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The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission has approved a Final Rulemaking Order prohibiting public utilities from charging customers a separate fee to receive a paper utility bill. The Commissioners voted 5-0 to approve a joint motion by Chairman Gladys M. Brown and Vice Chairman John F. Coleman Jr.



The rulemaking follows a March 20, 2014, Order resolving a Commission investigation into the practice of paper invoice charges in the telecommunications industry. The Commission concluded that the expense of creating and providing a bill to each utility customer traditionally has been included in the operating expenses of the utility, and that imposing a separate charge to provide for the provision of monthly paper bills is not consistent with the Public Utility Code, Commission regulations, long-standing precedent and well-established practices of Pennsylvania public utilities.

The Commission also concluded that failing to provide customers with the option of an itemized, monthly paper bill — free of charge — constitutes unreasonable and inadequate service, under the Public Utility Code. Finally, the Commission concluded that charging consumers for a paper bill

adversely impacted universal service and the obligation to ensure that services are provided in a nondiscriminatory fashion given the disproportionate impact to low-income and elderly consumers.

On Dec. 4, 2014, the Commission issued a Proposed Rulemaking Order to amend existing regulations for all fixed public utility industries. The proposed rulemaking was published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on March 14, 2015, with comments to be filed within 30 days. — *Pocono Record (Stroudsburg, Monroe Co.)*

Cable tycoon John Malone's Liberty Global PLC is in talks to acquire Cable & Wireless Communications PLC in a deal that could be valued at more than \$5 billion, according to people familiar with the matter, and widen the acquisitive company's presence in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

A takeover deal between the companies could be reached before they report their respective financial results in early November, one of the people said. As usual with mergers and acquisitions, it is possible the talks will fall apart before an agreement is

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reached. Liberty Global and Cable & Wireless released separate statements confirming the companies are in talks about a possible deal after The Wall Street Journal reported the news. Cable & Wireless had a market value of about £2.6 billion, or roughly \$4 billion, on Thursday in London, where it trades. With Cable & Wireless debt, a deal could be valued at roughly \$8 billion. On Thursday, shares of Cable & Wireless, rose 21% to 70 pence in London.

Mr. Malone is Liberty Global's chairman and largest voting shareholder, with a 25% stake. The deal would come less than a year after Cable & Wireless paid about \$1.9 billion in cash and stock for Columbus International Inc., in which Mr. Malone owned a stake. That deal handed Mr. Malone a 13% voting stake in Cable & Wireless. Mr. Malone has recused himself from the conversations between Liberty Global and Cable & Wireless as a result, one of the people said.

Cable & Wireless, which has more than six million subscribers, offers pay-television, Internet, landline phone and wireless service—the so-called “quad play”—in the Caribbean, Panama, Monaco and the Seychelles, according to its website. Liberty Global has been focused on the need to offer a “quad play” eventually in all its territories, which span Europe, the Caribbean and Latin America. It doesn't have a mobile operator in the Caribbean.

Liberty Global already offers cable service today in Puerto Rico and Chile and recently created a separate stock dubbed LiLAC to track its Latin American and Caribbean holdings. The stock has dropped since its debut this summer. Still, Liberty Global executives have touted the region as ripe for growth. In August, the company said the region's revenue was up 7%, excluding acquisitions and foreign-exchange impact. “That region as a whole requires massive consolidation,” Liberty Global Chief Executive Mike Fries said at a September investor conference. “It is fragmented. It is underpenetrated. It is inefficient. If there was ever a part of the world that would benefit from the kind of things we do in terms of bringing rational consolidation to these broadband connectivity platforms, we think this is.” It is likely Cable & Wireless would be housed with LiLAC if the deal is consummated, one of the people said. Shares of LiLAC were up 14% to \$37.54 on Thursday.

Cable & Wireless was created in 2010 when a British telecommunications stalwart of the same name separated its U.K. and Caribbean operations. The U.K. operations were then purchased by Vodafone Group PLC for about £1 billion in 2012. Liberty Global is a sprawling international basket of cable operators that has scooped up assets across the world as it looks to position itself as a media and content-distribution giant. A series of large acquisitions in recent years, including the U.K.'s Virgin Media Inc. and Dutch cable operator Ziggo NV, have made Liberty Global the largest international cable operator with 27 million customers across 14 countries.

