

Policy charging nonresidents a fee for responding to accidents could be history in Wapak

BY BOB BLAKE, Lima News, July 26, 2006

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WAPAKONETA — A policy enacted by Wapakoneta City Council last year charging nonresidents involved in motor vehicle accidents for the dispatching of police officers could be on its way out after the police chief recommended opting out of the program.

City Council adopted the program with Cost Recovery Corp. with the intent of forwarding incident reports to the company who would then bill a person's insurance company for the cost. Payments through the program, however, were few and far between, Chief David Webb said.

"It's a new process that other agencies are considering and doing. I don't want to be negative about it for them," Webb said. "Our understanding as we got into the program was insurance companies would pay. It didn't go that way."

The original intent was to generate a little extra revenue for the city, although the program was the target of criticism by people who work in the city but don't live in the city who received bills. Fewer than 15 percent of bills were paid when they were forwarded to individuals and no bills have been paid since only insurance companies have been billed, Webb said.

"The insurance companies are just not paying," Webb said. "It's pointless to continue with it."

Webb took his recommendation to opt out of the program when it ends this November to City Council's Health and Safety Committee meeting Monday. The committee, meeting in joint session with the council's Streets and Alleys Committee, voted to recommend to the full City Council that the city opt out of the program and end the policy.

Safety-Service Director Rex Katterheinrich said at the meeting he would begin working on a letter to opt out of the program.