

RCW 35.21.860 Electricity, telephone, or natural gas business, service provider—Franchise fees prohibited—Exceptions. (1) No city or town may impose a franchise fee or any other fee or charge of whatever nature or description upon the light and power, or gas distribution businesses, as defined in RCW 82.16.010, or telephone business, as defined in RCW 82.16.010, or service provider for use of the right-of-way, except:

(a) A tax authorized by RCW 35.21.865 may be imposed;

(b) A fee may be charged to such businesses or service providers that recovers actual administrative expenses incurred by a city or town that are directly related to receiving and approving a permit, license, and franchise, to inspecting plans and construction, or to the preparation of a detailed statement pursuant to chapter 43.21C RCW;

(c) Taxes permitted by state law on service providers;

(d) Franchise requirements and fees for cable television services as allowed by federal law; and

(e) A site-specific charge pursuant to an agreement between the city or town and a service provider of personal wireless services acceptable to the parties for:

(i) The placement of new structures in the right-of-way regardless of height, unless the new structure is the result of a mandated relocation in which case no charge will be imposed if the previous location was not charged;

(ii) The placement of replacement structures when the replacement is necessary for the installation or attachment of wireless facilities, the replacement structure is higher than the replaced structure, and the overall height of the replacement structure and the wireless facility is more than sixty feet; or

(iii) The placement of personal wireless facilities on structures owned by the city or town located in the right-of-way. However, a site-specific charge shall not apply to the placement of personal wireless facilities on existing structures, unless the structure is owned by the city or town.

A city or town is not required to approve the use permit for the placement of a facility for personal wireless services that meets one of the criteria in this subsection absent such an agreement. If the parties are unable to agree on the amount of the charge, the service provider may submit the amount of the charge to binding arbitration by serving notice on the city or town. Within thirty days of receipt of the initial notice, each party shall furnish a list of acceptable arbitrators. The parties shall select an arbitrator; failing to agree on an arbitrator, each party shall select one arbitrator and the two arbitrators shall select a third arbitrator for an arbitration panel. The arbitrator or arbitrators shall determine the charge based on comparable siting agreements involving public land and rights-of-way. The arbitrator or arbitrators shall not decide any other disputed issues, including but not limited to size, location, and zoning requirements. Costs of the arbitration, including compensation for the arbitrator's services, must be borne equally by the parties participating in the arbitration and each party shall bear its own costs and expenses, including legal fees and witness expenses, in connection with the arbitration proceeding.

(2) Subsection (1) of this section does not prohibit franchise fees imposed on an electrical energy, natural gas, or telephone business, by contract existing on April 20, 1982, with a city or town,

for the duration of the contract, but the franchise fees shall be considered taxes for the purposes of the limitations established in RCW 35.21.865 and 35.21.870 to the extent the fees exceed the costs allowable under subsection (1) of this section. [2014 c 118 s 2; 2007 c 6 s 1020; 2000 c 83 s 8; 1983 2nd ex.s. c 3 s 39; 1982 1st ex.s. c 49 s 2.]

Part headings not law—Savings—Effective date—Severability—2007 c 6: See notes following RCW 82.32.020.

Findings—Intent—2007 c 6: See note following RCW 82.14.390.

Construction—Severability—Effective dates—1983 2nd ex.s. c 3: See notes following RCW 82.04.255.

Intent—Construction—Effective date—Fire district funding—1982 1st ex.s. c 49: See notes following RCW 35.21.710.

"Service provider" defined: RCW 35.99.010.