

City abolishes minimum water billing

By Casey Hane
Staff writer

The city of Farmington is giving the little guy a break while cracking down on delinquent commercial water users.

Under a new ordinance introduced by city council Monday, June 16, Farmington homeowners using small amounts of water — typically senior citizens and single residents — will get a break on their water bills with the abolishment of the city's minimum water billing.

The minimum billing of \$17.60 would be replaced with a minimum meter and service charge of \$4.40.

In addition, commercial customers who allow water bills to become delinquent, forcing the city to place them on city tax rolls for collection,

would face an administrative charge as well as delinquent fines under the new ordinance.

Increased fines would also be levied against commercial customers for turning water on once it is shut off for non-payment, and the minimum amount accepted for commercial customers who deposit against water accounts would be raised from \$16 to \$25.

Under the ordinance, City Treasurer Patsy Cantrell would be granted the authority to waive the usual 10 percent penalty charge for "extenuating circumstances" once during a two-year period. Previously, these penalties could not be waived for any reason.

ALTHOUGH THE CITY of Detroit, which provides water and sewerage

services to Farmington, is raising wholesale water rates, it was determined that by adjusting retail water rates up and sewerage rates down, the same amount would be charged to most residents, according to a report to council from City Manager Robert Deadman.

The exception would be those using less than 6,000 gallons of water each quarter, whose quarterly water bill would be reduced depending on the amount of water used, according to Deadman. Rates could vary from as low as \$6.60 for 1,000 gallons of water used to \$17.63 for 6,000 gallons, according to information presented in the 1986-87 budget.

Additional revenues would be obtained through the new and increased charges to delinquent commercial accounts.

A new line of \$25 would be charged for placing past due water bills on local tax rolls. Previously, the city charged nothing, thus not recovering its costs in personnel, billing and mailings, Deadman said.

This charge may remove some of the incentive of customers permitting these delinquent water bills to be placed on the tax rolls, Deadman said. "We are proposing to make the number large enough to generate payment."

IT PREVIOUSLY cost commercial customers \$2 and \$11 to turn water service back on during regular business hours and after hours, respectively. Under the new ordinance, it will cost these customers \$20 and \$50 to cover the city's costs. The changes affect only those cus-

tomers who allow their water payments to go delinquent, forcing the city to shut off service.

The adjustments and change in minimum billings were proposed during the formulation and review of the recently adopted city budget.

The changes would provide the city with the same total revenue in the Water and Sewer Budget, according to budget notes.

"The assumption used in this budget is based on the system's past

experience of water and sewerage usage," according to the budget.

It is projected that the system will use 17,000 per thousand cubic feet of water at a cost of \$303,200 and treat 79,000 per thousand cubic feet of sewerage at a cost of \$348,000. Revenues from the sale of water and sewer treatment services are projected to be \$1,173,000 with other revenues generating \$56,450.

The Water and Sewer Budget for the city for 1988-87 totals \$1,229,450.

Surgery center planned

Sinal Health Services, through a subsidiary corporation, will begin construction in July of the Sinal Surgery Center of Farmington Hills, an out-patient surgery facility on Orchard Lake Road, north of 12 Mile.

Slated to open in the summer of 1987, the center will provide services in many specialties including gynecology, ears/nose/throat, urology, ophthalmology, dermatology, as well as cosmetic and reconstructive, dental and oral, orthopedic, general and pediatric surgery. The center will offer a range of state-of-the-art

laser treatments as does Sinal Hospital, Sinal Health Service's largest affiliate.

Dr. Stuart Hamburger, chairman of the hospital's Department of Surgery, and Dr. Eli Green, chairman of the hospital's Department of Anesthesiology, will be responsible for coordinating the medical services for the center.

Administrative and operational systems will be developed by Sinal's Ambulatory Health Services division. Harley, Ellington, Pierce and

Yee is the architectural firm designing the facility.

"Outpatient surgery drastically cuts health care costs while providing an excellent source of surgical care," said Irving Shapiro, executive vice president of Sinal Health Services.

"This new ambulatory center will enable us to continue our longstanding tradition of providing the highest quality of outpatient surgery in an area where many of our patients live."

Other Sinal Health Services affiliates are the Nathan L. and Betty Gudin Health Care Center in West Bloomfield, which opened in 1984, and the Samuel and Lillian Hechtman Center in Bingham Farms, slated to open in the fall.

Variance is granted

A variance to Farmington's fence ordinance was granted Monday, June 16, for property at 28264 Freedom.

Applicant John VanWingerden of the Hillview subdivision, and his proposed fence would include approximately 3 1/2 lots, according to Bill Billing, the city's director of public services.

VanWingerden is proposing a standard 4-foot chain link fence be installed on the lot line. According to city ordinance, the property owners in the subdivision could install a fence in the same area without vari-

ance because it is their rear lot line. The applicant, however, must get a variance because of the direction his house faces.

City councilmen Alton Bennett and Richard Tupper said the applicant had a "good reason" to put up the fence.

"He's not encroaching on the view" of other neighbors, Bennett said.

"The lots are narrow and shallow and their back yards would come into his front yard," Tupper added. "He has a very good reason to put it up."

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