

For my money, \$8 a month seems like a pretty good deal

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of the Journal

The Editor's Corner

As we move ever closer to the official start of spring—this coming Wednesday to be exact—it is only a matter of time before I take the calculated risk that there won't be one last pipe bursting blast of arctic air moving into the region.

When that decision is made, I will grab a flashlight, crawl under the house, and turn the water to my outside faucets back on.

Which means the next step is to haul the mower out of the shed—actually I detected the reassuring growl of power mowers in my neighborhood for the first time last weekend—break out the fertilizer spreader and uncoil the garden hoses in preparation for another irrigation season. Which I am hoping will arrive sometime in the next two or three weeks.

My wife on the other hand, while as big a fan of the warmer months of the year as the next person, doesn't share my enthusiasm for setting out the sprinklers in hopes of coaxing a healthy green out of a landscape with a natural propensity for various shades of brown.

Not because she has anything against healthy grass, shrubs and flowers. But instead, because she has a very strong aversion to the sticker shock that comes with our utility bill every other month during the growing season when overage charges are added to our basic \$65 per month bill, causing her to wonder whether it's water or gasoline I'm running through that hose out in the back.

And, as in years past, this little domestic drama will continue until the first frost forms and the outside faucets are turned off for another winter.

Next year could prove to be even more interesting though if all goes as hoped. Although word on the state Public Works Trust Fund

preconstruction loan the city is seeking for its proposed waterline and street reconstruction project won't be received until mid-April, and the loan program's decision on Ephrata's full \$9 million loan request isn't due until August, the council has endorsed a plan—if the applications are successful—to increase the basic water rate by \$8 for residential and commercial accounts effective Jan. 1, 2008 to fund repayment of the loan.

Should that increase come to pass, I can guarantee the summer long battle that rages in our household over the frequency and amount of water devoted to an aesthetically pleasing landscape is certain to intensify next year.

Yet with the stakes that are in play, whatever added water use criticism that comes my way from my more frugal half will be worth it.

While I admit my position on residential irrigation is not universally embraced by Ephrata homeowners, I have long ago accepted the fact that maintaining anything resembling an oasis-like look in the midst of a desert is going to have a cost associated with it.

And since I have accepted that reality, I see no reason to become overly upset by the prospect of seeing that cost increase by an additional \$8 a month—which works out to \$96 a year—when I take into account what I will receive in return.

In the long run, replacement of aging waterlines and reconstruction of rapidly deteriorating residential streets at a cost of \$8 a month seems like a reasonable price to pay. Particularly since, as an Ephrata Heights resident, I not only stand to achieve not only far more drivable roads and an end to streets with enough cracks that require mowing right along with the front lawn, but also the prospect of increased water pressure—which at times leaves something to be desired.

Besides, by never having developed a taste for espresso drinks, I figure that compared to much of the population who have, I've already compensated for that additional \$8 a month on my utility bill starting next year many times over.