

Farmington Observer

Volume 95 Number 97

Thursday, September 13, 1984

Farmington, Michigan

88 Pages

Twenty-five cents

Cities willing to grant Metro a raise

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Despite some public protest, MetroVision's request for a rate increase has the blessings of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC).

"It appears to us . . . that a rate increase is in order. The question is how much," said Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman, SWOCC member.

In a unanimous vote following a public hearing Tuesday, the six-member commission recommended that the city councils of Novi, Farmington and Farmington Hills approve MetroVision's requested rate increase.

The city councils have 60 days to consider SWOCC's recommendation.

The rate increase, according to the commission's recommendation, is subject to a rollback to provide MetroVision with a 15-percent rate of return (over the life of the 15-year franchise).

As SWOCC was about to vote, members realized that the proposed rate increase would provide the firm with a 16-percent rate of return.

SWOCC members claimed that through the original cable contract, they are committed to allowing the cable firm only 15-percent rate of return.

"This evening I have a very hard

time recommending to the city councils a 16-percent rate of return . . . when we've committed to 15 percent (rate of return)," Deadman said.

Although the figures are expected to change slightly (by 1 percent) because of the proposed rollback, the recommended rate increase would affect residents subscribing to MetroVision's Tier III level of service.

SUBSCRIBER'S CURRENTLY pay \$7.25 a month for Tier III (channels 2-11) service. Under the proposed change, the monthly rate would increase to \$9.95. The installation charge

would remain the same — \$19.95.

The proposed increase would not affect residents who subscribe to three or more pay services, such as HBO, Cinemax or Showtime. Monthly rates and installation charges for Tiers I and II would remain the same.

The cable firm is also proposing an increase from \$3.50 a month to \$4.50 for each additional outlet (without remote control).

SWOCC also recommended approval of several amendments to the original cable franchise agreement.

These amendments include:
• Allowing MetroVision to ask for a

rate increase at any time, provided they don't make the request more than once in a twelve-month period.

• Allowing the services and facilities originally agreed upon to be modified by mutual agreement between MetroVision and SWOCC.

• Changing the construction plan to incorporate changes, such as an additional 60 miles of wiring in Farmington Hills and Novi.

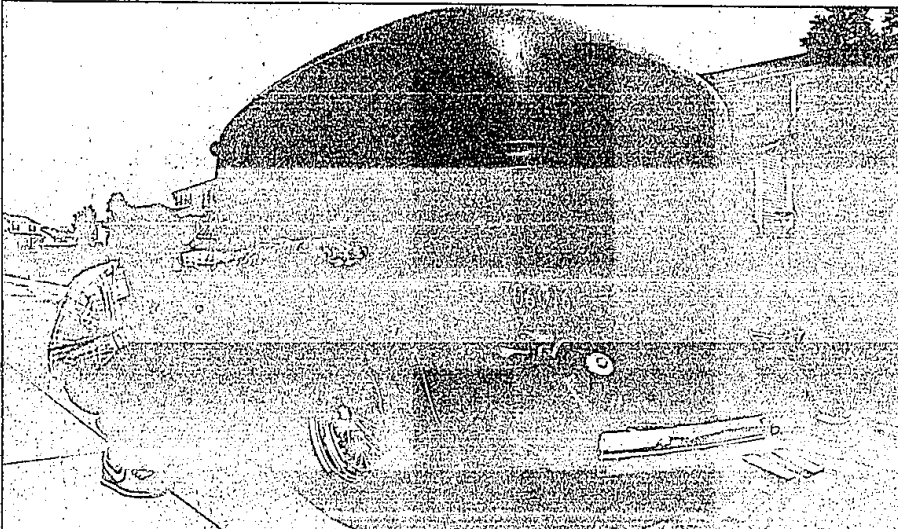
According to the original cable franchise, MetroVision could not be allowed to ask for a rate increase until 1986.

But with recent Federal Commu-

nications Commission rulings and U.S. Supreme Court decisions, MetroVision, at least according to cable industry interpretation, could increase their rates without SWOCC or public approval, Harris said.

SWOCC's recommended approval of the amendment allowing the cable firm to ask for a rate increase once in a 12-month period also would allow MetroVision's current request.

But Harris said the cable firm decided to follow procedures outlined in the cable franchise because legislation now being discussed could return control of rates regulation back to the local commu-



Cars shine for show

Richard Mueller will be one of two Farmington Hills residents participating in the 5th Annual Street Rod Nationals North to be held

this weekend at the Michigan State Fairgrounds. Please turn to page 3A for a related story and more photos.

Rate users blast cable

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

If it were up to at least 40 disgruntled cable-TV subscribers, MetroVision would have little chance of getting a rate increase until it improved its public image, performance and services.

And the residents who turned out for a Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission public hearing Tuesday weren't kidding when it came to their complaints about the cable firm.

"I have had your cable service for one day and I am ready to cancel," said Karen Crawford of Farmington Hills. She told MetroVision officials of her troubles in trying to subscribe to cable services.

"I spoke to six people in one day," Crawford said, adding it took about two weeks to get cable once MetroVision said they would be out to hook-up service.

As Crawford related her troubles, a woman in the back of the room murmured that Crawford's troubles were small compared to hers.

"It took me six months to get it," the woman said.

