

Community Corner

This week's question:

In general, are rest rooms for women inadequate?

We asked this question at the Farmington Area YMCA.



"They sure are. We were at the zoo once. The ladies room was so crowded that I used the men's. There was no one else in there."
— Ruthanna Bayon, Novi



"Yes. Wherever we go, my husband's in and out, and I'm a mile behind him."
— Renee Leibinger, Novi



"Sometimes it's a problem. We can't go outside like men do."
— Alana Hill, Farmington Hills



"Women are in the rest room longer than men. I've experienced problems, enough to be annoying at times."
— Virginia Plaza, Milford



"The lines are something else. It's sometimes impossible to go to the rest room on a break."
— Bonnie Fearbelle, Highland Township



"There's just not enough room, especially for a mother with a young child."
— Sally Stewart, Highland Township

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Farmington man campaigns against fee

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Farmington Hills Mayor Jonathan Grant said the council expects to schedule a public hearing on recycling during the budget process. Talk earlier in the year suggested that a ballot — if that's the course of action — would probably be placed on the August primary ballot. Both cities, however, are not forced to take the same action.

Despite Anderson's tenacity, city attorney John Donohue, who represents both cities, disagreed with the economist's claims of unconstitutionality at meetings in fall 1991.

A fee, Donohue told Anderson last year, is to raise money needed to pay the costs of a program, such as recycling. It would be a tax if money generated exceeded the costs of the program.

Taxes and user fees are both involuntary, mandatory and enforceable when not paid. With taxes, there is no promise from government for specific uses. Specific activities of

uses are promised with a user fee, Donohue said.

"Equity is the reason it's a fee," Deadman said. Businesses do not receive recycling services and consequently don't pay the fee.

ANDERSON DISAGREES. "The recycling (fee) is a tax. If you have a residential piece of property here and you're in Florida for the winter, you still have to pay. That's a tax."

Anderson said he expects a decision before the cities enter the second year of recycling. A lawsuit would not be out of the question if the fee is continued as established. "We feel our best chance would be to file in a year. But we hope to avoid that."

Anderson has requested and received some documents from the cities about the recycling program. "These documents are preparation if

a challenge is necessary," he added.

Both cities — which are not yet at their charter millage limits — have the opportunity of levying an ad valorem tax without voter approval because voters long ago approved charter limits. For example, an estimated .65-mill would be needed to pay the recycling bill for Farmington, Deadman said.

The ad valorem tax would be levied against property value or assessment. In this case, some property owners — based on their property tax assessment — would pay more or less than others.

And some property owners might pay more that way than with the fee, Grant added.

Or the cities can levy a flat tax — a new tax — on each residential parcel, such as \$100, that must be approved by voters, Anderson said.

The fairest method of all, Anderson said, is what he calls a true user fee. No vote is necessary, it's the simplest method and non-payment calls for a property lien, not a tax lien. Anderson's user fee — the cities would have to amend their ordinances — also would allow residents

to seek other companies to provide recycling for them.

The fee is the type of issue that drove voters to pass the 1978 Headlee Tax Limitation Amendment, which the fee violates, Anderson said.

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