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The Digital Viking



Twin Cities

PC USER GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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*TC/PC Exists to
Facilitate and Encourage
the Cooperative Exchange of
PC Knowledge and
Information Across
All Levels of Experience*

June 2026

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General Meeting

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

7:00 PM

Annual Meeting & Election of Officers

And

Taco Turn (Warehouse Engineering) Webinar

Via Zoom Only

Come to this month's meetings with ideas you would like to see addressed at next year's meetings and think of ways that you can contribute to your club. Ways to contribute include giving presentations or recruiting others to give presentations, and writing articles or short tips to include in the Digital Viking newsletter. There will also be a drawing for each of two gift cards, so if you are a TC/PC member you will not want to miss that.! But wait, there's more. We will also be watching a webinar on the engineering logistics and state-of-the art machinery and robotics that go into how warehouses get that product from order to final shipping to you. 🖥️

Note: All TC/PC Meetings and SIG Groups will be virtual until further notice. Visit tcpc.com for info.

Tech Topics with Jack Ungerleider via Zoom at 6pm before the General Meeting.



TC/PC is a
Member of

24-Hour Information • www.tcpc.com
Application form inside back cover

The Digital Viking

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Full page (7½ x 9½)	\$100.00
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Half page (7½ x 4¾)	65.00
One-third page (7½ x 3)	50.00
Quarter page (3½ x 4¾)	40.00
Member Bus. Card (2 x 3½)	10.00

Multiple insertion discounts available.

Contact Sharon Walbran at: SQWalbran@yahoo.com

Deadline for ad placement is the 1st of the month prior to publication. All rates are per issue and for digital or camera-ready ads. Typesetting and other services are extra and must be requested in advance of submission deadlines.

Payment must accompany order unless other arrangements are made in advance. Place make checks payable to: Twin Cities PC User Group

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Meets once or twice per year. All members welcome to attend.

Visit www.tpc.com for meeting details.

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Up to 5 newsletters mailed to
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Linux Phones

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Most of us use Android smartphones but how many of us know the update policy that applies to our specific device? The situation across the industry is nothing short of a mess. The level of support that is provided varies widely by manufacturer, and even by model, ranging between 3 and 7 years. Not surprisingly, the longest support periods are associated with the most-costly, premium phones while budget phones are normally at the other end of the spectrum.

Even so, the cost of a budget Android phone, at around \$100-150, is not inconsequential and the hardware is likely to be still perfectly functional when it will no longer receive over-the-air security patches from the manufacturer. So what is the poor user supposed to do – send perfectly good hardware to E-waste – purchase yet another short-lived Android device?

Does this seem reminiscent of the Windows 10 end-of-life scenario where many perfectly-good computers were placed on the scrap heap as a result of an arbitrary decision by a tech giant? It certainly should as there are clear similarities in the way in which the operating system software has been implemented.

Android, while being developed by Google, is built on the Linux kernel and so is nominally open-source software. In practice; however, both Google and individual device manufacturers have constructed proprietary ecosystems around their Android implementations. As a result, bootloaders are locked, access to large portions of the file system is restricted, essential device drivers are proprietary binary “blobs”, and security updates are tightly controlled. These constraints severely limit the ability of regular users to customize, modify and control how their smartphones function.

Wouldn't it be great if a phone could use native Linux rather than the limited functionality provided by Android? This scenario closely parallels the PC world where being confined by the limitations of the closed Windows operating system is contrasted with the flexibility offered by running that same computer with Linux.

Fortunately, Linux phones do exist, with hardware devices having only a tiny market share, and software options frequently limited by constraints imposed by proprietary hardware components.

Even more surprising is the fact that Linux phones were implemented more than 20 years ago! The first commercial Linux phone is usually taken to be the Motorola A760, released in 2003, and running MontaVista Linux. This was followed in 2007 by the OpenMoko Neo 1973 and in 2009 by the Nokia N900. The availability of such devices was short lived as manufacturers found that using Android was less expensive than in-house development of a Linux operating system and its applications.

Nevertheless, today there are a number of commercially-available Linux phones and several Linux distros that can be installed on existing phones that were originally released as Android devices. Prices for Linux phones vary considerably at US \$150 - \$2199. Most are available only on-line and many are subject to shipping charges and import duties. One important feature to check before purchasing any such device is its compatibility with Canadian cellular networks. Similarly, many available Linux distros currently support only a limited number of makes and models of smartphones so these too are not yet a universal solution.

