

# Time Warner subscribers pay \$1 more for HBO

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Time Warner subscribers will pay a buck more to watch HBO and one SWOCC trustee thinks that's more like BO — as in it stinks.

Time Warner notified customers in their monthly bill of the increase, which is due to "escalating program licensing fees," the statement said.

"They stuck it to us again by a dollar," said Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vignozzi, who serves on the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission.

Time Warner had no choice, said Bob

McCann, general manager. The increase for HBO was the first in 10 years and the \$9.95 a month fee still keeps the company in the lower tier for premium service costs.

Time Warner added HBO 2 at no extra cost to subscribers more than a year ago, McCann added.

"Our costs for HBO continue to increase," McCann said. "Our premium rates are, if not the lowest, one of the lowest in the entire country. It's gotten to the point where we don't want to do it, but we're in a position where we just have to raise the rates for HBO."

SWOCC has no jurisdiction over premium rates; only basic rates. And that is limited by the FCC.

As a result, SWOCC cannot protest the rate increase.

"There is no avenue for that from the FCC," said Caren Collins, SWOCC executive director. "It's solely at the discretion of the cable operator."

Collins found out about the increase like everyone else. "When I got my bill . . . There was a little notice inside," she said.

News of the rate increase had Farmington Hills City Council members ask-

ing at Monday's meeting when another potential cable suitor might land in the area. SWOCC representatives met with Ameritech officials recently.

Ameritech offers competitive cable service in Canton, Fraser and other communities. Phone company representatives made a pitch to SWOCC a couple of years ago, but nothing has occurred.

Ameritech is first going into areas where the infrastructure is already in place, Hills City Manager Daniel Hobbs said.

"They won't be here anytime soon,"

Hobbs said.

Time Warner also used monthly bills to announce channel changes starting Sept. 1. Court TV will be on 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Channel 25 while Sneak Previews run 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Animal Planet debuts on Channel 42 and the Classic Sports Network on Channel 63.

Ann Arbor-based WSBX moves from Channel 16 to Channel 21, which had been empty. A Time Warner spokesman said Channel 16 will remain vacant.

"I've asked what they're going to put on Channel 16, but I have not received a response," Collins said.



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