

# Fargo City Commission to consider home buyout

By Sarah Coomber

The Forum

City staff have proposed picking up half the local share of a buyout for owners of four north Fargo houses.

Built along the Red River on the 3700 block of North 10th Street, the houses are losing their back yards to slumping.

To fund the buyout, the city asked the state to return some Federal Emergency Management Agency funds Fargo had left over from 1997 flood buyouts. The program requires a 15 percent local match to supplement 75 percent from FEMA and 10 percent from the state.

After the 1997 flood, community development funds were used to pay local matches for flood buyouts, but that program is no longer in effect.

Homeowners said paying the entire local match would cause them financial hardship. At first the city was hesitant to help. But this week Mayor Bruce Furness met with the homeowners and presented them with a city offer to pay 7.5 percent of the appraised value of each house, if the homeowners pick up the remaining 7.5 percent. The offer is contingent on the homeowners vacating by June 15, 2000. The total cost to the city would be \$36,000 and would come from the storm sewer utility fund.

"We're going to take the offer," homeowner Barbara Rosten said Thursday.

Furness said he is concerned about setting a precedent, but this case has extenuating circumstances: The houses are located along a dike that protects the northern part of the city and the wastewater treatment plant.

"We need that dike," Furness said.

Similar slumping problems due to river movements are occurring along Kandi Lane near Trollwood Park and Elm Street near the El Zagal golf course in north Fargo, but no houses are affected, he said.

The offer is contingent on approval Monday by the City Commission.

Also on the board's agenda is the second public hearing regarding a proposed increase in Paratransit fares from \$1.50 to \$2. Paratransit users pleaded with commissioners at a Nov. 1 hearing to keep the price in check.

The Transit Advisory Committee on Monday unanimously recommended the fare increase and suggested ways to offset it for passengers living on fixed incomes or who are in "true need of assistance," according to a memorandum by Transit Director Wayne King.