At US \$149, the Pinephone 64 (<https://pine64.org/devices/pinephone/>) is the least-expensive option among recently-released Linux phones. However, the utility of this phone is hampered by outdated hardware with, for example, the main processor being more than 10-years old. A second version, the Pinephone Pro, featured updated hardware components and a consequent higher price (US \$399) but sales were slow and this device was discontinued in August, 2025.

Purism (<https://puri.sm>) has a premium range of Linux phones, from the Librem 5 (US \$799) to the Liberty Phone (US \$1999+). Even so, these devices are based on hardware components that are now more than five-years old. The Furi Labs FLX1s (<https://furilabs.com>) is a mid-range (US \$499) Linux phone with modern hardware. A number of current phones are also available, from international or crowd-sourced developers. These include the Volla Phone (Germany), Jolla Phone (Finland), Fairphone (The Netherlands), and BraX3 (United States).

One interesting aspect of Linux phones is that many are positioned as convergence devices, with docking stations included with the initial purchase or at least available as an optional accessory. These docks typically feature USB, HDMI, and Ethernet ports so that the phone can be connected to a keyboard, mouse, and monitor to function as a lightweight PC.

A related but different option is illustrated by the NexPhone (<https://nexphone.com>) which runs Nex OS, a multi-boot operating system that can launch Linux (Debian), Android, or Windows 11. Currently offered in pre-sale mode at US \$549 (\$199 deposit with a \$350 balance), the phone will include a five-port USB-C hub when it ships later this year.

The most well known Linux distro that can be installed on existing Android-based smartphones is Ubuntu Touch (<https://www.ubuntu-touch.io>). Originally developed by Canonical as a companion to Ubuntu Linux, the company's goal was to create a single operating system that could be used across all devices. The project was eventually cancelled in 2017 due to low user demand and a lack of partnerships with equipment manufacturers. The project was subsequently adopted by the community with the UBports Foundation being established in 2019. Open-source developers extended support to additional devices but even so only 31 phones are supported.

This lack of hardware support is a feature of many mobile Linux distros. For example, the website for Mobian (<https://mobian-project.org>), a derivative of the widely-adopted Debian distribution, lists only a dozen supported phones. Other distros with similar limitations include Sailfish OS (Volla) and PureOS (Purism).

Much broader coverage is offered by postmarketOS (<https://postmarketos.org>), a distro that is based on Alpine Linux. This distro lists more than 700 devices as having some degree of support available. The distro features Stable (point release) and Edge (rolling release) channels, and offers a number of user interfaces including Phosh and KDE Plasma. Main and Community devices are generally well supported with pre-built, ready-to-install images being available. Other devices, in the Testing or Downstream categories, require users to build installable images using software tools with source code that is specific to their devices.

One major limitation for this latter methodology is that open-source drivers for certain hardware components are not always available such that critical user features, e.g. the ability to place telephone calls and to send and receive text messages, may not be functional. This is recognized in the introductory material provided by postmarketOS that states *"In its current stage, postmarketOS is for Linux enthusiasts... If you are looking for an OS that is as usable as iOS or Android, this project is currently not for you"*

A recent announcement by the Open Software Foundation (<https://librephone.fsf.org/>) aims to fill the

software gap by reverse engineering the proprietary binary code that controls phone hardware components, such as modems and cameras, and provide open-source equivalents. Rob Savoye, a developer who previously worked on Gnash and OpenStreetMap, is the lead for the LibrePhone project. Initially the scope of the project will be limited to one or two devices that need the least amount of work. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that this will be a long-term project.

The current state of Linux phones is less than satisfactory with many reviewers finding the associated hardware and software to be somewhat lacking in terms of using these devices as daily drivers. Almost all of the devices and distros are noted as being suitable for those interested in tinkering with Linux on phones with requests for assistance in their future development. Notwithstanding such limitations, Linux on smartphones has come a long way and no doubt even more progress will occur over time. I will certainly be following the developments - and may even try tinkering a little in the interim!



