
Report Information from ProQuest

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Table of contents

[1. Parts of WHAM-TV sold](#)

[Bibliography](#)

Document 1 of 1

Parts of WHAM-TV sold

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[ProQuest document link](#)

Abstract:

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Full text:

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David Amy

CFO of Sinclair Broadcast, which already owns the local Fox affiliate

WHAM-TV (Channel 13) has a new owner, sort of.

Sinclair Broadcast Group said Monday it had picked up the non-license assets of the Rochester ABC and CW affiliate from Newport Television LLC for \$54 million.

Sinclair already owns local Fox affiliate WUHF-TV (Channel 31), as well as stations in Buffalo, Syracuse and Albany.

But don't expect to see WHAM news anchor Don Alhart doing Fox's 10 p.m. newscast anytime soon.

In the deal, Sinclair picked up all the physical property of the business, such as WHAM's studio equipment, the building and the vehicles. Sinclair also has an option to purchase the assets regulated by the Federal Communications Commission, such as the ABC and CW affiliation agreements and the syndicated programming contracts.

But for now, Newport still owns the FCC-licensed assets. And FCC regulations set fairly high hurdles for ownership of two television stations in the same market.

Sinclair Chief Financial Officer David Amy said the Maryland-based television station giant, with more than 70 TV stations scattered across some two dozen states, still has to figure out its end goal for the Rochester market.

"There's a lot of complexity that has to be worked through," he said.

The impetus for the purchase was the fact Newport was selling and Sinclair already has stations across upstate, Amy said. "It was an attractive market to us. With them selling and us interested ... it was a good match."

Adding to the complexity of the deal is the fact Sinclair's Fox station has an outsourcing agreement with Nexstar Broadcasting Group, owner and operator of CBS affiliate WROC-TV (Channel 8). Since 2005, WROC has run WUHF's local operations.

"This is a little more complex than you'd find in most markets," Amy said, adding that Sinclair has no intention of ending its arrangement with Nexstar.

Amy said that often in similar purchases, the license of the acquired property gets transferred to a third party. But Sinclair has not yet decided if that's what it will do with WHAM's licenses, he said.

According to Sinclair, it will provide sales and other non-programming services to WHAM.

WHAM-TV General Manager Chuck Samuels declined to comment.

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Meet the new boss

WHAM-TV's sale marks its second change in ownership in five years and the second time it has been part of Sinclair Broadcast Group in recent memory.

Since 2008, WHAM had been part of Newport Television LLC. Kentucky-based Newport was formed in 2008 by private equity firm Providence Equity Partners Inc. to purchase Clear Channel Communications' television group, of which WHAM had been part since 2002.

Clear Channel changed WHAM-TV's call letters in 2005 to line up with Rochester's oldest radio station into one joint brand. Clear Channel continues to own radio station WHAM-AM (1180).

Clear Channel picked up Channel 13 -- then known as WOKR-TV -- in 2002 when it acquired outdoor advertising company Ackerley Group.

Ackerly had acquired the station from Sinclair in 1999. That first time around, WOKR had been part of Sinclair only briefly, with Sinclair buying the station in late 1998 from Guy Gannett Communications before selling it months later.

Guy Gannett, which ceased operations in the 1990s, had no connection to Democrat and Chronicle owner Gannett Co. Inc.

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