

Hills adopts cable code

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residents," said Mayor Donn Wolf. His sentiments were echoed by Councilman William Lange, who wondered if Novi and Farmington needed Farmington Hills more than Farmington Hills needed the other two cities.

"Collectively, you'll benefit from the combined group from the very beginning," Horn reassured them. Horn cited a number of suburban communities around the nation which had banded together in their quests for cable television service.

In St. Louis, 20 communities have forged a cable pact. In the Chicago area, 21 have done the same. Five Minneapolis suburbs have worked out an agreement.

Horn warned that municipalities have to be careful when they enter into a pact to decipher between what a cable

firm verbally will promise and what they actually will deliver.

"Cable television companies will tell you what you want to hear. They will tell you you're going to get all the bells and whistles if that's what you say you want," he said.

Economics is the key, he said. The more communities uniting, the cheaper the cost to resident subscribers. "We (CTIC) can help you determine what wouldn't have been in the bid if you hadn't combined," he told them.

Even though bid specifications have been agreed upon, any of the three cities can withdraw if they are unhappy with what the other two may agree to.

What happens once the bids are in is up to the negotiating by the cable firms if they see they're not going to

win. They try to divide and conquer. It's better to stick together.

The three cities decided to combine their efforts after being deluged with offers from various cable television outfits. They hired CTIC to guide them through the process.

Bid proposals from each cable group can range up to 1,000 pages. CTIC will boil down the proposals to 150-200 pages "so you have a full understanding of what each company has to offer," Horn told the council.

Councilmen Earl Oppertbauer questioned whether cable might soon be outbid by satellite systems. Under those kinds of systems, viewers purchase an interceptor system to be mounted on their roofs.

But Horn was less than enthused about that system's viability in the near future.

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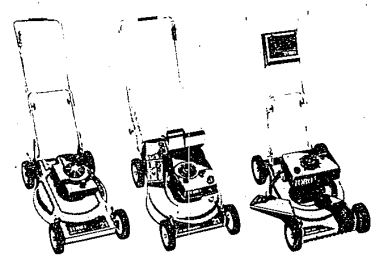
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