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Residents miffed over cable charge

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

"Why should we pay to get cable TV in here when people across the road are getting it put in free?"

That was a familiar, angry cry heard last week from some Farmington Hills residents who recently learned that after waiting months for cable TV, the only way they'll be tuning in is by paying a \$200-\$300 installation fee.

The problem stems from the Metro-Vision cable firm's "line extension policy" under which customers are charged for cable installation in areas which have fewer than 30 houses in a linear mile.

The stipulation was included in the cable TV ordinance adopted 1 1/2 years

ago by the Novi, Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils.

Out of the 21,000 potential cable subscribers in Farmington Hills, 95 percent meet the firm's density requirements and are receiving free installation, said MetroVision General Manager Tom Bjorklund. But residents in about 500 homes throughout the less densely populated sections of the city are out of luck, unless they are willing to pay an installation fee.

"I don't think we're saying this area or any other part of the town is being excluded," Bjorklund told about 20 Power and 11 Mile Road residents in an informal meeting last Thursday at the home of resident Dr. Lee Julian.

BUT BJORKLUND admitted that

'I don't think we're saying this area or any other part of town is being excluded.'

— Thomas Bjorklund
MetroVision

cable service cannot be brought to these residents unless they are willing to share the cost of installation ranging from \$200 to \$300 per household, depending on the number of residents who will subscribe to cable TV. If most of the 34 households in the Power Road area subscribe, the average cost per household will be near \$200, he added.

"If less than all the residents decide to go along (with cable TV), the subscribers ratio goes up a bit," Bjorklund said.

But Power Road residents claimed that even a \$200 installation charge was outrageous when most city residents are receiving free installation. The angry residents pointed to adja-

cent streets such as Alameda, Holly Hills and Hall, where cable is already installed. Power Road homeowners claim the adjacent streets have fewer houses per mile than their neighborhood.

"We have twice the homes and we can't have cable. That's not fair," said resident Nina Pili.

Bjorklund, however, claimed that MetroVision has not "intentionally built where there is less than 30 houses."

Responding to residents' charges of discrimination, Bjorklund said the issue is solely economic. "We're not a charity," he said, adding that for the firm to break even financially, cable TV must be installed in at least every 25 homes per mile.

Average overhead for cable construction is about \$12,000 for every mile of cable, Bjorklund said. Unless there are enough households along a cable route, the firm loses money.

While the 15-year cable franchise does not exclude residents in the less dense areas, the cable firm, as allowed by cable ordinance, may charge for installation.

"We're certainly not applying this rule only to Power Road," he said.

Still unsatisfied with Bjorklund's attempt to explain the "line extension policy," residents continued to shoot questions and fires at the general manager, the city councils which adopted the cable ordinance and MetroVision.

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Hospital sets site to expand

By Mary Lou Callaway
special writer

Sinai Hospital plans to take over the Potomac Medical Building early next year at Farmington and Maple roads in West Bloomfield.

The facility has been nearly "swept" since it was built four years ago.

The structure, now called Maple-Farmington Professional Park, will be used by Sinai as a new health care center, offering comprehensive ambulatory mental health services, cardiovascular fitness rehabilitation and physical medicine rehabilitation.

But Sinai must honor some local governmental requirements before moving in.

Sinai officials have applied for remodeling and alteration permits for the three-story building, according to the West Bloomfield Township building department.

LAST WEEK, Sinai representative Arnold Kimmel appeared at the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) requesting a variance to allow for a second sign at the planned Farmington Road access.

The ZBA will make an on-site inspection Thursday before deciding on the non-conforming sign. Planning department staff clerk Marjorie Kojala said the planning department mailed 107 letters to property owners within 300 feet of the building. There were 19 replies objecting to the additional sign, beyond the one allowed, she said.

The leased building will not be exempt from property taxes, according to the township assessing department.

Once the building department inspections are made, permits to begin renovation of the building can be issued. When those are complete, a certificate of occupancy is issued.

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Cloverdale will be one of the schools evaluated during the study of special education in the Farmington Schools.

District spends funds to find worth of special ed. program

By Tom Baer
staff writer

Most Farmington school officials think highly of their district's special education programs for handicapped students. Now they're going to spend \$8,000 to see if they can get that opinion confirmed.

The district has hired a Berkley firm, Instructional Development and Evaluation Associates, to do "a comprehensive study of the entire process of special education in Farmington" in the words of Eric Gordon, the firm's director.

State and federal laws require that all handicapped children have access to a "free and appropriate" education. To that end, the district served 1,342 students from southwest Oakland County in its special education programs last school year.

Included in the program are the Cloverdale and Farmington Training

Centers for about 300 developmentally disabled children. Most of the rest of the special education students are part of the general school population.

"No matter the handicap, we have to educate them in the least restrictive environment," said Graham Lewis, assistant superintendent for Farmington's special education services. "That means they have to stay as close as possible to the mainstream."

Lewis said the study, which is underway, is not required by the government to ensure compliance with the laws, but rather as a way "to get our bearings and move on."

ADDED LEWIS, "We want to stop and take a look and see if the programs we have are going in the right direction and serving all the handicapped children to the best of their abilities."

