

# Cablefax Daily™

Friday — August 28, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

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## Next Step: T-Mobile to Buy Shentel's Sprint Assets, But Price a Question Mark

**T-Mobile** is exercising its option to purchase **Shentel's** wireless operations for 90% of the defined 'entire business value,' but there's a dispute over how much that actually is. The parties haven't come to an agreement on certain terms for an effective appraisal, thus triggering a dispute resolution process set that could extend the timeline of a purchase. Shentel and T-Mobile have just under 60 days left to resolve the dispute. If they fail, either could pursue other remedies, including arbitration. The process is expected to take several months. Shentel is Sprint's largest affiliate, with its wireless business generating over \$400mln in revenue for the company with approximately 400 employees throughout its service area. After T-Mobile closed on its **Sprint** acquisition, it had until Aug 31 to decide whether to purchase Shentel's PCS business, which spans parts of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. If T-Mobile didn't but the assets, Shentel would have the option to purchase T-Mobile subs in the footprint. And if that didn't happen, T-Mobile would have to sell or decommission the legacy T-Mobile network and customers so that Shentel would become the exclusive provider of the new T-Mobile service in the area. "It comes as little surprise given the option facing T-Mobile for resolving Sprint's affiliate agreement with the company, and should result in the addition of 1.1mln subscribers to T-Mobile and spectrum... Assuming the dispute finds a timely resolution, it clears a minor roadblock on the path to unlocking value at New T-Mobile," **New Street Research** said in a note to clients. The analysts aren't changing their thesis on T-Mobile at this time, with New Street putting a 12-month price target of \$116 on the stock. "Over the last 21 years, the dedicated employees of our wireless business have charted an enormously successful path in the wireless industry," said Shentel pres/CEO Christopher French said in a statement. "We have built the best performing wireless network, deployed an unmatched footprint of stores and kiosks and provided industry leading customer service to over 1mln mostly rural subscribers in our region. Without Shentel, many of our wireless customers would not have otherwise had a reliable provider they could count on for critical connectivity to keep in touch with loved ones or to support their livelihood." Shentel also offers cable and wireline service, and it was among the 271 qualified bidders in the **FCC's** recently completed CBRS auction. The FCC is expected to release winners in the coming days. The auction is an opportunity for Shentel to further flex into fixed wireless. It is already in the process of rolling out a fixed wireless offering

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that will pass 300K rural households in Virginia, West Virginia and Southeast Ohio with 2.5Ghz of existing purchased spectrum. Shentel currently has active beta customers on the network and has validated speeds of up to 100Mbps downstream. The company expects to launch the fixed wireless offering in the second half of the year.

**Hurricane Damage Assessment:** Distributors, including **Suddenlink** and **Vyve Broadband**, were assessing the damage brought by Hurricane Laura Thursday. With extensive flooding and commercial power outages, they are in wait-and-see mode and turning to back-up generators. Complicating matters is a chemical fire at a chlorine production plant in Lake Charles prompting a shelter in place order Thursday. Vyve confirmed all of its employees are safe and accounted for, but the roads into its main system in Westlake, TX, weren't immediately accessible. The provider is pulling teams from Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas to be ready once it has clearance to start restoration. Suddenlink's Gulf Coast footprint includes the heavily hit Lake Charles, LA. The company has alerted customers that many along the Gulf are experiencing service disruptions, noting that restoration times could be delayed as its crews are following strict safety protocols in response to COVID-19. As always, cable and telecom crews must wait for the power company to remove live wires and complete their repairs before they can begin work. Hurricane Laura hit **Cable One's** Jasper and Sour Lake, TX, markets Wednesday evening, and on Thursday, its Shreveport and Monroe systems were impacted. A spokesperson confirmed all associates are accounted for and safe, but damage assessment is still in the early stages. **AT&T** said its wireless network in Texas and Louisiana is performing well overall, with it working with wireline and wireless customers who were impacted by storm damage and power outages. AT&T has begun deploying network recovery equipment to support customers and first responders, with additional assets on standby. **Cox** said the storm brought significant power outages in its Acadiana, LA, system. Crews are preparing for assessments of neighborhoods there and retail stores remain closed in the area. Once power is restored and it is safe, it will begin working as needed to reconnect customers. The **FCC** has activated its Disaster Information Reporting System for counties in Laura's path, but had not released a report for Aug 27 by our deadline. The voluntary, web-based system has communications providers—including wireless, wireline, broadcast, cable and satellite providers—report communications infrastructure status and situational awareness information during times of crisis.

