

Council Communication

November 17, 2015, Business Meeting

Approval of Franchise Agreement with Avista Corporation

FROM:

Dave Lohman, City Attorney, david.lohman@ashland.or.us

SUMMARY:

Avista Corporation (“Avista”) provides natural gas to customers within the City of Ashland. For many years, Avista has had a franchise agreement with the City which allows it to locate gas lines and other necessary facilities within Ashland’s rights-of-way. The current franchise agreement with Avista is due for renewal.

BACKGROUND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The proposed franchise agreement with Avista addresses the terms and conditions of its right to use public rights-of-way within the City, including the information to be provided to the City, relocation responsibilities, and liability responsibilities. It also requires Avista to pay to the City 5% of its gross revenues generated from delivery of natural gas to customers within Ashland’s borders. Under the proposed agreement, Avista also must meet the right-of-way excavation requirements in Ashland Municipal Code 13.12 Street Excavations. These terms are the same as those in the current Avista agreement.

The term of the new proposed agreement is 10 years, with an option to extend for an additional 10 years upon mutual agreement. The previous agreement was for a 10 year term only. The only other substantive change from the current franchise agreement with Avista is the addition of a provision in section 3.4 making clear that Avista is subject to the requirements of the City’s street tree ordinance (AMC 13.16) and tree preservation and protection ordinance (AMC 18.5).

COUNCIL GOALS SUPPORTED:

N/A

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUESTED ACTION:

Staff recommends that Council authorize the City Administrator to execute the Avista Franchise Agreement.

SUGGESTED MOTION:

Move to authorize the City Administrator to execute the Franchise Agreement between the City of Ashland and Avista Corporation as proposed.



ATTACHMENTS:

Proposed Avista Franchise Agreement



**AVISTA CORPORATION d/b/a AVISTA UTILITIES
AND
CITY OF ASHLAND, OREGON
FRANCHISE AGREEMENT**

Avista Corporation dba Avista Utilities ("Avista"), a Washington Corporation, which is authorized to do business within the state of Oregon has filed with the City of Ashland, State of Oregon (the "City") a written application for a renewal of its Franchise to locate, construct, operate, maintain and use such plants, works, underground pipelines, equipment and appurtenances over, under, along and across all of City's rights of way and public property in the City for the purposes of the transmission, distribution and sale of Gas; and the City has determined it is in the interest of persons and businesses in this jurisdiction to have access to Avista's services;

THEREFORE, THE CITY OF ASHLAND DOES ORDAIN:

SECTION 1.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Franchise the following terms, phrases, words and their derivations shall have the meaning given in this Section. When not inconsistent with the context, words used in the present tense include the future, words in the plural include the singular, and words in the singular include the plural. Words not defined shall be given their common and ordinary meaning.

Avista: means Avista Corporation, dba Avista Utilities, a Washington corporation, and its respective successors and assigns, agents and contractors.

City: means the City of Ashland, a municipal corporation of the State of Oregon, and its respective successors and assigns.

Commission: means the Oregon Public Utility Commission or such successor regulatory agency having jurisdiction over investor-owned public utilities in the State of Oregon.

Days: means business days.

Effective Date: means the date this Agreement is fully executed by both parties, and the date from which the time requirement for any notice, extension and/or renewal shall be measured.

Facilities: means, collectively, any and all gas transmission, and distribution systems and appurtenances owned by Avista, now and in the future in the Franchise Area, including but not limited to, Gas plants, Gas pipes, pipelines, mains, laterals, conduits, regulators, valves, meters, meter-reading devices, communication and control systems and other equipment, appliances, fixtures, attachments, appurtenances and other items necessary, convenient, or in any way appertaining to any and all of the foregoing for the purposes of transmission, distribution, storage and sale of Gas.

Franchise: means the grant by the City of rights, privileges and authority embodied in this Contract.