"At the same time, we're trying to make sure that special education is being accepted by other staff members

and administrators."

Gordon's firm, known as I.D.E.A. Inc., will collect data through on-site interviews and surveys. Gordon and associate Heather Sellich will conduct the study.

The survey should be finished in a month, Gordon said, and an analysis — with recommendations — will be ready by next spring.

"I think this is a very gutsy thing for the district to do," said Gordon, a former assistant professor of education at Michigan State University. "Whenever you take a look at yourself like this you take the chance of seeing some blemishes."

Why should a district like Farmington seek the services of Gordon's firm? "One has financial investments," he said. "Periodically, one looks at them to see if they're progressing the way they should be. That's the way we look at an educational program."

"Why go to Eric Gordon instead of

doing it with your own staff? Sometimes, if you're removed from the situation, you can be totally objective when you look at it. When you're internal, you're too close."

STARTED IN 1973, I.D.E.A. Inc. has done work for the Farmington District in the past, but never in the field of special education.

"The key to special education is to provide the best educational opportunities possible for kids with special needs," Gordon said. "Now what we want to do is find out to what extent we are doing that. It's a status survey which ultimately can be used in planning."

Gordon said the study will focus on communication between members of the educational team providing the special education instruction.

In this way, he said, the success of the program and the preception of the parents of special education students can be determined.

Gordon and Sellich, who both hold doctorates in education, explained their program to the Farmington Board of Education last Tuesday at its regular meeting.

Gordon said the study will cost "between \$8-10,000."

School still out in Walled Lake

Teachers in the Walled Lake School District begin their second week on the picket line today with no immediate end to the labor dispute in sight.

Negotiators for the school board and the Walled Lake Education Association, the teachers' union, failed to schedule talks over the weekend, according to reports Friday.

Both sides met extensively on Tues-

day and Wednesday last week. After a marathon session Tuesday, and another seven-hour meeting Wednesday, both bargaining teams were optimistic that a settlement could be reached.

But it never materialized.

Walled Lake teachers walked out their jobs Oct. 3. Their 1982-83 contract was extended 30 days last month, in hopes of reaching an agreement.

Assault logged in Farmington

A 35-year-old Plymouth man told Farmington police he was assaulted by a man at a gas station following a traffic dispute last Wednesday night.

Richard Fernandez said he was driving his car on Eight Mile Road east of I-75 a little after 10 p.m. Wednesday when a car pulled up behind him and followed closely.

Fernandez drove to a gas station at Eight Mile and Farmington roads and got out of his car. The other driver also entered the station and left his car. The

driver threatened Fernandez before hitting him in the eye, police said, and then returned to his car and drove away.

"... the victim (Fernandez) noticed a strong odor of Intoxicants" when the assailant approached him, the police report said.

Police are looking for a male standing 5-foot-9, weighing about 160 pounds with brown curly hair to his shoulders and a short brown beard. He was driving a 1982 Dodge Rampage.

Schools awarded gifts

Farmington's Board of Education Tuesday rendered an official thank you to three benefactors who have provided recent gifts of money to the school district.

The gifts, totalling \$3,593.15, came from the Beacon Square Swimming Club in Southfield, the Farmington Hills Knights of Columbus and the American Association of University Women (AAUW).

Beacon Square's donation — \$1,893.15 — represented the proceeds of a swim-a-thon held last summer. The money will benefit the Cloverdale Developmental Center, a Farmington Public Schools facility for about 70 developmentally disabled and mentally handicapped students.

"The funds will be used for whatever items they may need, but may not have money for in their budget," a district spokesman said.

The Knights of Columbus contributed \$1,500 — a share of a recent candy sale — to the Farmington Training Center, another learning facility for the developmentally disabled.

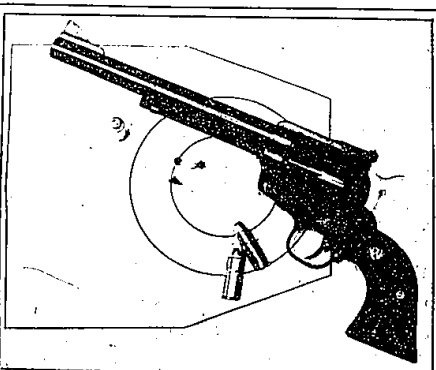
"We appreciate this," said Fred Parker, supervisor for special education for the Farmington Schools. "It allows us to have some things not normally in our budget."

OVER THE past several years, the financial gifts have allowed the center to start a coffee house for the students and to purchase 25 to 30 pairs of roller skates, computer equipment and software and a large-screen television set.

The AAUW's gift of \$200 was an unofficial payment for the use of a room in a district-owned portable classroom. The group used the room to store books for the annual book sale at the Livonia Mall.

"It's not rent — it's a gift," said board trustee Emma Mahinen, who is affiliated with the AAUW. "It's saying thank you to the board for the use of the room."

The gifts were acknowledged at the board of education meeting Tuesday.



On target

Oral Quarrels left little room for doubt when responding to last Thursday's question about gun control. Please turn to page 6A to find out how your neighbors feel about this controversial issue.

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