

*The*

## **LINKING LETTER**

**By Anne Scheck**

August 28, 2017

Coverage: City Council  
Meeting August 8, 2017

▲ *City Council: Water Rates & Debt*

▲ *City Council: Marijuana Licensing*

▲ *PIN Report: LWC Stormwater Forum*

▲ **DATE-TO-NOTE:** Tuesday, August 29

■ *Editorial: Citizens Talking Too Much*

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### **Water Rate Hike Likely**

As Independence embarks on the construction of a water-treatment plant that will require a \$6 million loan, a raise in wastewater rates is imminent, the city's utility consultant told the City Council at its last meeting.

In announcing the likely need for a hike, Steve Donovan, a Portland utilities analyst, noted that last year MINET required the accumulated sum of \$10-per-month from water fees to service its debt. "And you can't drink MINET," he said.

"No, you can't," responded City Councilor Ken Day. However, water rates are a "hot topic" and they need to be fully explained to city residents before the council moves forward in taking out a new loan for the water-treatment facility, he said. Mr. Donovan is scheduled to return to the City Council with a simple power-point presentation in September, although the issue is "mind-numbingly complicated," he said.

After his presentation, Mr. Donovan was asked (by email) why other debt payments weren't mentioned by him – the city also allocates more than \$12 from the monthly billing to pay other loans, including on the Independence Civic Center. Apparently unaware of other debt service in the fees, Mr. Donovan referred the matter to Gloria Butsch, the city's finance director. Ms. Butsch didn't respond to queries. However, City Manager David Clyne

-- apparently on her behalf -- emailed a reply, calling the question a “good” one. He added that he would forward it to Mr. Donovan “for consideration as part of his presentation” this fall.

Loans for MINET and the Independence Civic Center were cited as part of the water-sewer-storm-drain billings more than a year ago, when a group of citizens met with Mr. Clyne about these rates. However, Mr. Clyne determined that the meeting – which grew from a few individuals to about two dozen after social media broadcast it – was private. Videotape was barred. Following the meeting, a breakdown of the water-sewer-storm-drain billing was posted on the city’s website. It shows debt and interfund-loan repayments from the monthly billings, as well as money for MINET.

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## **Marijuana License Questions**

The City Council decided to direct Independence to revisit its marijuana business license following testimony by the owner of a local dispensary that the city is duplicating screening efforts of the state.

“I was shocked about how anti-industry this (ordinance) was,” said Alex Andrade, proprietor of *Blackbird Indica*. An online search revealed the wording was lifted from a law that was one of the “most conservative” on the books and came from an entirely different region of the country, she said. *Blackbird Indica* already is licensed for retail sale, according to the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC). Additionally, the state requires workers in such stores to register for background checks.

City Councilor Kathy Martin-Willis asked Ms. Andrade if she would allow the city to obtain “linkage” letters from the OLCC showing that the business met state criteria and that its workers had permits. Ms. Andrade answered yes. City Manager David Clyne told councilors “I think it is time to re-aim the ordinance a little.”

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## **PIN REPORT**

### **Public Interest News**

What about water that *doesn't* come out of your faucet? If you want to have a say about our local waterway -- Ash Creek -- the Independence-based *Luckiamute Watershed Council* has a forum for you. The “Ash Creek Stormwater Solutions Forum” will be held at the Monmouth Library Meeting

Room ([168 S. Ecols St](#)) from **5:30 to 7:30 pm on Tuesday, September 12**. And maybe there's no such thing as a free lunch, but the Ovenbird Bakery is generously making sure there is a free dinner. To register: <http://www.luckiamutelwc.org/ash-creek-stormwater-solutions-forum.html>

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### **DATE-TO-NOTE: Water, water everywhere!**

The Independence City Council will hear a proposal for acquisition of a new water right in preparation for city growth tomorrow night, Tuesday, 6:30 pm, August 29 in city council chambers at the Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence.

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#### ■ **Editorial by Anne Scheck, publisher and Editor**

There he was again, Matthew Lind. Heart on sleeve, sweat on brow -- and talking way too much. Mr. Lind, owner of *Mecanico*, has repeatedly returned to city council meetings to plead his case for a refinancing-extension to buy the site of the eatery and bar, which is the only one in downtown where smokers can light up, or so I am told.

During Mr. Lind's undeniably protracted public testimony, the mayor told him to stop talking after his three minutes expired. Mr. Lind didn't. So, under orders from the mayor, two casually dressed law-enforcement officers appeared, and escorted Mr. Lind away from the podium.

In some ways, for me, it was public-testimony déjà vu.

You see, last fall, in the *not-too-distant* Lane County, a woman with the same penchant for long-winded testimony faced a similar fate. This time, it was at a meeting of the Lane County Board of Commissioners. The commission chair's reaction was similar, too.

There, also, a plainclothes officer appeared to escort the over-talker away. But, just as the woman was confronted, the Commission's vice chair stood up, strode over to the officer -- and asked him to desist. Who was that guy who calmly defused the situation, bringing a halt to enforcement? I found him on the internet. I thought you might like to know his name: Pat Farr.

Mr. Farr, I remembered the report about you when I saw Mr. Lind led off. I found the video online. I cannot stop watching it. There you are – my hero.

Anne Scheck

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**September: PICK UP THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE INDEPENDENT beginning Sept.1, featuring coverage of the eclipse and the people who came to see it. Issues are available at The Golden Horse Restaurant, Elite Cleaners, The Ovenbird Bakery, Brew and Tap House – all downtown. And at The Starduster Restaurant at Independence Municipal Airport.**

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**FINALE:** The best fiesta in the west. That’s what some attendees called it. It’s easy to understand why, isn’t it? This past weekend, downtown music perpetually filled the air – and so did the scent of Southwestern and Latin American food, hot off the grill. It was another success for locals at the Riverview Park. And, though this event wasn’t as crowded as the one days before, there were plenty of people who still seemed to be feting the eclipse. Or was it the festival itself? Maybe both. The breezy weather was cause for celebration, too.

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