Franchise Area: means the surface and space above and below all public property and rights-of-way, including, without limitation, rights-of-way for: public roads, streets, avenues, alleys, bridges, tunnels, City-owned easements, and highways of the City, as laid out, platted, dedicated, acquired or improved within the present corporate limits of the City;

- public roads, streets, avenues, alleys, bridges, tunnels, City-owned easements, and highways that may hereafter be laid out, platted, dedicated, acquired or improved within the present corporate limits of the City and as such limits may be extended by annexation or otherwise during the term of this Franchise; and
- all City-owned utility easements dedicated for the placement and location of various utilities, provided such easements would permit Avista to fully exercise the rights granted under this Franchise within the area covered by the easement.

Gas: means natural, manufactured, renewable and/or mixed gases.

Maintenance, maintaining, or maintain: means, without limit, repairing, replacing, upgrading, examining, testing, inspecting, and removing Avista Facilities, vegetation management, digging and excavating, and restoration of affected Right-of-way surfaces.

Parties: means City and Avista collectively.

Party: means either City or Avista individually.

Person: means a business entity or natural person.

Right-of-way: means the surface of and the space along, above, and below any street, road, highway, freeway, bridge, tunnel, lane, sidewalk, alley, City-owned utility easement and/or right-of-way now or hereafter held or administered by the City within its corporate limits.

State: means the State of Oregon.

Tariff: means the rate schedules, rules, and regulations relating to utility service, filed with and approved by the Commission in effect upon execution and throughout the term of this Franchise.

SECTION 2.0 GRANT OF FRANCHISE

2.1 Grant

City hereby grants to Avista the right, power, privilege and authority to enter upon all roads, rights-of-way, streets, alleys, highways, public places or structures, lying within the Franchise Area to locate, construct, operate and maintain its Facilities for the purpose of controlling, transmitting and distributing Gas, as may be necessary to provide Gas service to customers within the Franchise Area.

2.2 Effective Date

This Contract will be effective thirty (30) calendar days following the date of approval and passage as required by law.

2.3 Term

The rights, privileges and Franchise granted to Avista will extend for a term of 10 years from the Effective Date, and shall continue year-to-year thereafter, until it is otherwise renewed for another 10-year term, or terminated by either Party, with not less than 180 days prior written notice to the other Party.

Both parties may agree to the option of one successive 10 year renewal of this Franchise following the initial term of this Franchise. No fewer than 30 days prior to expiration of the initial term of this Franchise, either Party shall notify the other Party in writing a request to renew for a 10 year period. If both Parties agree to the renewal, the renewal date shall commence the day immediately following the expiration date of the current term, and all terms and conditions of the Franchise shall remain the same.

2.4 Non-Exclusive Franchise

This Franchise is not an exclusive Franchise. This Franchise shall not prohibit the City from granting other franchises within the Franchise Area that do not interfere with Avista's rights under this Franchise. City may not, however, award a Gas Franchise to another party under more favorable or less onerous terms than those of this Franchise without this Franchise being amended to reflect such more favorable or less onerous terms.

2.5 Notice of City's Intent to Compete with Avista

In consideration of Avista's undertaking pursuant to this Franchise, the City agrees that in the event the City intends to engage in the business of providing Gas service during the life of this Franchise or any extension of this Franchise, in competition with Avista, the City will provide Avista with six (6) months notice of such action.

2.6 Assignment of Franchise

Avista shall have the right to assign its rights, benefits and privileges under this Franchise. Any assignee shall, within thirty (30) days of the date of any assignment, file written notice of the assignment with the City together with its written acceptance of all terms and conditions of this Franchise. As permitted by federal and state law and Commission regulation, Avista shall have the right, without notice to or consent of the City, to mortgage or hypothecate its rights, benefits and privileges in and under this Franchise as security for indebtedness.

2.7 Payment of Franchise Fees

2.7.1 In consideration of the rights, privileges, and franchise granted by City to Avista under this Franchise, Avista will pay City five percent (5%) of Avista's gross revenues derived from service to customers located within City (the "Franchise Fee"). Avista will pay the Franchise Fee in quarterly installments, which quarterly installments will be due not later than thirty (30) days following the end of the quarter to which the payment relates. Except as otherwise provided in OAR 860-022-0040, "gross revenue(s)" means revenues received from utility operations within City, less related net uncollectables. Gross revenues of an energy utility shall include revenues from the use, rental, or lease of the utility's operating facilities other than residential-type space and water heating equipment. Gross revenues shall not include proceeds from the sale of bonds, mortgage or other evidence of indebtedness, securities or stocks, sales at wholesale by one utility to another utility purchasing the service is not the ultimate customer, or revenue from joint pole use.

