

Cable from page A1

At the last meeting, one Hills resident accused the commission of being in cahoots with the cable company. Others have wondered why some commission members sound like apologists for Time Warner.

"I think the most frustrating thing is a lack of understanding in terms of what authority we have, what we can and can't do," Farmington Councilman and SWOCC Chairman Bill Hartscock said. "And quite frankly it is confusing to the general public because the rules have changed."

SWOCC was formed as a guardian of community interests over cable TV.

In ensuing years, commission members have watched their authority erode as Federal Communications Commission and Congress have tried to regulate the industry. Cable companies have responded by manipulating government mandates to their benefit, critics have said.

For example, Farmington area cable subscribers will see rates of being in cahoots with the cable company. Others have wondered why some commission members sound like apologists for Time Warner.

The social contract was a result of Time Warner previously overcharging customers. However, Time Warner wasn't the cable provider in Farmington at the time.

Yet Farmington like all Time Warner's subscribers will pay a dollar more in January.

Last January, Time Warner raised rates \$1.88 for a majority of customers in order to pay for a fiber optic upgrade. Financial figures given to SWOCC indicate Time Warner made \$10 million during a 10-month period — a profit margin of 48 percent (though estimates have gone as high as 50 percent).

Residents complain, but cable commissioners generally throw up their hands.

"I think often that people who

come to these meetings with complaints forget the fact that this is a business. They are out there to make money," Hartscock said. "Perhaps as much as we would like, perhaps as much as the residents would like, we don't control them so far as how much money they make."

That is why he said Hills Mayor and commission member Aldo Vagnozzi, but he lets Time Warner officials hear about it.

"I think they are entitled to a reasonable profit or return," Vagnozzi said. "I consider them a public utility and the return there is around 12 percent."

"To raise rates on a 55-percent profit year was unconscionable ... They are siphoning money from the community."

One area SWOCC does have control — renewal of the franchise agreement — had Vagnozzi vowing to do all he can to hold it up unless Time Warner is more forthcoming with financial information.

But added Vagnozzi, "I'm not too sure how much authority we have to delay a franchise renewal."

Cable commission and its subscribers knight in shining armor, ironically, might be a telephone company. Ameritech made a presentation about offering cable service in the Farmington area.

No time table has been set and talks in are in the preliminary stages, SWOCC officials said.

Ameritech is already providing competition for Continental Cablevision in Canton. Cable subscribers there seen immediate benefits, including previous pay channels like Disney and PASS being offered free of charge.

"Quite frankly we all welcome the opportunity to have more than one cable operator because then it becomes a normal business environment where there is competition," Hartscock said.

Hills looks for better parks management

By WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

With the new natural and recreational parks, an ice arena, youth program and senior programs, Farmington Hills has a lot to offer.

Now the city wants to find

ways to better manage its larger program.

That's why the city council voted to seek bids for an organizational analysis of the Department of Special Services, which oversees the vast properties and activities covering all age groups.

City Manager Daniel Hobbs recommended the study at a cost of up to \$10,000, after discussing the issue with the council at a Sept. 4 study session.

Hobbs suggested a short list of six firms to examine the department and make recommendations to make sure the city can continue to run and maintain programs and parks.

The city now has almost 400 acres of park land of which half is being kept in its natural state. The other half is in various stages of development for soccer, ball fields and other recreational space.

The goal of the analysis is to review management, staffing, organization, resources and the role of advisory boards.

Hobbs would like the study to be completed in time to include any recommendations or costs in next year's budget.

The city council also voted to obtain bids for improvements to the ice arena's vestibule.

The council discussed problems with the cold inside the entrance at the arena. The city recommended an outside expansion to provide an airlock that would keep the entrance area warmer.

The city will take bids on the project. The estimated \$26,000 in costs would come from arena proceeds that exceeded costs by \$30,000 for the first, shortened operating year.

AGENDAS

Below are highlights from the agendas of meetings this week. All meetings are open to the public.

Farmington Hills City Council
City Hall, 474-0115
Regular meeting
Council chambers
7:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 16

Agenda items include:
■ Report on the Youth and Families Program by Todd Lipa
■ A public hearing to consider the introduction of a request to rezone property at the northeast corner of Haggerty and Nine Mile from office research to local business or community business.

■ A review of a decision on dry floor activities at the ice arena.
■ Consideration of a final plat approval for the Arbor Park subdivision.

■ Consideration of a final plat approval for the Buttons Orchard subdivision.

■ Consideration of approval of a grant request for an environmental study and possible reclamation action for the Grand Haggerty Salvage Yard.

■ Consideration of a proposed amendment and extension to fiscal 1996/98 and amendment to the proposed 1997 juvenile justice grant budgets for the Decen-

tralized Youth Program.

Farmington City Council
City Hall, 474-5500

Regular meeting, council chambers
8 p.m. Monday, Sept. 16

Agenda items include:
■ Request for sign variance, 20750 Farmington Road, Magic Cleaners/Kentucky Fried Chicken.

■ Letter from Carol Kirkland about a block party on Merrilland Court.

■ Request for proclamation: YMCA Day, Oct. 12.

■ Proposal to remove and redo Historical Museum roof.

■ Appointment to Beautification Commission of Patricia Shelton and Joan Harrison.

Farmington Public Schools
Lewis Schulman Administrative Building, 489-3300

Regular meeting, school headquarters
7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 17

Agenda items include:
■ Monthly curriculum/school reports.

■ Preliminary report on high school proficiency tests.

■ Approval of natural gas purchase agreement.

■ Award of bids: district ice cream contract.

Dentistry in the 90s
by Herbert M. Gardner, D.D.S. & Martha P. Zinderman, R.N., D.D.S.

CANKER SORES
Usually arising at a single site, but often occurring as multiple ulcers, canker sores affect up to half the population of this country. Their cause is often unknown, but they are believed to represent hypersensitivity reactions, often known as immune dysfunction. For many people, canker sores accompany the eating of certain foods (especially acidic foods), appear after exposure to irritants, or result from trauma to the mouth. Stress may also play a role. Canker sores usually run their course in three to fourteen days. To help the healing process along, patients may want to consider warm salty water or apply a nonprescription anesthetic cream or ointment to help ease the discomfort. If recurrences of canker sores are frequent, consult with the dentist about using a prescription steroid cream or mouthwash.

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P.S. Canker sores differ from canker sores in that they appear outside the mouth and are triggered by a herpes virus, the family of viruses that cause chicken pox and shingles.

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AIDS from page A1

teachers aides are helpers "and not people with AIDS," McElroy said.

Many districts in Oakland County teach many of the same things.

How sexual activity is linked with AIDS is taught starting in the fourth grade, she added.

McElroy planned to fax a letter to Schlessinger to clarify the issue.

"I just feel a moral and profes-

sional obligation to clear that up a little bit," McElroy said.

Part of the confusion stems from a parent notification letter explaining AIDS education in the early elementary level. A version of the same letter that is sent outlining sex ed program to parents of children in grades fourth and above was used.

Likely, a new one will be written, McElroy said. A synopsis is on the back of the back of the letter outlines what is taught at the kindergarten through grade three level.

"I don't think they (parents) get that far," she said.

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Presented by Joseph E. Oesterling, M.D.
Urologist-in-Chief, Director of the U-M Prostate Program

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Marriott Hotel at Laurel Park Place
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This event is free of charge.

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