

Money for rehab housing increased

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Cass and Edmonton in Farmington Acres Subdivision.

BUT THE AMOUNT allocated for capital improvements was reduced Monday when Edmonton residents opposed paving. With improvements planned only for Kirby and Cass, city officials allocated \$110,000 instead of \$130,000 in CDBG money for proposed projects.

The CDBG money will be used to pay the majority of drainage improvements while residents will be specially assessed \$100,000 for paving costs. A \$10,000 portion of the drainage costs will be included in the special assessment district, bringing the total to \$170,000 or approximately \$2,967 per unit. Construction is tentatively scheduled for spring 1987.

"It was only because of the lack of desire of those people (Edmonton residents) to have anything done on their roads that the money came back to its rightful home — housing rehabilitation," Roberts said following Monday's meeting.

Of the city's total expected \$234,000 in CDBG money, only \$234,000 is actually new money from the federal government. The total \$234,000 includes \$30,000 expected in repayments of loans made through the housing rehabilitation program.

It was inclusion of the \$30,000 in the 1986-87 allocation of CDBG money to the housing program that has irked Roberts since the proposed allocations were presented in February. Adding the \$30,000 to the program meant that city officials were allocating only \$16,000 in new money to the program for a total \$116,000.

Although \$30,000 in loan repayments is expected, Roberts said there is always the chance that the entire amount will not be repaid. "If we have delinquencies, we won't have that money, will we?" he said in mid-April.

LOAN REPAYMENTS, or at least a portion, should be set aside as a reserve on which the program can continue in case the federal government decides to eliminate CDBG

programs in an effort to reduce the burgeoning federal deficit. A reserve fund should also be maintained in case residents' fail to repay low-interest loans offered through the housing program.

Although Roberts maintains capital improvements in the low- to moderate-income areas are needed, he believes such improvements should be made with money in the city's general budget, rather than CDBG money.

But city officials have continued to maintain that capital improvements — financed with CDBG money — benefit a larger group of residents. Roberts, however, maintains that improving the housing stock in the south end of the city — where a majority of the program is used — improves the value of the city.

Although he approved the allocation of CDBG money, Councilman Don Wolf nonetheless believes the federal money should not be used to rehabilitate houses.

"It seems to me we are always pushing the liberal side," Wolf said after Monday's meeting. "I don't think the federal government should be involved in buying shingles, hot water tanks or porch steps. That kind of stuff hurts the very people you're trying to help because it increases the (federal) deficit."

Wolf would prefer — and expects — the eventual elimination of CDBG programs, although he is willing to accept the money if the federal government continues offering it to local municipalities. "I'm dumb, but not stupid. If we've got the money, spend it," he said.

BUT WOLF would like to see all of the city's CDBG money spent on road improvements in low- and moderate-income areas because he believes the projects benefit more people. Road improvements tend to encourage residents to improve their own houses, which, in turn, improves the marketability of the neighborhood, Wolf said.

"I don't think we can just hand them (low- and moderate-income residents) money (to rehabilitate houses)," Wolf said, though offering

no alternative to help residents improve their houses.

Despite his opposition to programs such as housing rehabilitation, Wolf said he favors the city's decision several years ago to put a lien on the property of those residents who want their roads paved yet cannot afford it. The lien does not have to be paid until the property is sold.

If the housing program becomes self-sufficient through repayment of loan interest loans, however, Wolf said he would have no qualms about its continuation as a local program.

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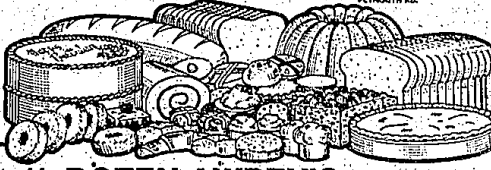
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