

Schools seek activist role in cable TV

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"That proposal reflects the district's strong desire and intent to become involved with the use of television, cable television and video taping as a means of instruction for students and community education and letting the community know what's going on in their schools," Freedman said.

The Farmington district is linked with the Novi School District, Oakland Community College, about 20 private schools and the city governments of Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi in a franchise area served by MetroVision.

MetroVision is the cable company which provides programming for the area under a contract with the Southwest Oakland Cable Commission, a decision-making body which is made up of the three city managers and representatives of their city councils.

"If we're going to broadcast to the community, we have to be locked into the agreements reached by the cable commission," Freedman said.

Freedman said he hopes the cable TV venture will receive additional financial support from MetroVision and the cable commission "just as other (school) districts throughout the state have received support."

But Freedman added, "At this point in time, we have not received any statement of support in terms of finances or equipment."

The Southfield School District, Freedman said, recently received a \$54,102 grant from their cable compa-

ny, Continental Cablevision, and the Southfield city government.

The size of the Farmington-area franchise and the many governmental bodies involved have clouded the financing question, Freedman said.

"The waters get a little muddied," he said. "You're not talking about a grant to just one district like Southfield. You're talking about a grant for a variety of educational areas."

"This is rather unique. I don't know of any other area in the same boat." Just one channel has been allocated for the area's educational programming. More will be needed, according to Freedman.

"There may be a choice football game or activity existing at three Farmington high schools and Novi all at the same time," he said. "I can see the difficulty of deciding who gets that time on the air."

THE PERSON to be hired to take charge of the Farmington district's cable TV program will be "a skilled individual who would have the title of coordinator of telecommunications," Freedman said.

Freedman said he expects problems finding trained people to teach instructors and students to use the new equipment.

"If things move along, the coordinator, once appointed, could teach a course in each of our high schools," he said.

In addition to Southfield, Oakland County school districts with cable TV programs include Birmingham, Waterford and Madison Heights Lamphere. Freedman said he hopes to model the

Farmington program after Birmingham's.

"We think Birmingham has one of the best setups right now," he said. "They put on some beautiful programs. They've been at it a little longer and they have the funds behind them."

Their cable company (Booth Communications) has provided them with a full-time person who is an expert in educational TV. Their cable company pays that salary."

Freedman sits on the Educational Advisory Committee with OCC's William Stuart, Novi's Rita Truane and William Tyndale College's Tom Lyzen-ga. Their committee make recommen-

dations to the Cable Access Committee, composed of nine citizens from the communities served.

The Cable Access Committee reports to the Southwest Oakland Cable Commission.

Although the Farmington board has placed the money for start-up costs into next year's budget, it will have to vote on the actual expenditures, Freedman said.

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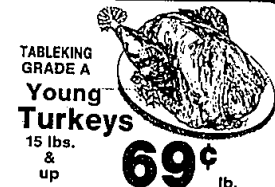
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