

CHAPTER 110

NATURAL GAS FRANCHISE

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110.01 FRANCHISE GRANTED There is hereby granted to INTERSTATE POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY, hereinafter referred to as the “Company,” its successors and assigns, the right, franchise and privilege for the term of twenty-five (25) years from and after the passage, adoption, approval and acceptance of the ordinance codified by this chapter, to lay down, maintain and operate the necessary pipes, mains and other conductors and appliances in, along and under the streets, avenues, alleys and public places in the City as now or hereafter constituted for the purpose of distributing, supplying and selling gas to said City and the residents thereof and to persons and corporations beyond the limits thereof; also the right of eminent domain as provided in Section 364.2 of the Code of Iowa. The term “gas” as used in this franchise shall be construed to mean natural gas only.

110.02 MAINS AND PIPES; INDEMNIFICATION. The mains and pipes of the Company must be so placed as not to interfere unnecessarily with water pipes, drains, sewers and fire plugs which have been or may hereafter be placed in any street, alley and public places in said City nor unnecessarily interfere with the proper use of the same, including ordinary drainage, or with the sewers, underground pipe and other property of the City, and the Company, its successors and assigns shall hold the City free and harmless from all damages arising from the negligent acts or omissions of the Company in the laying down, operation and maintenance of said natural gas distribution system.

110.03 EXCAVATIONS. In making any excavations in any street, alley, avenue or public place, Company, its successors and assigns, shall protect the site while work is in progress by guards, barriers or signals, shall not unnecessarily obstruct the use of the streets, shall back fill all openings in such manner as to prevent settling or depressions in surface, and shall replace the surface, pavement or sidewalk of such excavations with same materials, restoring the condition as nearly as practical and if defects are caused shall repair the same.

110.04 CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE. The Company shall, at its cost, locate and relocate its existing facilities or equipment in, on, over or under any public street or alley in the City in such a manner as the City may at any time reasonably require for the purposes of facilitating the construction, reconstruction, maintenance or repair of the street or alley or any public improvement thereof, in or about any such street or alley or reasonably promoting the efficient operation of any such improvement. If the City orders or requests the Company to relocate its existing facilities or equipment for any reason other than as specified above, or as the result of the initial request of a commercial or private developer, the Company shall receive payment for the cost of such relocation as a precondition to relocating its existing facilities or equipment. The City shall consider reasonable alternatives in designing its public works projects so as not arbitrarily to cause the Company unreasonable additional expense in exercising its authority under this section. The City shall also provide a reasonable alternative

location for the Company's facilities as part of its relocation request. The City shall give the Company reasonable advance written notice to vacate a public right-of-way. Prior to vacating a public right-of-way, the Company shall be provided an opportunity to secure an easement to allow it to operate and maintain its existing facilities.

110.05 SERVICE REQUIREMENTS. Said Company, its successors and assigns, shall throughout the term of the franchise distribute to all consumers gas of good quality and shall furnish uninterrupted service, except as interruptible service may be specifically contracted for with consumers; provided, however, that any prevention of service caused by fire, act of God or unavoidable event or accident shall not be a breach of this condition if the Company resumes service as quickly as is reasonably practical after the happening of the act causing the interruption.

110.06 FRANCHISE FEES.

1. In its monthly billing the Company shall include a franchise fee of 1.5 percent (1.5%) on the gross receipts from the sale of natural gas to the Company's natural gas customers located within the corporate limits of the City.
2. The franchise fee shall be applied to all customers' bills in accordance with Iowa Code Chapter 364.2 and 423B.5. The amount of the franchise fee shall be shown separately on the utility bill to each customer.
3. The Company will commence collecting franchise fees on or before the first Company billing cycle of the first calendar month following ninety (90) days of receipt of information required of the City to implement the franchise fee. This information shall include but not be limited to a copy of the City's Revenue Purpose Statement and written proof of legal adoption and publication of the Revenue Purpose Statement, City's list of City utility accounts exempt per Iowa law from the franchise fee, signed Nondisclosure Agreement pertaining to the protection of the confidentiality of utility service address information provided by the Company to the City, and the City's verified utility customer service address list. The Company shall not commence assessing the franchise fee until it has received written approval of its amended tax rider tariff from the Iowa Utilities Board.
4. The City recognizes that the costs of franchise fee administration are not charged directly to the City and agrees it shall reimburse the Company for any initial or ongoing costs incurred by the Company in collecting franchise fees that the Company in its sole opinion deems to be in excess of typical costs of franchise fee administration.
5. Upon receipt of a final and unappealable order or approval authorizing annexation, or changes in the corporate limits of said City, the City Clerk shall provide written notification by certified mail to an officer of Company of such annexation or change in the limits of said City, and the Company shall apply the franchise fee to its customers who are affected by the annexation or change in the corporate limits of the City, commencing on an agreed upon date which is not less than ninety (90) days from receipt of the information required of the City to implement the franchise fee.
6. The Company shall have no obligation to collect franchise fees from customers in any annexed area until and unless the following have all been provided to the Company by certified mail: such final and unappealable orders or approvals, the City's list of City utility accounts exempt from the franchise fee in the annexed area, and the City's verified utility customer service address list for the annexed area.

7. The City shall indemnify the Company from claims of any nature arising out of or related to the imposition and collection of the franchise fee. In addition, the Company shall not be liable for collecting franchise fees from any customer originally or subsequently identified, or incorrectly identified, by the City as being subject to the franchise fee or being exempt from the imposition of franchise fees.

