — when it was eliminated starting in 2000. Other potential tax increases on banks, electronic cigarettes and other tobacco products are in the mix, as is eliminating a sales tax exemption on basic cable service. Republicans otherwise have balked at a tax increase on income, sales or Marcellus Shale natural-gas production. – ***Associated Press*****;** **more from *Philadelphia Inquirer*** ——————————————————————— Disney gained control of ESPN through its acquisition of Capital Cities Communications in 1996. Over the following two decades, ESPN became the crown jewel of its cable business, which generated 30% of Disney's sales and over half of its operating income last quarter. However, Disney's cable business has lost some of its luster in recent years due to cord-cutters leaving for streaming services. Between fiscal 2011 and 2015, Disney's ESPN subscribers fell from 99 million to 92 million, which was surprising since live sports broadcasts seem to be protected against streaming rivals. Similar declines hit Disney's other domestic channels, although it gained overseas viewers at both ESPN and its core Disney channels. Last quarter, Disney's cable networks revenue fell 2%, but operating income rose 12% as lower programming costs and higher affiliate revenue offset declines in advertising revenue and subscribers. That's worrisome, because programming costs and affiliate revenues fluctuate seasonally, while revenue from ads and subscribers are core pillars of growth. The bears believe that ESPN will eventually be crushed by rising costs for sports programming and subscriber declines. The bulls believe that ESPN's multiplatform digital expansion across its website, app, and streaming platforms will keep its brand relevant, lock in subscribers, and boost its negotiating clout with major sports leagues. But another option has only been occasionally considered -- what if Disney spun off ESPN via an IPO? Spinning off ESPN would greatly reduce the weight of its cable networks business on Disney's top and bottom lines. Investors could then focus on Disney's parks and resorts and studio entertainment businesses, which both have more tailwinds and fewer

headwinds than the cable division. The downsized media networks business could then focus on integrating its film-based properties, like Marvel, Star Wars, and Pixar, into programs on ABC and the Disney Channels. ESPN programs, on the other hand, can't extend Disney's core film and theme park franchises.

If Disney spins off ESPN, the network could use its own stock to fund acquisitions instead of waiting for permission from its parent company. These acquisitions could include apps, games, and websites to expand its digital presence. If Disney still wants to stay invested in ESPN, it can retain a controlling share after the IPO. ESPN's exact value is hard to pin down, since Disney doesn't report the network's operating results separately. In 2014, Wunderlich Securities analyst Matthew Harrigan estimated that the network was worth $50 billion,up from anestimated value of $40 billion in 2012. Hearst Corporation still owns 20% of ESPN, so that estimate values its stake at about $10 billion, while Disney's majority stake would be worth $40 billion -- slightly more than 20% of its current enterprise value.

At first glance, a stand-alone cable sports network could be a tough sell. Shares of MSG Networks, which owns a diverse portfolio of sports teams and sports networks, have slid more than 20% in 2016 due to slow sales growth and an earnings miss in February. However, ESPN could attract investors by diversifying its portfolio, bringing in fresh talent to lead its digital initiatives, and offer a higher dividend than Disney's current **1.4% yield** Opens a New Window. .

There's also the possibility that Disney's media rivals might try to buy ESPN if it went public. **Fox** has been challenging ESPN in live sports for years, and Comcast's NBC Sports Network would get much bigger by absorbing ESPN. Dalian Wanda, Disney's rapidly growing **Chinese rival** Opens a New Window. , might make a bid to expand its portfolio of U.S. entertainment properties, which already includes AMC Entertainment and Legendary Pictures Opens a New Window. .

Any company that bought ESPN would also gain much more clout in price negotiations with sports leagues and associations. But it's unclear if any of these media giants would be willing to pay over $50 billion for the network.

Ten years ago, Disney shot down speculation thatit should spin off ESPN. But over the past decade, bidding wars for sports broadcast rights have intensified and cord-cutters have disrupted the business of cable bundles. I doubt Disney will divest such a huge part of its core business anytime soon, but it might be a wise move that would allow it to focus on its growing theme park and movie businesses. – ***Motley Fool***

The Dolans had a celebration lunch at Michael's restaurant last Monday to mark their exit from the difficult business of running a cable operator. The family closed on its $17.7 billion deal to sell Cablevision to European media company Altice.

At the center of the fête was Cablevison's 89-year-old founder and Chairman Charles Dolan. Fifty years earlier, he pioneered cable TV by launching the first urban cable system here and also founding HBO. Among those at the retirement lunch were Dolan's retired financial wizard Bill Bell; longtime government affairs executive Sheila Mahony; AMC Networks Chief Executive Josh Sapan; MSG and AMC Vice Chairman Gregg Seibert; MSG Chief Communications Officer Barry Watkins; and Cablevision's communications chief for the past quarter-century, Charlie Schueler.

Dolan bade farewell to Cablevison, wishing his colleagues a good summer. In the meantime, Dolan will keep himself busy as executive chairman of AMC Networks and as controlling owner of MSG. – ***New York Post***

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