

Know Your Rights

What can I do if I get an unusually high water bill from the city?

There are a variety of things you can do, but the first action you should take is to find out the cause of the leak. Almost every high water bill results from a leak in the pipes either under or inside the house. Many persons will put this off for several months while the water bill goes higher and higher. Water charges as high as \$300 have been reported here in High Point, although a charge of even \$20 should be cause for concern.

What kinds of leaks are most common?

The most common leak is a toilet that runs constantly. Any constant hiss of water in a toilet should be fixed even if you haven't gotten the bill, because a leaky toilet can cause a water bill of \$40 or \$50 in just a few days. The second most common cause is a broken pipe under the house. This happens most often in the winter in substandard or run-down houses. Unfortunately, these leaks are hard to locate and usually require a plumber to find them.

What can I do to stop a leak right away?

Many toilets and sinks have a turn-off valve behind or underneath them. You can turn on these valves to use the fixture, and turn it off as soon as you finish.

Do I have to pay to have a leak fixed myself if I am renting my house?

In the absence of a winter lease provision to the contrary, the landlord has an obligation to repair leaks in the plumbing. You should call the landlord and make sure that he understands that you have a leak in your house. Be sure to write down the date that you call him, and if he does not send someone out in two or three days, call him again. The landlord will not penalize you for calling him, for he knows that he must repair these things.

What if the landlord ignores my repeated calls or refuses to do anything?

There are not many landlords in town who treat their tenants this badly. If you have one of these, you must either (1) report the leak to the building inspector's office at City Hall, or (2) call the city water department and ask them to turn off your water until the leak is repaired, or (3) call a plumber yourself and ask him to send his bill to the landlord.

If you have a written lease be sure to read the lease carefully to see if repairs to pipes and plumbing are yours or the landlord's responsibility.



About 125 persons from all over High Point gathered in this courtroom at the City-County Building December 5 for a Model Cities town meeting. Among those present,



(Photos by George Manning)

which included dozens of agency representatives and community officials, was Mayor William S. Bencini.

At Model Cities Town Meeting

Mayor Reaffirms Citizens' Role

To a crowd of about 125 persons, the majority of whom were Model Cities agency representatives and community officials, High Point Mayor William S. Bencini reaffirmed his commitment to citizen involvement in decision-making at a town meeting December 5.

Sponsored by the Model City Commission, the town meeting was the first in a series of open gatherings planned to steer the direction of Model Cities' Fourth Action Year.

In addition, Model Cities personnel hope that the discussions at these meetings will have an impact on revenue sharing spending, made possible by the recent check sent High Point from Washington.

Bencini briefly explained revenue sharing to the group, and stated that no decisions had yet been made about the expenditure of the money. City Council has the final word on this federal grant of an expected \$1,287,000.

In his remarks, the mayor said, "It is our responsibility to meet the needs of as many citizens as possible with these monies, above and beyond projects already planned."

"If the crowd in office now doesn't deliver, then they should be voted

out." Bencini added that, "I don't know of a better way of bringing problems to solutions than through Model Cities."

ADVISORY GROUPS

Model Cities task force member Dr. Harvey Tilles raised the question of "citizen advisory committees," now being planned by Model Cities in the form of city-wide task forces.

In response, Bencini said he felt the Model Cities process was "an excellent way" for groups to express their concerns to city government. "I have been so pleased with the Model Cities process," he said, "that I want to continue channels through Model Cities for citizen input."

Other prominent topics of discussion were the Southside Neighborhood Development Plan (NDP), the Southside Multi-purpose Center, lack of housing in High Point, unfair utility rates, and welfare reform.

Another topic which drew interest was the Parks and Recreation Department. Citizens charged that recreation facilities in the Tate Street, Daniel Brooks and Washington Terrace areas were being neglected and ill-supervised.

Even Councilman S. E. Burford, one of three City legislators present, voiced his concern over his inability to "get to first base" with improvements for Washington Terrace Park, which he called his "pet summer project."

Newly-elected Model City Commissioner Nathaniel Waden asked why blacks continually fail to be hired to professional positions in City Hall. To this question, Burford added, "I'm still waiting for the same answer."

Burford is the only black Councilman in High Point.

Mayor Bencini replied that City Council neither hires nor fires employees of the City, and that personnel matters are left up to the discretion of the City Manager's office.

City Manager Harold Cheek was not present to respond.

Council May Spend Grant As It Wishes

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on how to spend this money. This new technique gives cities such as High Point a chance to develop their own strategies and programs to meet their own unique needs without strict federal guidelines.

How revenue sharing grants are spent is up to people from all over the community who must make their voice and needs heard at City Hall. It is them, after all, who know best what their conditions are, and how the money can best be spent.

To date, City Councilmen have not publicly indicated which projects or areas they themselves prefer to fund with this money.

Feel Unhappy All The Time? Can't Adjust To Life? Mental Health Center Can Help

The Guilford County Mental Health Center can help people find new or better ways to handle their mental or emotional problems.

People who are having a hard time coping with their troubles, adjusting to their job, their home, their environment in general—these are people who are not "crazy." They are simply disturbed in some way or another, and they can get better with trained, professional help.

Anyone in Guilford County who is having mental or emotional problems may be considered for services from the Mental Health Center, located at 404 N. Wrenn Street.

A minimum fee of \$1 is charged for each clinic visit, but patients pay only what they are able to pay, according to a sliding scale. If patients are eligible for Medicaid, their stickers will cover the cost of a clinic visit.

Guilford County Mental Health Center offers what is known as out-patient services, allowing patients to be treated while living at home.

When a person goes to the center, a social worker fills out a form with his personal history, and refers him to the right staff member who will handle his case from then on.

TALK THERAPY

Treatment comes in several forms, which include individual talk therapy, group or family therapy, and medication when needed. In these groups, people with similar problems get together to share them and try to help one another, under supervision.

If possible, patients are asked to make a telephone appointment to visit the center. The phone number is 888-9929. They may also be sent by a doctor, teacher, minister, public health nurse, or a concerned friend.

Information about every patient's case is private and is kept confidential by the Mental Health Center.

There is no minimum or maximum age for mental health's services. Most children handled by the center have emotional problems, however, rather

than learning disabilities. Most marriage counseling work is also referred to Family Services Bureau, with whom they coordinate closely.

Many people are in poor mental health, and fail to realize it. Sometimes handling day-to-day problems seem too much for them, and these problems may affect the way they act and feel toward others.

Other symptoms of a person's poor mental health include inability to make decisions or to understand why he is acting in a certain way; prolonged unhappiness or fear; a wish to hurt himself or others; getting angry too easily or too often; forgetfulness; a wish to avoid contact with everyone; or an attempt to "drown" problems in alcohol or drugs.

When these problems become too much for a person, he may try to run away from them. But it is times like these that he needs most to find help.

Seeking help early can often prevent more serious problems later.

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