

Fargo neighborhood seeks buyout supplement funding

By Sarah Coomber

The Forum

Residents of a north Fargo neighborhood will ask the City Commission Monday to provide a 15 percent local match to supplement state and federal funds in a house buyout program.

The four houses, on 10th Street North and south of Cass County 20, are along the Red River in an area where the bank is slipping. They have been appraised at \$118,000 to \$121,000, said City Coordinator Pat Zavoral.

Homeowner Greg Rosten said the back yards, located on an earthen dike, are "flaking away" like a glacier and have been for about the past year. Part of Rosten's back yard has dropped three feet, and the slumping has taken off his neighbor's deck.

The houses were not flooded in 1997, Rosten said, but the river

rose up to his retaining wall.

In response to the homeowners' concerns, the city asked the state to return some Federal Emergency Management Agency funds Fargo had left over from 1997 flood buyouts to use for these houses, Zavoral said.

The program requires a 15 percent local share to supplement 75 percent from FEMA and 10 percent from the state.

So far, the city has not offered to ante up the local share.

"The city is not responsible for that situation up there," said Mayor Bruce Furness earlier this week. "Caveat emptor," he added, meaning, "Let the buyer beware."

In 1997, community development funds were used to pay the local match for flood buyouts, Zavoral said, but that program is no longer in effect.

Rosten said when he bought the new house — "in good faith" — in

1996, everything was fine. Now if he has to pay 15 percent of the buyout, he will lose \$16,000, and, he added, some families might not be able to cover their mortgages or buy different homes.

"Why should I have to take this loss?" he asked. "I didn't do anything."

Zavoral said the four houses were appraised as if they were located elsewhere in the city and not sliding into the river.

In other business, the board will consider:

► Amending the 1999 Community Development Action Plan to provide an additional \$30,000 in community development funds for the Rental Housing Inspection Program. According to a letter by Planning Director Jim Gilmour, the program exceeded its budget because it needed to acquire two

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