**ACA Connects Goes to Court for C-band:** **ACA Connects** made good on its threat to ask the **DC Circuit** to stop the **FCC** from requiring earth station owners to elect a lump-sum payment by Sept 14 as part of the Commission's C-band transition. The association filed a writ of mandamus Thursday that claims that the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau faultily determined the lump-sum payment amount by choosing to exclude the cost of integrated

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receiver/decoders that MVPD earth stations require for relocation. “As a result, the lump sum will not contain sufficient funding for many ACA Connects members that want to use the lump sum to employ fiber-based transport and retire some earth stations,” ACAC pres/CEO *Matt Polka* said. ACAC filed an application asking the FCC to review the Bureau’s determination, and also asked the Commission to stay the lump-sum payment deadline. The Commission did not rule upon the request for stay by ACAC’s Wednesday deadline.

**Sports Takes a Beat:** Wednesday night, athletes across the majority of major sports leagues in the US boycotted games in protest of the police shooting of *Jacob Blake* in Wisconsin. The Milwaukee Bucks led the charge, with the **NBA** then deciding to postpone three Game 5 playoff series. Within hours, all **WNBA** games for the evening were postponed, as were five **MLS** games and three **MLB** games. *Naomi Osaka* said she would not play her semifinal at the Western & Southern Open on Thursday, but after “lengthy consultation with the WTA and USTA” she will play in the rescheduled match Friday. The NBA and WNBA will not play Thursday evening, though the NBA hopes to return to play Friday or Saturday. This has left programmers in a bit of a bind, with **ESPN2** choosing Wednesday to broadcast live from the WNBA “wobble” as players delivered statements and spoke on racial inequality and social injustice. On Thursday’s edition of “SportsCenter” on **ESPN**, five players from the WNBA’s executive committee spoke on their decision to focus attention on social justice and racial equality. It’s a remarkable change from just a year ago, when ESPN pres *Jimmy Pitaro* made it clear he wanted the net to stay out of politics. On **TNT** Wednesday evening, the net went into a makeshift pregame show instead of airing the game. The net’s “Inside the NBA” program cut to *Chris Webber*, who was set to call an NBA game, who then spoke passionately about supporting the players and the pain in the Black community. His words came shortly after *Kenny Smith*, a former NBA player and host, walked off the set in solidarity. On **NBA TV**, the net had commentary tied with contact info for local law enforcement in Kenosha, WI, so viewers can seek action. Though many MLB games still went on, on **MLB TV** hosts read Instagram posts from players in support of the boycott.

**RNC Night Three:** **Fox News’** coverage of the third night of the Republican National Convention pulled in 7.066mln viewers from 10-11:15pm. The broadcast nets followed, with **NBC** (1.966mln), **ABC** (1.895mn) and **CBS** (1.781mln) beating **CNN** (1.51mln) and **MSNBC** (1.48mln). In primetime (8-11pm) Fox News again came out on top with 6.664mln, followed by MSNBC with 1.625mln and CNN with 1.487mln.

**Univision Offloads Puerto Rico Stations:** **Univision** is selling some of its Puerto Rico stations to **Lieberman Media Group**, a Hispanic media company based in Burbank, CA. Included in the deal are WLII-DT, Caguas-San Juan and the stations which repeat its signal across the island: WOLE TV-DT, Aguadilla in the western area and WSUR-DT, Ponce in the central area. Univision is not selling and will continue to operate sister station WSTE-DT as well as its radio properties, including Uforia. Financial terms of the deal, which is expected to close by the end of the year, were not disclosed.

**Voices Magnified:** **A+E Networks** launched the “Voices Magnified” campaign, a cross-platform initiative working to spotlight and amplify voices of people making changes in their communities for the greater good. The first special to air under the banner is “Voices Magnified: Policing in America,” premiering Sunday at 9pm on **A&E**. In addition, A&E will support the initiative with short-form content on air and online, and supporting nonprofit organizations like the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

**SCTE Launches Semon Scholarship:** **SCTE-ISBE** and the **SCTE Foundation** announced a new scholarship Thursday that will memorialize longtime cable technologist *Doug Semon*. The “Zelmo’ - Doug Semon Scholarship” will award grants each year for an initial period of four years to FIRST robotics teams and their college-bound seniors. Named in honor of a nickname Semon used for himself and his work, the award will be supported by SCTE Foundation assistance in securing internships for winners. Donations can be made on the SCTE Foundation website. Semon, a Cable Pioneer, passed away on Aug 18. He was an avid supporter of the FIRST Robotics program in and around Denver, as is his wife, technology analyst and writer *Leslie Ellis*.

**Ratings:** **USA’s** “Chrisley Knows Best” is hitting ratings highs in its eighth season, averaging 2.27mln views across platforms since its debut on July 9. The series has grown more than 4% over Season 7, and the most recent episode on Aug 20 was the highest-rated telecast of the series in more than a year.