It has been on a buying spree in content over the past year, agreeing to acquire Irish broadcaster TV3 and taking stakes in production house All3Media and British broadcaster ITV. At the same time, it has been bulking up with telecom deals, including the purchase of Belgian mobile-phone operator BASE Company NV, agreed to in April. Liberty Global is separate from Mr. Malone's Liberty Broadband Corp., which backs U.S.-based Charter Communications Inc., the company buying Time Warner Cable Inc. and Bright House Networks. – ***Wall Street Journal***; **more in New York Times**

Facebook Inc. is taking another crack at search. The company said Thursday it has indexed more than two trillion posts from the social network, touting it as a way for users to track discussion of news events in real time. “A large percentage of people who come to Facebook, find out about what's happening in the world through their news feed,” Tom Stocky, vice president of search at Facebook, said in an interview. “This is an extension of that.”

By positioning itself as a source for news, Facebook is pitting itself against messaging service Twitter Inc., which recently added a curated news service called Moments. In late June, some users were prompted to search for news about ballerina Misty Copeland after she was named the first black principal ballerina in the American Ballet Theatre. These and other tests conducted by Facebook showed users had a big appetite for “things that are trending right now,” Mr. Stocky said.

Facebook is also ratcheting up its rivalry with search giant Google, now a unit of Alphabet Inc., by creating a search engine that falls outside Google’s scope. More than 1.5 billion search requests are made every day on Facebook, the company said Thursday. Google last updated its search figures in 2012, when it was averaging about 3.3 billion searches a day.

Facebook said users would be able to search through posts from friends as well as any post marked “public,” which could raise concerns about privacy. Managing that capability will be complicated because users can change the privacy settings of their posts at any time, former employees and search experts have said. Posts are also updated “billions of times” whenever users comment or like them, Mr. Stocky said.

Traditional search engines such as Google don’t face this particular issue. Facebook engineers had to create a system, called “Live Updates,” that combs the social network and tracks changes to posts. “All of these things have to be reflected in the search results within seconds or minutes,” Mr. Stocky said. Facebook’s previous attempt at search, the Graph Search feature launched in 2013, disappointed in part because of technical complexity. Even so, Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg has maintained that beefing up search is important to the company’s long-term strategy.

Facebook’s collection of public posts “is bigger than any web search corpus that is out there,” he told analysts in July. “We’re going to start off focusing on stuff that’s unique to Facebook, that you couldn’t really answer those questions elsewhere.” A well-honed search function would keep users on Facebook longer, allowing the social network to collect more data about its users, analysts say. Many Facebook users already use posts on the social network for help choosing a restaurant or a baby sitter, including Mr. Stocky who took to Facebook recently for stroller recommendations for his newborn child. Studies show that many consumers prefer recommendations from friends over anonymous reviews.

But for billions of people, Google is synonymous with search. That is a mentality Facebook will have to change if it hopes to take some of that activity away from Google, said Tamara Gaffney, principal analyst for Adobe Digital Index. The search capability was earlier reported by tech website the Verge. – **Wall Street Journal**

Phone and Internet service provider Talk Talk said Friday that private data from its 4 million British customers may have been compromised in a “significant and sustained” cyberattack on its website. Chief Executive Dido Harding said “there is a risk that all of our customers’ personal data has been accessed,” including credit card and bank details. She said she was unable to say whether customers’ information had been encrypted. London’s Metropolitan Police says its cybercrime unit is investigating “an allegation of data theft from a telecommunications website” reported on Wednesday.

Talk Talk has acknowledged that it realized it was under attack on Wednesday. It has been criticized for not telling customers for more than a day. It is the third known cyberattack in a year on Talk Talk, which provides mobile phone, broadband Internet and pay television services. Shares in the company plunged more than 7 percent Friday morning to 248.4 pence (\$3.83) on the London Stock Exchange. – **Associated Press**



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