2.7.2 Contemporaneously with each quarterly payment, Avista will file with City a sworn statement describing the total gross revenues Avista received during the applicable quarter (the "Accounting Statement"). City's acceptance of any payments under this Section 2.7 will not constitute a waiver by City of any Avista breach of this Franchise.

2.7.3 Inspection of Books and Records.

On ten (10) days' advance written notice to Avista, City may review such Avista books, records, documentation, and/or information that City reasonably determines necessary or appropriate to audit an Accounting Statement and/or ascertain Avista's compliance with this Franchise. Avista will cooperate with City in conducting any inspection and/or audit and will correct any discrepancies affecting City's interest in a prompt and efficient manner. Avista will keep all its books, records, documentation, and/or information at its Spokane, Washington headquarters.

SECTION 3.0 AVISTA'S OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

3.1 Compliance with Laws, Regulations, Codes and Standards

In carrying out any authorized activities under the privileges granted by this Franchise, Avista shall meet accepted industry standards and codes and shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations and ordinances of any governmental entity with jurisdiction over Avista's Facilities in the Franchise Area. This includes all applicable, laws, regulations and ordinances existing as of the Effective Date or may be subsequently enacted by any governmental entity with jurisdiction over Avista's operations within the Franchise Area. The City shall have the right to make and enforce reasonable rules and regulations pertaining to the conduct of Avista's operations within the Franchise Area. Prior to the adoption of any new rule, procedure or policy, Avista shall be provided a written draft document for comment with a response period of not less than thirty days. Service shall be supplied to the City and its inhabitants in accordance with Avista's rules and regulations and Tariffs currently or subsequently filed with and approved by the Commission.

3.2 Facility Location by Avista and Non-Interference

Avista shall have the discretion to determine the placement of its Facilities as may be necessary to provide safe and reliable Gas service within the Franchise Area, subject to the following non-interference requirements. All construction, installation, repair or relocation of Avista's Facilities performed by Avista in the Franchise Area will be done in such a manner as not to interfere with the construction and maintenance of other utilities, drains, drainage and irrigation ditches and structures, and City-owned property within the Franchise Area.

3.3 Facility Location Information

Avista shall provide the City, upon the City's reasonable request, Facility location information in electronic or hard copy showing the location of its Facilities at specific locations within the Franchised Area, to the extent such information is reasonably available. Avista does not warrant the

accuracy of any such Facility location information provided and, to the extent the location of Facilities are shown, such Facilities may be shown in their approximate location. With respect to any excavations within the Franchise Area undertaken by or on behalf of Avista or the City, nothing stated in this Franchise is intended (nor shall be construed) to relieve either party of their respective obligations arising under the State one-call law with respect to determining the location of existing underground utility facilities in the vicinity of such excavations prior to commencing work.

3.4 Vegetation Management –Removal of Trees/Vegetation Encroachment

The right of Avista to maintain its Facilities shall include the right, as exercised in Avista's professional discretion to minimize the likelihood that encroaching (either above or below the ground) vegetation can interfere with or limit access to Avista's Facilities, or pose a threat to public safety and welfare. Subject to requirements under AMC Chapter 13.16 Street Tree ordinance, and Chapter 18.4.5, Tree Preservation and Protection ordinance, Avista or its agents may accordingly remove or limit, without recourse or payment of compensation, the growth of vegetation which encroaches upon its Facilities and Gas transmission and distribution corridors within the Franchise Area.