**Programming:** **HGTV** ordered another 14 hour-long episodes of “Good Bones.” The new season is scheduled to air in summer 2021. The current season is on pace to be the highest-rated of the series among P25-54 and W25-54. -- The sophomore, four-ep season of **ID’s** “Impact of Murder” will premiere Sept 10 at 9pm. -- **Bravo’s** three-part reunion of “The Real Housewives of New York City” kicks off the net’s first in-person reunion since the pandemic began. The socially-distanced reunion airs Sept 10 at 9pm.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## BBC America Celebrates Best of Planet Earth

Craving a taste of nature after being forced to stay at home? **BBC America** is ready to offer viewers another dose of natural history in “Planet Earth: A Celebration.” The one-hour special premieres Monday at 8pm across **BBC America**, **AMC**, **SundanceTV** and **IFC**. The program will highlight eight of the best sequences from “Planet Earth II” and “Blue Planet II,” including clips of surfing bottlenose dolphins and rare footage of the Himalayan snow leopard. This special promises something for Planet Earth fans of all kinds, even those that have already incorporated the specials into their quarantine binging regimen. The program features new narration from *Sir David Attenborough* as well as a newly-arranged instrumental track from composer *Hans Zimmer*. The score was performed by the BBC Concert Orchestra with accompaniment on the grand piano by rapper *Dave*, and is meant to elicit feelings of calm for viewers largely stuck at home due to the ongoing pandemic. Executive producer *Jo Shinner* said the event has been designed to bring the joy and wonder of the natural world into people’s homes. “At a time of international uncertainty, I hope that Planet Earth: A Celebration can be a source of inspiration and escape for people,” Shinner said. “We wanted to take our audience around the world, from East Cape of South Africa to the north of Norway, to Chile and the Indian Ocean, from the comfort of their sofa.” During the broadcast and online, AMC Networks will also share with viewers how they can support the efforts of **The National Wildlife Federation**, America’s largest wildlife conservation organization, and **MusiCares**, a non-profit dedicated to providing a safety net for the music community in times of need. – *Sara Winegardner*

**Reviews:** “Ghosted: Love Gone Missing,” Season 2 premiere, 9pm, Wednesday, **MTV**. Somewhat similar to one of our favorite MTV series, “Catfish,” “Ghosted” puts the positives and negatives of the world of dating under the Klieg light. Its weekly storyline follows *Rachel Lindsay* and the heavily tatted *Travis Mills* as they attempt to discover why one member of a couple has suddenly ghosted the other, essentially cutting off all communication. Over the past few months, we’ve spoken about TV acting as a COVID-19 escape valve, at least temporarily. This season of Ghosted works, to an extent. The entire series is virtual, with Rachel and Travis interacting from their respective abodes. On the upside, their lives—sitting online, scheduling Zoom meet-ups—may seem too close to home for some. On the other hand, the storylines are a good escape. In the opening ep, Joanna falls for Aaron, and a 7-month romance begins. Then suddenly, of course, Aaron ghosts Joanna. The story becomes more complicated, a lot more complicated, as Rachel and Travis dive deeper. -- “Britannia,” 9pm, Saturday, **Epix**. Certainly, this is one of the better COVID-19 escapes. Loaded with a stellar English cast, including *David Morrissey* as Roman general Aulus, the setting is 43 AD and warring factions battle for territory until the Romans invade. Lots of sex and violence. A great binge. – *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (08/17/20-08/23/20)		
Mon-Sun	MC US	MC US AA AA% (000)
MSNBC	1.091	3,352
FNC	0.994	3,054
CNN	0.909	2,792
TNT	0.511	1,571
HGTV	0.428	1,315
TLC	0.395	1,212
ESPN	0.387	1,189
TBSC	0.274	842
HIST	0.264	811
FOOD	0.254	782
USA	0.244	748
HALL	0.242	742
ID	0.234	718
DISC	0.222	682
A&E	0.196	603
INSP	0.195	601
PARA	0.193	595
TVLAND	0.190	584
BRAVO	0.187	573
HMM	0.186	572
LIFE	0.166	509
NBSCN	0.163	501
ADSM	0.160	492
NICK	0.156	481
NAN	0.145	446
GSN	0.140	430
WETV	0.135	415
SYFY	0.131	404
AMC	0.117	361
TRAVEL	0.116	355
NATGEO	0.114	351
APL	0.111	340
DSNY	0.108	332
E!	0.103	317
MTV	0.103	316
DSJR	0.101	309
COM	0.097	298
FRFM	0.094	289
NKJR	0.092	282
OXY	0.088	270
BET	0.086	264

\*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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