Windows OneDrive

The Good, the Bad, The Ugly – and the Real Ugly

By Ken Pyzik, Contributing Member
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Has this happened to you on your Windows 11 machine? You save a file. You know you saved it; it's in your Documents folder. You go back later to open it ... and it's gone! Not moved. Not renamed. Just gone. You're staring at the screen thinking, "I'm not crazy. I put it right here."

Or how about this? You spend an hour editing a document. You save it. You take a break. You come back, open what you think is the same file ... and none of your changes are there. Not one. Suddenly you're questioning your memory, your sanity, and whether you've entered some kind of digital Twilight Zone. What is going on?

Welcome to Windows OneDrive, the "helpful" assistant that was supposed to protect your files but instead leaves you wondering if you're losing your mind.

The Evolution of OneDrive: From Optional Tool to Windows Enforcer

Windows OneDrive began life in 2007 as SkyDrive, a simple, optional cloud-storage service. You signed in if you wanted it. You chose what to upload. You controlled what lived in the cloud. It was a straightforward, user-driven backup tool — nothing more.

But as Windows shifted toward a cloud-centric model — and as large corporations demanded tighter control over local files (they didn't want branch offices storing "important documents" on random C:\ drives) — Microsoft slowly reshaped OneDrive into something far more aggressive.

Fast-forward to Windows 11:

- OneDrive is preinstalled.
- OneDrive is auto-launched.
- OneDrive redirects Desktop, Documents, and Pictures into the cloud.
- And unless you explicitly stop it, it assumes ownership of your user folders.

Yes, you **can** avoid this... but Microsoft has made the opt-out path so convoluted that most people never realize they "opted in" **in the first place!**

So, does that make Microsoft and OneDrive some kind of villain? Not exactly. It's more like Microsoft is trying to satisfy its biggest customers — enterprise IT departments — by giving them maximum control over user data.

But for everyday Windows users? That's where the story gets a little more complicated. So, let's break it down honestly and clearly: what's good, what's bad, what's ugly... and what's really ugly.

OneDrive – The GOOD Stuff

Let's be fair: OneDrive **does** have strengths, and when it works the way Microsoft originally intended, it does one thing extremely well; it protects your files.

If you accidentally delete something, OneDrive has your back. A copy is sitting safely in the cloud, ready to restore. That alone has saved countless people from losing school papers, work documents, family photos, and everything in between.

And sharing? That's where OneDrive genuinely shines.

You can share documents, photos, spreadsheets, and entire folders with friends, family members, coworkers, committees, peer groups, club members and any other social club.

You choose what to share, and you control who can see it. For collaboration, it's simple, clean, and effective. In other words: As a cloud backup and sharing tool, OneDrive is genuinely good. If that's all it did, this article wouldn't need a "Bad," "Ugly," or "Real Ugly" section.

OneDrive – The BAD Stuff

But here's where things start to go sideways. Microsoft got ... let's call it ambitious. They didn't want OneDrive to be something you chose to use. They wanted it to be something you couldn't avoid. So, they slowly shifted it from an optional cloud tool into something that feels "almost mandatory."

They took away your ability to choose.

If you want OneDrive? Great! It installs itself, launches itself, and happily takes over your user folders. But if you don't want OneDrive? Now you're in trouble. You have to dodge it during setup. You have to decline it in multiple places. You have to know exactly which screens to avoid. And most people don't, so they end up with OneDrive whether they wanted it or not.

Then Microsoft added a little psychological pressure: "If you don't enable OneDrive, you might break Windows. Your files won't be safe. You're doing something risky." And once it's installed? Good luck removing it. Even if you uninstall it, disable it, and rip out every hook you can find... Windows updates have a habit of quietly resurrecting it. Suddenly it's back, running in the background, reclaiming control of your folders, and acting like it never left. This isn't "helpful." This is persistent and "pushy".

And it's the beginning of why OneDrive goes from "bad" to "ugly" very quickly.

OneDrive – The UGLY Stuff

Today, when installed, OneDrive stops being merely "pushy" and starts taking over parts of your computer that most people assume are sacred. Microsoft has designed OneDrive to seize control of

three of the most important locations on your system: your Documents folder, your Desktop and your Pictures folder. Why those three? Because that's where almost everyone stores almost everything. Think about your own computer: Where do your letters, spreadsheets, tax files, photos, screenshots, and personal documents live? Right there in those three folders.