3.5 Right of Excavation

For the purpose of implementing the privileges granted under this Franchise, and after any required notification is made to the City, Avista is authorized to make any necessary excavations in, under and across the streets, alleys, roads, rights-of-way and public grounds within the Franchise Area. Such excavation shall be carried out with reasonable dispatch and with as little interference with or inconvenience to the public as may be feasible. Avista shall remove all debris stemming from excavation and construction. The Right-of-way surface shall be restored by Avista after excavation, in accordance with applicable City and Avista specifications.

3.6 Emergency Work

In the event of an emergency requiring immediate action by Avista to protect the public health and safety or for the protection of its Facilities, or the property of the City or other persons in the Franchise Area, Avista may immediately proceed with excavation or other Right-of-way work, with concurrent notice to the City to the extent possible.

SECTION 4.0 RESERVATION OF CITY'S RIGHTS AND POWERS

4.1 Reservation of Right

The City, in granting this Franchise, does not waive any rights which it may not have or may subsequently acquire with respect to road rights-of-way or other property of City under this Franchise, and this Franchise shall not be construed to deprive the City of any such powers, rights or privileges which it now has or may hereafter acquire to regulate the use of and to control the City's roads, rights-of-way and other public property covered by this Franchise. Nothing in the terms of this Franchise shall be construed or deemed to prevent the City from exercising at any time and any power of eminent domain granted to it under the laws of this State.

4.2 Necessary Construction/Maintenance by City

The construction, operation and maintenance of Avista's Facilities authorized by this Franchise shall not preclude the City, its agents or its contractors, from grading, excavating, or doing other necessary road work contiguous to Avista's Facilities, provided that Avista shall be given not less than ten business days' notice of said work, except in events of emergency when there exists an unforeseen and substantial risk or threat to public health, safety, welfare, or waste of resources in which case the City will make reasonable efforts to contact Avista prior to doing the necessary work. It is provided further that the City, its agents and contractors, shall be liable for any damages, including any consequential damages to third parties, caused by said work to any Facilities belonging to Avista.

4.3 Expansion of Avista's Facilities

Facilities in the City's Franchise Area that are incidental to the Franchise Area, or that have been, or are at any future time acquired, newly constructed, leased, or utilized in any manner by Avista shall be subject to all provisions of this Franchise.

4.4 Change of Boundaries of the City

Any subsequent additions or modifications of the boundaries of the City, whether by annexation, consolidation, or otherwise, shall be subject to the provisions of this Franchise as to all such areas. The City shall notify Avista of the scope of any change of boundaries not less than thirty (30) days prior to such change becoming effective or in accordance with applicable state laws, and shall affirm, authorize and ratify all prior installations authorized by permits or other action not previously covered by this Franchise.

4.5 Removal of Abandoned Facilities

During the Term of this Franchise, or upon a revocation or non-renewal of this Franchise, the City may direct Avista to remove designated abandoned Facilities from the Franchise Area at its own expense and as soon as practicable, but only where such abandoned Facilities constitute a demonstrated threat to public health and safety. Avista shall not be required to remove, or pay for the removal of facilities it has previously abandoned to another franchisee, or utility under a joint use agreement, or Person granted permission to access Avista's facilities.

4.6 Vacation of Properties by City

If, at any time, the City shall vacate any road, right-of-way or other public property which is subject to rights granted by this Franchise, such vacation shall be subject to the reservation of a perpetual easement to Avista for the purpose of operating, maintaining, and upgrading Avista's Facilities on the affected property. The City shall, in its vacation procedure, reserve and grant said easement to Avista for Avista's Facilities and shall also expressly prohibit any use of the vacated properties which will interfere with Avista's full enjoyment and use of said easement.

SECTION 5.0 RELOCATION OF AVISTA'S FACILITIES

5.1 Relocation of Facilities Requested by City

Upon request of the City, Avista shall relocate its Facilities as necessary within the Franchise Area as specifically designated by the City for such purpose. The City shall provide Avista rea-

sonable notice of any intended or expected requirement or request to relocate Avista's Facilities, but not less than ninety (90) calendar days prior to any such relocation except in cases of emergency or not otherwise reasonably foreseeable by the City. The City shall use reasonable efforts to cause any such relocation to be consistent with any applicable long-term development plan(s) of the City.

