

# **Linking Letter**

July 20, 2017

by *Anne Scheck*

7/11/2017 CITY COUNCIL

Order of Content in the *Linking Letter*

| **Marijuana:** Licensing Snags

| **Water:** Rate Study Coming

| **PIN REPORT:** Gloria Butsch

| **DATE-TO-NOTE:** Inclusivity Vote

| **Letter-to-Editor:** Downtown Indy

| **Finale:** \$1M to Riverview Park!

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## **Changes Needed For Marijuana Biz License**

An ordinance establishing provisions for marijuana business licenses that passed earlier this year has caused application snags -- and revisions are needed, Independence City Manager David Clyne told councilors at the last city council meeting. Specifications in the new licenses have “been very difficult” to process, he explained. Eventually, “we are going to suggest some amendments,” Mr. Clyne said. The changes could help the city “get to yes” among applicants hampered by language in the current business licensing for marijuana production and sales, he added.

“I would take great caution in being visible,” said Councilor Marilyn Morton, noting that “we’ve had a number of people come to council meetings” over the issue. Mr. Clyne replied that the process will be conducted in an open and public way.

Under a new state requirement, the number of licenses issued within a city is part of a formula to determine distribution of marijuana sales-tax dollars back to municipalities, according to the Oregon Department of Revenue. In the past, such revenue returns had been based on city population.

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## **Plans for Water System Require New Rate Study**

A rate study soon will be underway on water-and-sewer charges for residents, due to a pressing need to pay for new water-treatment facilities, according to city municipal-funding advisor, John Peterson, who presented financing alternatives to the Independence City Council on July 11.

An estimated \$9 million will be needed for completing the first two phases of the three-phase plan, which are scheduled to begin as soon as possible and continue for nearly the next two decades. “How do we pay for this?” Mr. Peterson asked. “Unfortunately, the city is not disadvantaged enough to get a grant,” he said. There are two other ways: a loan, a bond, or a combination of both, said Mr. Peterson, vice president at *Piper Jaffrey* in Portland.

Two years ago, the *Department of Environmental Quality* (DEQ) declared Independence responsible for “major discharges” of wastewater into the Willamette River. Under the DEQ ruling, the city was required to develop the means for adequate water treatment to address its growing population needs -- and to upgrade its increasingly outdated system. As a result, the city planning staff determined that a recent technology, called a membrane bioreactor, could reduce the need to enlarge the current lagoons while expanding the city’s water-purification process. Membrane bioreactors capture pollutants that otherwise may be missed, such as pharmaceuticals and chemicals in personal care products, according to the city report.

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**>|PIN REPORT: Honored!**

**Public Interest News**

Gloria Butsch, Independence’s finance director, has been awarded a *Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting* along with the city she serves. It is the second time in as many years that Independence has received the award, which represents the highest form of recognition for government accounting and financial reporting, according to the *Government Finance Officers Association*, which bestowed the honor. The association, based in Chicago, represents 19,000 officials of local and state governments.

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**<|DATE-TO-NOTE: 7/25/2017**

Independence is slated to join Monmouth in becoming an “inclusive” city in a vote scheduled at the next City Council: 6:30 pm, Tuesday, July 25  
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===Letter to the Editor===

**From Shawn Irvine, Independence Economic Development Director**  
*(This is only part of an editorial that will run in its entirety in the September issue of The Independent. It has been abbreviated for The Linking Letter).*

To Anne Scheck:

*The Independent* recently published a piece on the changes in the downtown economy. Though well done, I would like to contribute an editorial to help complete the story. As the Economic Development Director for the City of Independence, I know it takes a wide range of efforts from all sectors of the community to create a vibrant downtown environment. The key is to have everyone working toward a similar goal, and I think that is where Independence has found success. Two decades ago, it was a very different kind of downtown experience and economy. I have been told that many people were afraid to go downtown.

Over the past 20 years, the City has created a number of programs, projects and partnerships to revitalize the downtown. A partnership brought the MERIT micro-enterprise development program to Independence about five years ago. Several MERIT graduates now dot downtown Independence and Monmouth, including Ovenbird Bakery and Ladies of Liberty, and City loan funds have helped businesses like the Ash Creek Animal Clinic and Starduster Cafe get on their feet.

City facade grants and infrastructure projects have improved the look and appeal of the built environment downtown. Other projects, like construction of the amphitheater, development of a downtown library, or creation of a concert series, were designed to bring people (potential customers) downtown. The city planned this under the leadership of Mayor McArdle and a very stable City Council. – Shawn Irvine (*Look for Mr. Irvine's complete piece on the progress and efforts by the city for building a vibrant downtown in the September issue of The Independent*).

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**FINALE: \$1 Million From State for Riverview Park**

A million dollars to help finish *Riverview Park* officially landed in Independence this past Thursday – state funding that will enable the recreational section along *Independence Landing* to be completed.

Rep. Paul Evans, who addressed a crowd gathered near the city’s downtown fountain during the announcement, said the revenue was approved at the last legislative session. The money will contribute to a project important to him both “professionally and personally,” Rep. Evans later explained. “I grew up fishing on this river, right near here,” he said.

The sum will provide the means to install a covered pavilion and deck overlooking the river, connecting to a stairway that’s being financed with recently approved grant money of about \$414,000, said Shawn Irvine, economic development director for the city. A kayak-and-canoe launch ramp at the terminus of C Street now can be funded, too, he said. The viewing pavilion and kayak launch constitute the top “priority,” he said. Both will be wheelchair-accessible, with ramps and parking close by. “It will be safe and efficient,” Mr. Irvine added.

In a short speech, Mayor John McArdle thanked Rep. Evans and “the entire legislature” for the windfall. “When everyone is pulling in the same direction and not worrying about who gets the credit, it’s amazing what can be accomplished,” he said.

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**LINK to 7/11/2017 meeting video below**  
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