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Franklin dropping billing company

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By Ed Richter, Staff Writer

9:19 PM Tuesday, December 13, 2011

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FRANKLIN — As a result of a Middletown Journal investigation, the city of Franklin has notified its billing company that it will be cancelling its contract.

The Journal's investigation found that Springfield-based Cost Recovery Corp., which also provided billing services to recoup public safety costs for crashes and fires to a number of area communities, had been tacking on markups of up to 268 percent of what the company was collecting.

The Journal obtained one bill in which the company tacked on a \$358 fee, a 39 percent markup from the \$907 it was collecting for the city. Franklin had also set a \$250 limit per incident such as a structure fire or a crash, whether or not it involves a resident or non-resident.

After being contacted by the Journal last Friday, Franklin Fire Chief Jonathan Westendorf met with City Manager Sonny Lewis to discuss the matter.

After he met with Westendorf Friday, Lewis said Monday that the city was cancelling the contract.

"Right is right and wrong is wrong," Lewis said. "And this was wrong. We're giving them their 90-day written notice that we're cancelling the contract."

Lewis said the city will be looking at other options.

Westendorf said those options may include contracting with other companies or doing the billing in-house.

"This is too important. There can be no question about this," Westendorf said. "They're representing us and we can't have that."

Westendorf said he contacted the billing company before meeting with Lewis. Company officials told him there was a glitch in the system on how these bills were calculated and

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that they were in the process of fixing the problem.

Cost Recovery Corp. President Regina Moore-Jones said in a written statement last week that there had been miscommunications with some local officials but that after an internal review, "CRC is 100 percent in compliance with our contracts."

The city of Springfield recently cancelled its contract with the company after it found it was charging fees up to twice what it specified in its contract. The city of Hamilton used the company but found it was not cost effective.

Staff Writer Josh Sweigart contributed to this report.

Contact this reporter at (513) 696-4504 or Ed.Richter@coxinc.com.

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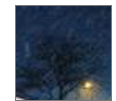
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