In the event a relocation forces Avista off City's existing Public Right(s) of Way then the City shall accommodate such relocation by securing an acceptable, alternate location for utilities. If the City requires the subsequent relocation of any of Avista's Facilities within three (3) years from the date of relocation of such Facilities or installation of new Facilities, the City shall bear the entire cost of such subsequent relocation. Avista agrees to relocate all Facilities promptly within a reasonable time. Upon notice from the City, the parties agree to meet and determine a reasonable relocation time, which shall not exceed the time normally needed for construction projects of the nature of the City's relocation request unless otherwise mutually agreed.

Notwithstanding the above, Avista shall not be required to relocate facilities of other entities that were abandoned to another franchisee. Such relocation of these types of facilities shall be accordance with Section 5.2 below.

This provision shall not apply to Facilities in place pursuant to private easement held by Avista, regardless of whether such Facilities are also located within the Franchise Area. In the event the City requests relocation of Facilities that are in place pursuant to an existing easement, said relocation shall be treated in the same manner as a relocation requested by third parties under Section 5.2, below.

5.2 Relocation of Facilities Requested by Third Parties

City acknowledges that Avista is obligated to provide gas service and related line extension or relocation of Facilities for the benefit of its customers and to require compensation for such services on a non-preferential basis in accordance with applicable Tariffs.

If Facilities are to be relocated at the request of or for the primary benefit of a third party, the City shall not require Avista to relocate its Facilities until such time as a suitable location can be found and the third party has entered into an agreement to reimburse Avista for its reasonable costs of relocation

5.3 Availability of Other Funds

In the event federal, state or other funds are available in whole or in part for utility relocating purposes, the City agrees to use reasonable efforts to apply for such funds, provided such funds do not interfere with the City's right to obtain the same or similar funds, or otherwise create any expense or detriment to the City. The City may recover all costs, including internal costs, associated with obtaining such funds.

SECTION 6.0 INDEMNITY

6.1 Indemnification of City

Avista agrees to defend and indemnify the City, its appointed and elected officers and employees or agents, from any and all liabilities, claims, causes of action, losses, damages and expenses, including costs and reasonable attorneys fees, that the City may sustain, incur, become liable for, or be required to pay, as a consequence of or arising from the negligent acts or omissions of Avista, its officers, employees or agents in connection with Avista's obligations under this Franchise; provided, however, that this indemnification provision shall not apply to the extent that said liabilities, claims, damages and losses were caused by or result from the negligence of the City, elected officers and employees or agents.

6.2 Indemnification of Avista

To the extent permitted by law, City agrees to defend and indemnify Avista, its officers and employees, from any and all liabilities, claims, causes of action, losses, damages and expenses, including costs and reasonable attorneys fees, that Avista may sustain, incur, become liable for, or be required to pay, as a consequence of or arising from the negligent acts or omissions of the City, its appointed and elected officers and employees or agents in connection with City's obligations under this Franchise; provided, however, that this indemnification provision shall not apply to the extent that said liabilities, claims, damages, losses and so forth were caused by or result from the negligence of Avista, its employees or agents.

SECTION 7.0 FRANCHISE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

7.1 Non-waiver

Failure of a Party to declare any breach or default of this Franchise immediately upon the occurrence thereof, or delay in taking any action in connection therewith, shall not waive such breach or default, but the Party shall have the right to declare any such breach or default at any time. Failure of a Party to declare one breach or default does not act as a waiver of the Party's right to declare another breach or default. In addition, the pursuit of any right or remedy by the City shall not prevent the City from thereafter declaring a revocation and forfeiture for breach of the conditions of the Franchise.

7.2 Dispute Resolution by the Parties

Disputes regarding the interpretation or execution of the terms of this Franchise that cannot be resolved by department counterparts representing the Parties, shall be submitted to the City's Attorney and an attorney representing Avista for resolution. If a mutually satisfactory or timely resolution cannot then be reached by the above process, prior to resorting to a court of competent jurisdiction, the Parties shall submit the dispute to a non-binding alternate dispute resolution process agreed to by the Parties.

