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City channels efforts on cable

CABLE CONNECTION



MARY LINDA CALDERONE

Farmington City Manager, Frank Lauhoff talks about the philosophy of the city having its own channel.

Channel surf no more. Farmington 15 premier Dec. 1. Farmington 16 is the government access channel for the city of Farmington. Up until now, the city of Farmington has shared Channel 8 with Farmington Hills.

"We're going to use the channel not only to provide information on times, notices and minutes of meetings as in the past, but we're looking to use the city's services and how to take advantage of them. Any kind of unusual situations that our residents need to know about, will also be covered on the channel."

"In situations such as the recent outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in the Farmington/Farmington Hills areas Lauhoff says, "the value of having government access channels was brought to the forefront." Public health updates can continue with first-hand, up-to-date coverage

on Channel 8.

I asked Mr. Lauhoff what else may be in store for us. He told me about a project in the works that Kevin Southern, government production specialist, is now developing. There will be approximately 20 different public service announcements that will describe activities and services provided by the city. Leaf pick-up, sled-hill use and parks information are just a few examples of what you will see in video form mixed with graphics and character-generation. You'll watch council members explaining, discussing services and department heads like the Police

Chief and Recycling Coordinator detailing what is happening in their areas.

So remember, if it's about Farmington, you'll hear it first on Farmington 15.

The next SWOCC meeting is Tuesday, Dec. 17, at 7 p.m. at Novi City Hall.

The next CAC meeting is Tuesday, Dec. 10, at 7 p.m. at SWOCC.

Mary Linda Calderone is the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission.

Council debates meeting replays on cable

BY WILLIAM COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills City Council members want the public to have plenty of chances to see them at work, but perhaps not too many lawyers.

At Monday's regular meeting, they debated the idea of video taping their regular meetings and playing them on the city's cable access Channel 8, the "Great 8."

City Manager Dan Hobbs put the proposal in terms hard to resist for the seven elected council members.

"At the risk of publicly praising you all, you are people of integrity," Hobbs said. "I prize your sense of humor."

Hobbs said replaying the meetings, which are now cablecast live, would give the city's video staff an immediate inven-

tory, allowing them to plan viewing and take pressure off for producing programs.

"Eventually we'll be in the opposite position, where we'll have plenty of good material and we'll have to find a chance to squeeze it in," he said.

But Councilman Jerry Ellis, who is a practicing attorney, said he was concerned that the city could be creating evidence that could be used against it in court.

"No matter how careful we are, an attorney will use that as evidence," Ellis said, adding that the public can tape the meetings, come to the council and follow accounts in the newspaper.

Council members Terry Sover and Cheryl Oliverio said they were not as concerned about the legal pitfalls, but preferred that the city repeat the meetings so that everyone who wanted to could see them.

City Attorney John Donohue said that while the meeting

tapes could be used against the city, they could also be used for.

But Councilwoman Vicki Barnett said that if the city taped them, the meetings would become public record, subject to the Freedom of Information Act and other laws that require the city to inventory and store the tapes.

"How long must we inventory?" she said, adding that she wasn't sure whether the city or Time Warner Cable would be responsible.

Donohue said that once the city generates a public document, the state dictates how long it must be kept.

"To my knowledge, the Secretary of State has never made any rulings on it," he said.

Council members Jon Grant and Nancy Bates both had reservations about creating a public record.

Grant said there would be

staff time as well as legal ramifications. Bates said if the tapes were edited, it could be trouble and if they weren't, some would be very lengthy.

Donohue said he was not as concerned about the tapes as evidence, since people record them on their VCRs. He said making them public documents could create staff and other headaches for the city.

"We're playing up the liability issue too much," Sever said. "Anyone can request verbatim minutes."

Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi said he would like to see the meetings taped.

"One of the best things we ever did was to televise council meetings," he said. "I'd like to see this done."

The council agreed to put it on the Jan. 11 goals session agenda.



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