

B'ham looks at non-resident water, sewer rates

BY HELEN NIEMIEC
STAFF WRITER

The dispute over a \$35,000 water bill issued to the Birmingham Country Club has prompted Birmingham officials to take a second look at non-resident water and/or sewer customers which likely will result in higher fees.

The country club, located entirely in Bloomfield Township on Cranbrook Road at 14 Mile Road, paid the disputed amount

by the Jan. 17 deadline to avoid having service shut off. The club argued that the 18 months of billing showed a usage "spike" that couldn't be explained.

"They paid their bill under protest and the water is still on," said City Manager Thomas Markus. Looking over the country club's water and sewer bills, Birmingham discovered that the sewage service provided at the tennis courts hasn't been billed to the country club since the ser-

vise began there in 1986. "It's not a significant amount," Markus said.

Non-resident customers are billed double the rate that Birmingham residents are charged for water to more closely reflect the cost of providing the service, Markus said. However, sewage is billed at the same rate as a resident — which is what Markus wants to change, perhaps to double the rate.

Improvements to the water

and sewage system are funded not only through fees but also through the property tax. Before changes are made, City Commissioner Archie Damman III said he wants a financial breakdown of the cost of providing the service to non-residents.

The city is going to ask to renegotiate current agreements. The city must give notice before it can change the rates.

Commissioner Dante Lanzetta said the money isn't nearly as

important as the liability and he would prefer seeing the water and sewer service provided by the municipality in which either the business or house is located.

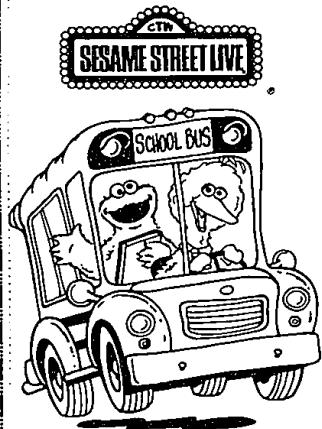
"We've got an untenable situation," Lanzetta said. "We don't have a policy that gets rid of them. I don't want to be in the water/sewer delivery system for non-residents when we don't have enforcement power."

The difficulty the city has in billing customers who are under the jurisdiction of another municipality. Normally, an unpaid water or sewer bill is placed as a lien against the property. Birmingham can't do that to the country club, or to the homes in Troy that it provides sewer service to, since only the jurisdiction the property lies in has that authority.

Currently the city provides water and sewer service to two Bloomfield Township properties, the country club and a house on Northlawn.

In Troy, Birmingham provides water and sewer service to the former Ford-Holland Tractor Plant and sewer service to two businesses on East Maple. There also is a portion of Troy's residential section along Derby that drains into Birmingham's sewers, though the city isn't sure that they are being paid for providing that service.

There is one Birmingham residence on North Adams that is serviced by Bloomfield Township. That homeowner pays double the township rate for water, and sewage, the same amount, that Birmingham charges its non-resident customers.



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SOMERSET
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Secrets of a forgotten file offer bit of mystery but little information

BY LARRY PALADINO
STAFF WRITER

It didn't rival the hoopla created a few years ago when Geraldo Rivera oversaw the opening of Al Capone's safe on national television, but the result was a bit more rewarding when Franklin Village opened a long-forgotten file cabinet.

It cost the village \$70 to pay a locksmith to get the thing opened for the first time in a couple decades, but when the file in the basement of the Franklin library was opened it revealed ...

Well, council member Jo Saltzman didn't want to say right off at January's meeting.

The item was at the bottom of the agenda and, as she often is wont to do, she likes to go into details first:

- She gave some background on why the file was there (it never was moved when the village hall moved 21 years ago from the library to the Broughton House).

- She said the library needed the space for other things.

- She described how rusty the lock was and it probably would have been tough to open in 1976.

Finally, councilman Dick Glass could stand it no more. "What was in it?" he blurted with impatience and a big smile.

"Oh, you want to know right away?" Saltzman said.

"Yes," Glass replied.

"I'd call it powdery mildew," she said. "There were 14 binders of council meeting minutes, but I only looked through nine of them. The minutes start June

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23, 1954 ... and go to February 1957 of the ones I looked at."

Saltzman said the locksmith told her she needed to use surgical gloves to examine the find, which she did. "There was an item in there about building a community building on the site of the gazebo," she said. "Of course, it didn't pass."

The village currently is looking into building a new facility, with considerable interest going to a site adjacent to the Broughton House, a stone's throw from the gazebo on the village green.

Other items in the minutes, too, Saltzman said, show how councils more than 40 years ago were dealing with the same issues as those of the current board.

Councilman Jim Pikulas said he would have Laidlaw Waste Systems haul away the file cabinet (which is made of cement on three sides), and the village offices would examine the contents and store the binders.

"Oh, we have plenty of room," clerk Kathy Marotta said facetiously.

Marotta said she thinks she has all the same minutes on file already and so the new discoveries might be duplicates.

When Capone's safe was opened — to much pre-event hype during a TV ratings sweeps period — all that was found inside was a small glass bottle.

Networking tea Thursday

The Women's Business Forum winter networking tea will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursday, Jan.

30, at the 220 Restaurant, 220 Merrill in downtown Birmingham.

The Birmingham-Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce Group meets quarterly to have women business owners meet one another and exchange both ideas and business cards.

The event is \$12 for chamber members and \$15 for non-members.

Reservations, which are required, can be made by calling the chamber office at 644-1700.

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