7.3 Right of Enforcement

No provision of this Franchise shall be deemed to bar the right of the City or Avista to seek judicial relief from a violation of any provision of the Franchise to recover monetary damages for such violations by the other party or to seek enforcement of the other Party's obligations under this Franchise by means of specific performance, injunctive relief or any other remedy at law or in equity pursuant to Section 7.4. Any litigation between the City and Avista arising under or regarding this Franchise shall occur, if in the state courts, in a court of competent jurisdiction, and if in the federal courts, in the United States District Court for the District of Oregon.

7.4 Attorneys' Fees and Costs

Each Party shall pay for its own attorneys' fees and costs incurred in any dispute resolution process or legal action arising out of the existence of this Franchise.

SECTION 8.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS

8.1 Franchise as Contract, No Third Party Beneficiaries

This Franchise is a contract between the Parties and binds and benefits the Parties and their respective successors and assigns. This Franchise does not and is not intended to confer any rights or remedies upon any persons, entities or beneficiaries other than the Parties.

8.2 Force Majeure

In the event that Avista is delayed in or prevented from the performance of any of its obligations under the Franchise by circumstances beyond Avista's control (Force Majeure) including, without limitation, third party labor disputes, fire, explosion, flood, earthquake, power outage, acts of God, war or other hostilities and civil commotion, then Avista's performance shall be excused during the period of the Force Majeure occurrence. Avista will use all commercially reasonable efforts to minimize the period of the disability due to the occurrence. Upon removal or termination of the occurrence Avista will promptly resume performance of the affected Franchise obligations in an orderly and expeditious manner.

8.3 Prior Franchises Superseded

As of the Effective Date this Franchise shall supersede all prior gas franchises for the Franchise Area previously granted to Avista or its predecessors by City, and shall affirm, authorize and ratify all prior installations authorized by permits or other action not previously covered by franchise. Termination of the prior Franchise shall not, however, relieve the Parties from any obligations which accrued under said Franchise prior to its termination, including but not limited to, any outstanding indemnity, reimbursement or administrative fee payment obligations.

8.4 Severability

The Franchise is granted pursuant to the laws of the State of Oregon relating to the granting of such rights and privileges by City. If any article, section, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Franchise is for any reason held illegal, invalid, or unconstitutional, such invalidity shall not affect the validity of the Franchise or any of the remaining portions. The invalidity of any portion of this Franchise shall not abate, reduce, or otherwise affect any obligation required of Avista.

8.5 Changes or Amendments

Changes or amendments to this Franchise shall not be effective until lawfully adopted by the City and agreed to by Avista.

8.6 Supremacy and Governing Law

This Agreement shall be interpreted, construed and enforced in all respects in accordance with the laws of the State of Oregon. In the event of any conflict between this Franchise and any City ordinance, regulation or permit, the provisions of this Franchise shall control. In the event of a conflict between the provisions of this Franchise and Avista’s applicable Tariff on file with the Commission, the Tariff shall control.

8.7 Headings

The headings or titles in this Franchise are for the purpose of reference only and shall not in any way affect the interpretation or construction of this Franchise.

8.8 Acceptance of Franchise.

Avista shall, within 30 days after passage of this Contract, file with the CityRecorder, its acceptance of the terms and conditions of this Franchise.

8.9 Abandonment or Suspension of Franchise Rights and Obligations

Avista may abandon or amend the rights and authorities granted hereunder, provided that six (6) months’ written notice of intention to abandon is given to City. In addition, pursuant to Section 8.6 and in the event a conflict exists between the terms of this Franchise and Avista’s Tariff with the Commission that cannot be resolved, Avista may suspend or abandon the rights and obligations of this Franchise upon reasonable notice to the City.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have signed this agreement.

AVISTA CORPORATION
D/B/A AVISTA UTILITIES

CITY OF ASHLAND

By: _____
Dennis Vermillion
Title: President, Avista Utilities

By: _____
Dave Kanner
Title: City Administrator

Date: _____

Date: _____

Approved as to form:

David H. Lohman
Ashland City Attorney