Jerome and Janet Morris, on the other hand, tried to subscribe to cable. But the couple has now put aside the idea. The reason, they say, is they didn't like the treatment they received

over the telephone from MetroVision employees.

DARLENE THOMPSON of Farmington Hills also complained about poor service.

Thompson said she didn't like the manner in which the cable service man conducted himself when he came to her home to fix a problem.

"God forbid it's a Friday," she said, about having a repairman to fix a problem.

When the repairman realized he didn't have the necessary part to fix Thompson's cable system, he said he would prefer returning on Monday because he had to go fishing or to a party, Thompson said.

"Guess what? I waited until Monday," she said.

Many residents complained of poor treatment by MetroVision phone operators, officials and repairmen.

But getting through to MetroVision over the telephone was one of the biggest complaints from residents.

"A service company that you can't get through to isn't a service company," said Soeila Gross.

A problem with MetroVision's fairly new and sophisticated telephone system was one of several problems ad-

Please turn to Page 4

City will spruce up with help of federal funds

By Jean Adamczak
staff writer

Farmington neighborhoods will benefit from yet another federal grant.

Sidewalks, home improvements and downtown beautification will all be considered under the Urban County Community Development Block Grant Program.

Funding for the program originates at the federal level and is distributed through individual counties. Cities with a population less than 50,000 are eligible for funds.

City council members recently approved renewal of a three-year contract with Oakland County which should garner the city \$48,000 next year. The city has participated in the program for the past decade.

"Each community must develop its own program to utilize the funds," says

Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman.

A sub-committee of the planning commission is appointed by the commission's chairman. This committee is responsible for delegating how the funds from the community development program are used, says Deadman.

Next year's program priorities have yet to be set, according to Deadman. But in past years sidewalk development and repair, ramps for the handicapped, and city beautification have all been funded through the community development program.

ACCORDING TO Deadman, a few Farmington neighborhoods were identified as low-to-moderate income areas and the city was able to put in streets and replace sidewalks under the program.

"The senior citizen taxi-cab service was funded for awhile by community development funds," Deadman says, adding that the service is now financed by SEATA.

Community development funds also paid for the planting of trees along Grand River, designed to improve the marketability of the downtown area.

A major part of the program goes for low-interest home-improvement

loans available to low- or moderate-income families.

Homeowners may take up to 20 years to repay the loan at an interest rate of 3 percent, says Deadman.

"Extremely low-income families may receive interest-free loans regardless whenever the homeowner leaves," explains Deadman.

"Historically, it has been homes badly in need of repairs to correct building

code violations that have taken advantage of the loans," he says.

Roof repair, replacement of siding, kitchen or bathroom modernization and energy conservation are the principal improvements made to such homes.

Low- or moderate-income homeowners wishing to apply for a loan must file an application with the building department which will inspect the home and decide on repairs.

The community development committee then reviews the application and money is granted from the county.

The highest number of home improvement loans granted was 10 loans one year.

"The amount of money Farmington receives varies year to year depending on the flow of funds from the federal government to the county and on federal appropriation laws," Deadman says.

what's inside

- Cable Connection . . . 12A
- Classified Ads . . . 12A
- Sections C,D,E
- Crackerbarrel . . . 18A
- Editorials . . . 18A
- Obituaries . . . 2A
- Recreation News . . . 12A
- Sports . . . Section C
- Suburban Life . . . Section B
- NEWSLINE . . . 477-5450
- CLASSIFIED ADS. 691-0900
- HOME DELIVERY . 691-0500

"I ALWAYS HAVE GOOD RESPONSE!"

T. Fry was delighted with the results of the LIVING QUARTER TO SHARE Observer and Ecentric. Classified ad placed.

"Your paper generates more response in the 'submit' area" plus better, "quality" response!"

Remember...

One call does it all!

591-0900

Use your MasterCard or Visa



Preston Meisel stands in front of the building which has represented a way of life for him for the past 26 years. He is the retiring golf pro at the Farmington Hills Country Club.

He hangs up clubs after 26 years

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

CHUCK MARTIN, the first person to tee off at the Farmington Hills Country Club, almost quit golfing after his first round.

"I bought a set of clubs from the pro shop, went out and played the round. When I came back I gave them back to the pro. I told them to sell them. I never wanted to play the game again. The course was terrible," Martin said. That was in 1958.

Three years later, in the spring of 1961, Preston Meisel became the club pro at Farmington Hills CC. In a very short time, Meisel helped transform that "terrible" course into one of the state's finest.

"When I first started, I saw a need to get the club some publicity," said Meisel, a soft-spoken, immensely popular man of 70. "I agreed to have the state Pro-Am Tournament here in 1959. Then we got the state PGA tour-

ney in '60, then we got two Michigan Opens in '61 and '62."

AS YER club's course and exposure grew, so did its membership. There were between 150-160 members in 1958. Now, the membership is in excess of 600.

Meisel, the man largely responsible for the growth of the club, is retiring at the end of this year. He will call it quits after 26 years of service.

"Most people spend their whole lives doing something they don't like. Golf pros generally are doing something they really enjoy."

"I always tell people that I've never worked a day in my life," Meisel said. "And, a lot of people will agree with me."

"And a lot of people work."

"It's not all that easy being a golf pro," said Ed Kirk, the man who will take over the pro shop after Meisel retires. "There's a lot of long hours and a

Please turn to Page 18