

The
LINKING
LETTER

By Anne Scheck

Oct. 8, 2017

Coverage: City Council

Tuesday, 9/26/2017

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FRANCHISE FEE FALLOUT

Franchise fees imposed by Independence for internet service appear to be affecting MINET subscribers more than customers of two other telecom companies – Century Link hasn't been paying franchise fees to the city and Charter Communications hasn't been passing them on to users.

The seven-percent franchise fee on internet service – a fairly new source of increased revenue to the city -- passes through to Independence. This charge for access to internet "data" has yielded \$16,126 by MINET to the city, \$3,974 from Charter and Century Link has paid nothing, according to a memorandum submitted at last week's city council meeting.

However, even when franchise-fee contracts lapse -- as Century Link's seem to have done -- such companies still are obligated to pay franchise fees, said City Manager David Clyne. Franchise-fee payment will be collected by Century Link – it uses the public right-of-way to deliver service, just as other telecommunication companies do, he said. As for Charter, the cost of franchise fees is being absorbed by the carrier rather than being billed to subscribers.

The franchise fees have been cited as one reason MINET has lost some customers in recent months, according to reports given at the MINET Board meeting last Thursday. Some price-sensitive subscribers have been switching to other carriers, and there is worry that revenue will drop for the municipal-owned broadband. “I am very concerned that we are pushing our customers’ spending limit to the max,” said Don Patten, general manager of MINET.

Asked after the meeting about the seven-percent fee reportedly is going unpaid by Century Link, Mr. Patten declined to respond. However, he later sent an email in which he explained: “I have no way, myself, of knowing about Century Link’s compliance with the franchise fee structure established by ordinance by the City of Independence,” he said. However, MINET is complying with the city’s franchise-fee requirements “despite the fact that our own franchise agreement expired more than a year ago,” Mr. Patten pointed out.

He added that he would consider it unfair for the city to require the billing of and the passing through of charges to occur from one company without requiring the same terms, conditions and effective dates of all other similar ones “regardless of terms of their pre-existing franchise agreements.”

MORE FUNDS ASKED FOR INDEPENDENCE LANDING

Independence Landing needs another \$250,000 from a state lending agency known as the Infrastructure Finance Authority, though the indebtedness will remain “well within the original engineering estimates of \$3.5 million” budgeted for the street-building project, according to a staff report that outlines the need for more money.

Most of the loan-financing for *Independence Landing* is through the city’s Urban Renewal District (URD), which now also carries a lion’s share of the debt for the *Independence Civic Center*. *Independence Landing* was originally purchased, bulldozed and graded by the city for about \$1.2 million as part of this new URD project.

Then infrastructure construction, such as street-scraping, was undertaken to ready the site for a development that will include a hotel, apartment buildings and townhomes. A resolution to approve the additional funding for finishing that

phase is scheduled to go before the city council Tuesday. (*The October issue of The Independent covers this issue; It is now at downtown outlets and the airport's Starduster Restaurant*).

PIN REPORT

Public Interest News

The City of Independence was honored with a silver award for safety this fall by a City-County Insurance Services and the League of Oregon Cities. The award recognizes cities with the fewest number of work days lost due to on-the-job injuries. The good employee-safety record, which reflects 2016-17, capped a year of wellness education, including police work on a "fitness trail" along the Willamette River and regular information sent out by human resources on healthy eating.

DATE-TO-NOTE: October 10

CITY COUNCIL TUESDAY 6:30pm

Increases in monthly water-and-sewer fees, which had been proposed at 5.5% annually for sewer and 2.5% for water, may be bounced down to about 4% and 2% at this Tuesday's city council meeting. Also slated for discussion: The city's marijuana business-licensing, which has provisions alleged to be overly bureaucratic for local retailers.

Editorial NOTE by Anne Scheck, publisher of *The Linking Letter*

Two public meetings were incorrectly posted on the city website over the last couple of weeks. And the news about that is both bad *and* good: About a half dozen citizens missed a public meeting they'd planned to attend due to the city's mistake. But ...

You six people who were nowhere to be found due to the somewhat hastily scheduled early morning city council meeting, hear this: You put me in the kind of mood to do a cartwheel across my front yard (though, at my age, I managed only a little skipping step).

Why?

Two years ago, when I started covering meetings, I often was the only one at them -- outside of city staff. And I was only there because I was retiring, and a few of my neighbors seemed to want a "look-see" by an aging journalist into city business. *I came, I saw, I stayed.*

Now I see more of my fellow residents. And, to the ones who missed the city council meeting, I am devoting the December issue of *The Independent* to you. Let's make it a non-stop Q and A over the three pages in which I usually try to take an in depth look at an issue. I will take any inquiry, and try to get it

answered for you. That way your planned attendance to the last meeting won't be lost, only delayed till it can find its way into print. Thank you,
Anne Scheck
Editor and Publisher,
The Linking Letter, The Linking Loop
THE INDEPENDENT

October issue is here: PICK UP AN ISSUE OF THE INDEPENDENT featuring coverage of Independence Landing.
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 State Airport. AND NOW at ROBIN'S ROOST,

==To Unsubscribe Hit Reply, write "no" in message line ==

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FINALE: Restaurateur Matthew Lind's offer of \$100,000 persuaded the City of Independence to allow him keep *Mecanico*, an outdoor eatery and tavern north of the Riverview Park pavilion. In another, unrelated development, the city council gave the go-ahead on a grant application to explore economic development of 90 acres of industrial land west of the airport.

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