8. The Company shall remit franchise fee revenues, minus uncollectible amounts, to the City no more frequently than on or before the last business day of the month following each calendar year quarter. Company shall notify City at least thirty (30) days in advance of any changes made in this collection schedule, including any alterations in the calendar quarters or any other changes in the remittance periods.

9. The City shall give the Company a minimum six-month notice prior to the request to implement any adjustment in the percentage of franchise fee to be collected pursuant to subsection 1 hereof. The City agrees to modify the level of franchise fees imposed only once in any 24-month period. When any such Ordinance increasing, decreasing, modifying or eliminating the franchise fee shall become effective, billings reflecting the change shall commence on an agreed upon date which is not less than ninety (90) days following written notice to the Company by certified mail. The Company shall not be required to implement such new percentage unless and until it determines that it has received appropriate official documentation of final action by the City Council. In no event may the percentage of franchise fee exceed the statutory amount authorized by Iowa law.

10. The City shall be solely responsible for the proper use of any amounts collected as franchise fees, and shall only use such fees as collected for a purpose as allowed by applicable law.

11. The Company shall not, under any circumstances be required to return or refund any franchise fees that have been collected from City customers and remitted to the City. In the event the Company is required to provide data or information in defense of the City's imposition of franchise fees or the Company is required to assist the City in identifying customers or calculating any franchise fee refunds for groups of customers or individual customers, the City shall reimburse the Company for the expenses incurred by the Company to provide such data or information.

12. Collection of the franchise fee shall cease at the earlier of the modification or repeal of the franchise fee or the end of the Ordinance term.

A. The obligation to collect and remit the fee imposed by this chapter is modified if:

(1) Any other person is authorized to sell natural gas to customers within the corporate limits of the City and the City imposes a franchise fee or its lawful equivalent at zero or a lesser rate than provided in this chapter, in which case the obligation of Company to collect and remit franchise fee shall be modified to zero or the lesser rate; or

(2) The City adds additional territory by annexation or consolidation and is unable or unwilling to impose the franchise fee upon all persons selling natural gas to consumers within the additional territory, in which case the franchise fee imposed on the revenue from sales by Company in the additional territory shall be zero or equal to that of the lowest fee being paid by any other retail seller of natural gas within the City; or

(3) The Iowa General Assembly enacts legislation, or any Iowa court issues a final judicial decision regarding franchise fees, or the Iowa Utilities Board issues a final nonappealable order (collectively, "Final Franchise Fee Action") that modifies, but does not repeal, the ability of the City to impose a franchise fee or the ability of Company to collect from City customers and remit franchise fees to City. Within sixty (60) days of Final Franchise Fee Action, the City shall notify Company and the parties shall meet to determine whether this chapter can be revised, and, if so, how to revise the franchise fee on a continuing basis to meet revised legal requirements. After Final Franchise Fee Action and until passage by the City of revisions to the franchise fee Ordinance, Company may temporarily discontinue collection and remittance of the franchise fee if in its sole opinion it believes it is required to do so in order to comply with revised legal requirements.

B. The obligation to collect and remit the fee imposed by this chapter is repealed, effective as of the date specified below with no liability therefor, if:

(1) The imposition, collection or remittance of a franchise fee is judicially determined to be unlawful by a court of competent jurisdiction within the State of Iowa. Such determination shall be effective only after all available appeals have either been exhausted or have expired; or

(2) The Iowa General Assembly enacts legislation making imposition, collection or remittance of a franchise fee unlawful, effective as of the date lawfully specified by the General Assembly; or

(3) The Iowa Utilities Board, or any successor agency, denies the Company the right to impose, collect or remit a franchise fee provided such denial is affirmed by the Supreme Court of Iowa, effective as of the date of the final agency order from which the appeal is taken.

13. Said franchise fee shall be in lieu of any other payments to the City for the Company's use of streets, avenues, alleys and public places in the said City and other administrative or regulatory costs with regard to said franchise; and said pipes, mains, and other conductor and appliances in, along and under the streets, avenues, alleys and public places in the said City for the purpose of distributing, supplying and selling gas to said City and the residents thereof and to persons and corporations beyond the limits thereof shall be exempt from any special tax, assessment, license or rental charge during the entire term of this chapter.

110.07 MANAGEMENT FEES. The City shall not, pursuant to Chapter 480A.6 of the Code of Iowa, impose or charge right-of-way management fees upon the Company or fees for permits for Company construction, maintenance, repairs, excavation, pavement cutting or inspections of Company work sites and projects or related matters.

110.08 NONEXCLUSIVE. The franchise granted by this chapter shall not be exclusive.

110.09 TERM OF FRANCHISE. The term of the franchise granted by this chapter and the rights thereunder shall continue for the period of twenty-five (25) years from the after its acceptance by the Company, as herein provided.

110.10 ENTIRE AGREEMENT. This chapter sets forth and constitutes the entire agreement between the Company and the City with respect to the rights contained herein, and may not be superseded, modified or otherwise amended without the approval and acceptance of the Company. Upon acceptance by the Company, this chapter shall supersede, abrogate and repeal the prior gas system ordinance between the Company the City as of the date this franchise ordinance is accepted by the Company. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in no event shall the City enact any ordinance or place any limitations, either operationally or through the assessment of fees that create additional burdens upon the Company or which delay utility operations.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Ordinance No. 999 adopting a natural gas franchise for the City was passed and adopted on May 16, 2011.

(Ch. 110 - Ord. 999 – Dec. 11 Supp.)