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Aiken (SC) residents and visitors will be just a finger touch away from free Wi-Fi Internet service in the downtown area beginning this summer.

As part of Atlantic Broadband's \$4.5 million "FastForward Aiken" initiative, the company announced on Monday it will be providing public access to free Wi-Fi service in and around Aiken's downtown area in July, according to a press release. "By providing free Wi-Fi to our city and the downtown area, Atlantic Broadband is answering a need that residents have brought to our attention, and we thank them for that," Mayor Fred Cavanaugh said. "Bringing fast Wi-Fi Internet access free of charge to our community is a huge benefit for residents, visitors and businesses. In a time when being connected is an integral part of communication and economic success, we're thrilled by Atlantic Broadband's commitment to ensuring the vitality of Aiken, and it's support of the city's continued move toward innovation and progress."

Integrating free Internet service throughout the downtown area was an initiative both the Aiken Young Professionals and the Aiken Downtown Development Association presented during City Council's annual Horizons Retreat meeting earlier this year. The free Wi-Fi service is expected to cover the area surrounded by Park Avenue, Barnwell, Greenville and York streets. About 200 businesses will be able to offer the Wi-Fi service speeds up to 5 Mbps within this specific perimeter. *Aiken (SC) Standard*

Vice Media Chief Executive Shane Smith long has proclaimed he wants to turn the company he co-founded two decades ago into "the next CNN." Now CNN's parent company, Time Warner Inc., may give him the chance to do just that.

Time Warner is in talks with Vice Media about partnerships in an attempt to rejuvenate CNN's struggling sister channel, HLN. The most likely deal would combine HLN with Vice to form a new venture in which Time Warner would hold a significant minority stake, according to people familiar with the matter. Their goal: infuse Vice's edgy brand of documentaries and newsgathering into HLN, potentially gaining a younger audience and improving its ratings, the people said. The two sides are far apart on terms and the prospects for a deal are uncertain, the people said. One major issue is vastly different views about the values of their respective businesses, the people added.

On Tuesday, Mr. Smith, who controls Vice through supervoting stock, declined to comment on any discussions with Time Warner. "We're talking to people all the time. Lots of things happening," he said at an industry marketing event. He also said there is great value in being on television, which boosts Vice's brand and exposes it to audiences that don't go online as much. "It makes a lot of money," he added.

That the deal is under consideration highlights the challenges faced by established media outlets in reaching younger viewers who increasingly rely on the Web for news. HLN's ratings are down 26% in total viewers for the season to date, and 22% in the 18- to 49-year-old demographic that advertisers pay a premium to reach, estimates Nielsen. Four months ago, Time Warner rebranded HLN as "the first TV network for the social media generation." Once known as CNN Headline News, the channel was best known for its wall-to-wall coverage of tabloid trials.

The revamp is led by MTV Networks veteran Albie Hecht and designed to populate HLN with the "viral" Internet topics of the moment. HLN hasn't fully implemented the changes. Vice started life as a punk magazine before expanding into music and online content. It is increasingly drawing attention for its edgy video programming, which today spans everything from war zone reporting to music reviews and mild pornography. While the company started its video efforts online, it has moved into traditional TV. Time

Warner's HBO channel already airs a current events-focused series produced by Vice. The second season has featured stories on climate change in Greenland, the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, and India's rape epidemic.

Vice's network of websites has more than doubled traffic in the U.S. over the last year to 15.4 million unique visitors in April from 6.6 million the year before, according to researcher comScore. Operating in 36 countries, the company says it reaches 154 million viewers a month across all of its outlets. In the last year, it made a big move into news, expanding the operation to about 100 staff from 60. Combining these two businesses faces numerous obstacles, including valuation. Media-research firm SNL Kagan estimates that HLN's cash flow this year at \$87 million. Time Warner doesn't break down those figures, but the company believes HLN's subscription and advertising revenue streams would bring significant value to the table in a Vice deal. Vice expects to generate around \$500 million in revenue this year, at a margin of around 25% to 30%, implying profit of \$125 million to \$150 million.

Another issue is the valuation of Vice's online advertising business in relation to HLN's larger TV advertising business. Also, the two sides must agree on how much of Vice's programming and branding the new TV network could take on before complicating HLN's carriage agreements with cable and satellite TV operators, the people say. News of the talks were reported earlier by British Sky Broadcasting PLC's Sky News.

HLN's carriage deals are negotiated with CNN and other Time Warner channels such as TNT and TBS. There is flexibility under those deals to alter programming on a network, but a full rebranding of HLN might require carriage agreements to be revisited, one of the people said. A joint venture isn't the only possible outcome. The people familiar with the matter said the talks, which have been going on for several months, could result in a simple programming partnership or lead to nothing at all. Last year, Vice raised \$70 million by selling a 5% stake to 21st Century Fox. Until last summer, 21st Century Fox was part of the same company as The Wall Street Journal's owner-News Corp. Other Vice shareholders include ad agency holding company WPP and merchant bank Raine Group. *Wall Street Journal*

Just 10 days after a plane crash took his father's life, Drew Katz confirmed last night that he's selling his stake in the *Daily News*, the *Inquirer* and Philly.com to philanthropist H.F. "Gerry" Lenfest, making Lenfest the company's sole owner. "Because of the turmoil of the last 10 days, I have made a decision that it would be in the best interests of *The Inquirer*, *Daily News* and Philly.com for me to sell my interest in the company," the 42-year-old son of Lewis Katz said in an email to local journalists.

He added: "I believe strongly that the organization would be in excellent hands under the ownership of Gerry Lenfest now and in the years to come." The surprise announcement was the latest twist in the dramatic saga of the newspapers in the nation's fifth-largest city. At an auction just two weeks ago, Lenfest and Lewis Katz, a South Jersey parking-lot-and-billboard magnate, bid \$88 million and took control of the media company - known until then as Interstate General Media - from the majority ownership led by South Jersey Democratic power broker George Norcross.

Four days later, on May 31, Katz and six other people died when his private jet crashed on takeoff at an airport in Massachusetts, where he had attended an event.

Drew Katz issued his statement in response to queries about a report on the website BigTrial.net. Katz said that although he has decided to sell his stake, "no deal has been consummated," and that he "will have more to say" if and when the deal is reached. The \$88 million purchase is scheduled to be finalized today. Katz, CEO of Interstate Outdoor Advertising and also a philanthropist, said in the email that he wanted to dispel suggestions in the BigTrial.net report of a rift between he and Lenfest, who was not available for comment last night.

"Mr. Lenfest sent me a heartfelt, beautiful note when my father passed away," he said.
"My father loved Gerry Lenfest and Gerry loved my dad." *Philadelphia Inquirer*



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