OneDrive doesn't just back up those locations. It redirects them. It takes command of those folders and forces everything inside them to be synced to the cloud. And here's where things get truly unsettling. To "save space" (and to give Microsoft more control), OneDrive doesn't simply copy your files to the cloud, it often *moves* them there. Your local machine is left with tiny placeholder icons that look like files but aren't real files!

You think your files are on your computer. You think they're safe and local. But in reality, they may exist only in the cloud, and you're just seeing pointers that pretend to be files.

This is the moment where people start losing work, losing track of where their data lives, and losing confidence in their own memory. The system is no longer behaving like a normal computer; It's behaving like a cloud terminal attached to Microsoft's cloud environment. You are not controlling your documents anymore – Microsoft is. And that's not just bad. That's ugly.

OneDrive – The Real UGLY Stuff

So, after all the confusion, after all the disappearing files, and after finally discovering that your "local" documents are actually living in the cloud, Microsoft then delivers the final blow: Cloud storage limits.

Because here's the truth: Microsoft can't store everyone's files forever. They can't give unlimited space to millions of users. So, they do what every cloud company eventually does: they cap your storage. You get 5 GB of cloud storage and 15 GB of email storage for free. That sounds generous ... until you realize what's actually being stored there. Remember:

- OneDrive has taken over your Documents.
- OneDrive has taken over your Desktop.
- OneDrive has taken over your Pictures.
- OneDrive is syncing everything you touch.
- And if you use Microsoft 365's Outlook, your email is also eating into that same quota.

Add in: backups, autosaves, version histories, attachments, photos, screenshots, and every file you didn't even know was being redirected, and suddenly that "free" storage evaporates. Then comes the message: "You're out of OneDrive storage. To keep syncing your files, you need more space." And guess what? **1 TB more space costs \$10 a month (\$100/year).**

Not because *you* chose to store your files in the cloud. Not because you intentionally uploaded anything. But because OneDrive quietly moved your files there, filled up your quota, and now holds your own data hostage. This isn't convenience anymore. This isn't safety anymore. This is a business model — and you end up paying for something you never really wanted in the first place.

OneDrive – The Moral of the Story

I don't want you to think I hate OneDrive (though to be honest, I really do). To each their own. Some people genuinely love the convenience of the collaboration features, the file sharing, the automatic backups, the ability to access documents from anywhere. And for those people, OneDrive is fantastic.

But here's what you need to remember. OneDrive is no longer the simple, optional backup tool it started to be. It used to be a nice little add-on — something you could choose to use if you wanted a safe place to store or share files.

Today, OneDrive has morphed into something very different: intrusive, controlling, deeply embedded into the system, confusing for novices and nearly impossible to avoid.

Microsoft didn't evolve OneDrive out of kindness. Maybe in the beginning it was a helpful bonus. But now? OneDrive is a core part of Microsoft's cloud-centric business model — a model that guarantees future revenue from users who never intended to store their entire digital life in the cloud. And that's the real moral of the story:

OneDrive isn't just a tool anymore. It's a strategy. And unless you understand how it works, you're the one being managed — not your files.



Meetings start at 7:00 PM (9:00 AM on Saturday) unless otherwise noted. *Virtual Meetings during Covid pandemic.

June

July

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 7pm General Mtg Annual Meeting 6pm Tech Topics	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 7pm General Mtg TBA 6pm Tech Topics	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	



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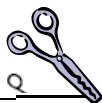
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As a member of TC/PC, the Twin Cities Personal Computer Group, one of the benefits is reading this monthly publication at www.tcpc.com.

As a member of TC/PC, you may attend any or all of the monthly Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings and be eligible for software drawings. The small membership fee also includes access to real-live people with answers via our helplines, discounts, and various other perks.

Does membership in this group sound like a good way to increase your computer knowledge?

It's easy to do! Simply fill in the form below and mail it to the address shown.
(If you use the form in this issue, you will receive an extra month for joining now.)



		6/26
Here's the info for my TC/PC Membership:		I'm signing up for3
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June 9, 2026

7:00 pm

**General Meeting
Annual Meeting and
Election of Officers**

Via Zoom Only



341 County Rd C2 W
Roseville, MN 55113

FIRST CLASS MAIL