

Hills got off easy with main break

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The most positive thing one can say following the big water main break Nov. 16 is that Farmington Hills got off easy. The break in the Detroit-owned, 48-inch transmission line at 14 Mile and Halsted forced restaurants to close, and health officials to issue boil-water warnings - not in the Hills but in communities to the west, said

Tom Biasell, director of public services. By mid-morning on Monday, Detroit Water and Sewer crews were running pressure tests on new pipe and testing for bacteria. "Once they have the water restored they can backfill the hole," Biasell said. Some Hills residents west of the transmission line break reported low water pressure for a time, and flooded basements, he added.

"The only thing on Friday morning we had low water pressure," said Lorretta Larkin of Pine Cone Drive. "There was just the inconvenience of not being able to go out to 14 Mile," she said, adding some neighbors reported flooded basements. Biasell said residents reporting flooded basements were directed to the city of Detroit. Biasell said Detroit Metro Water and Sewer staff were passing out claim forms in the area.

Sign of the times

Council enforces ordinance

BY JONI HUBBARD
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A downtown Farmington landmark may be headed for the scrap heap, now that Baskin Robbins Ice Cream has become a Hershey's Ice Cream franchise.

City council members voted Monday to order the free-standing Baskin Robbins sign taken down, because it exceeds new zoning ordinances that limit the height of signs in the downtown business district. "This is not a decision by the owner. Baskin Robbins is eliminating single franchise outlets," said Bill Riley, owner of Signorama of Brighton and Dearborn. He accompanied business owner Dave Mihajlovski to the meeting.

City manager Frank Laubhoff explained the sign had been "grandfathered," having been in place when the new rules were approved. Any alterations in the sign kicked it out of that position, giving officials the

choice of ordering the owner to either lower or remove it.

Mihajlovski seemed baffled by the process, given the longevity of the sign. "The business has been there 35 years. The sign has been there 35 years. I don't see why we have to remove the sign."

"Those are the laws we created," councilwoman JoAnne McShane said gently. "We have to stay within those laws to be fair to everyone."

Across the board, officials stuck to their ordinances. "My personal belief is we've made a valiant attempt to get rid of a lot of ground signs," councilman Arnold Campbell said. That included a free-standing sign at First Federal Bank on Farmington Road, just down the street from the Hershey's Ice Cream store.

Campbell noted if the sign were lowered, it would be level with the building - and with two other signs on its east and south sides.

"Our council's been pretty

consistent in requiring the non-conforming signs be brought down altogether," councilman Bill Hartsock said.

Although permits were issued in October for changes to the building signs, Mihajlovski also complained that trees planted by the Downtown Development Association blocked their view.

"We'll take a special look at that location and make sure those trees are thinned out," Laubhoff said.

After the council's unanimous vote to order the sign down, Mihajlovski said he would do what he could to fight their decision. On Tuesday, Laubhoff said the council's decision was final; however, the decision could be appealed to Circuit Court.

Laubhoff doubted any appeal would be successful. "This has been a non-conforming use for at least 20 years. The council has been very consistent in requiring these signs removed."



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