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POLITICS: Ward 2 opponent 'appalled' by invoice

Bannon defends spending on council newsletters

BY SANDRA BOLAN
sbolan@yrmg.com

Councillor Phil Bannon spent \$4,063 on one newsletter last year.

It was the most of the three councillors who mailed newsletters to constituents in 2010.

Ken Ferdinands spent \$1,272, while Susanne Hilton's newsletter expenditure was \$899.

Each councillor can spend up to \$2 per household on newsletters per calendar year. Mr. Bannon has approximately 2,500 homes in Ward 2 (\$5,000), while Mr. Ferdinands' Ward 1 has about 1,200 (\$2,400) residences. Household numbers for Ms Hilton were not made available by the town's planning department prior to deadline.

"There's new demand for residents to be informed and for clearer transparency and I'm making every effort I can," Mr. Bannon told The Sun-Tribune.

"I'm appalled at the cost of the newsletter," Maurice Smith, Mr. Bannon's opponent in last October's municipal election, stated during the March 8 council meeting in which the councillors' remuneration figures for 2010 were released.

Mr. Bannon and Mr. Ferdinands were absent from the meeting.

The Bannon multi-page newsletter is full colour and printed on glossy stock. On the

other hand, Mr. Ferdinands' multi-page newsletters are printed on standard bond paper.

"That's just the way we've chosen to go," Mr. Bannon said. "That's something people will pay attention to."

In an era of widespread Internet access and social media, why does Mr. Bannon still rely on circulating paper-based material once a year?

'It's more of a conversation network than anything else and not used by that many people.'

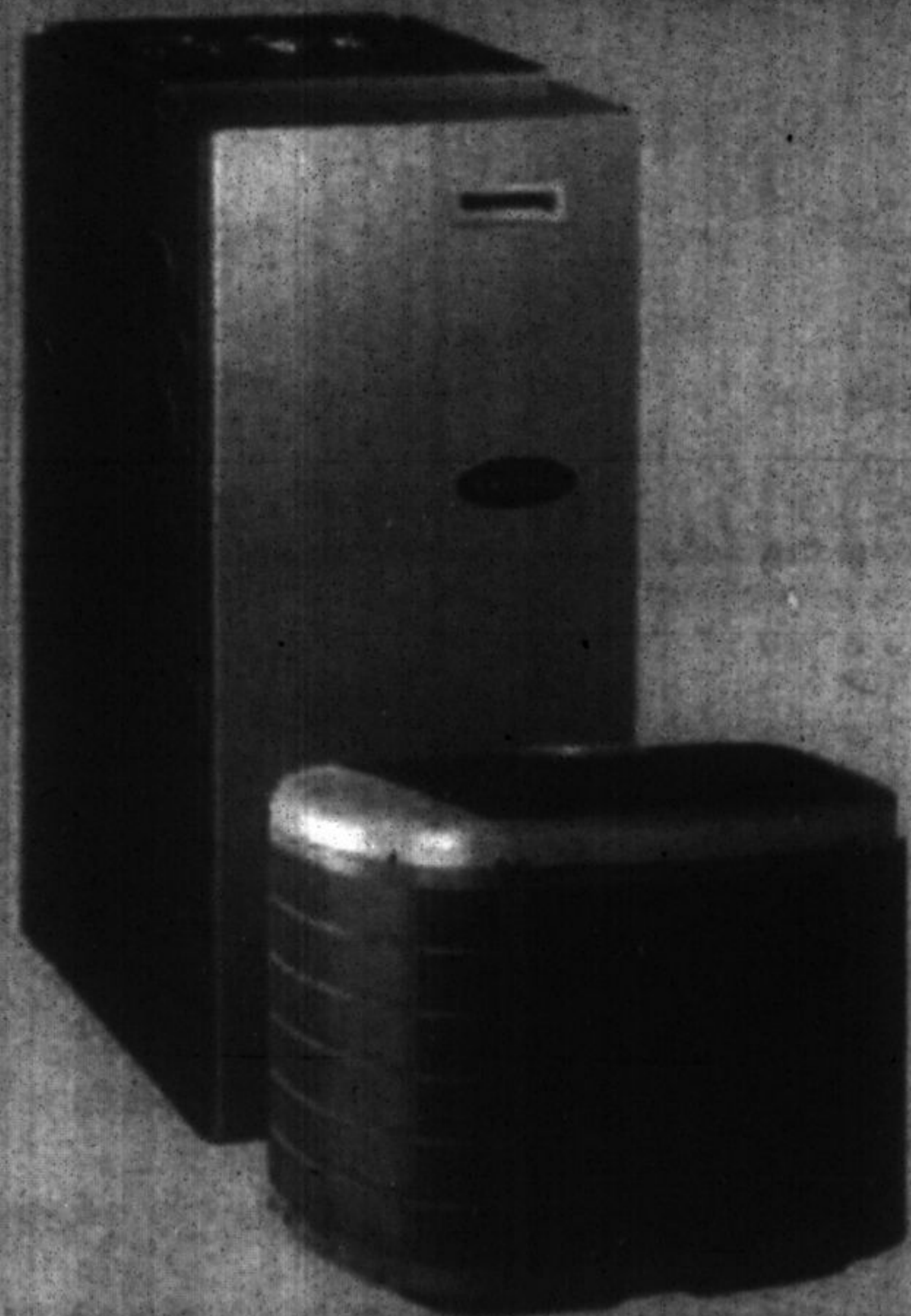
"There's still a tremendous number of residents in my ward, especially in the north end, who don't have online service," he said.

But that is not the only way Mr. Bannon reaches out to his constituents. He has a database of about 1,000 e-mail addresses to which he regularly sends out information. He also holds town hall meetings.

Would Mr. Bannon ever consider tweeting on Twitter, or posting to Facebook, an item coming up for discussion at a council meeting or provide notice of a resolution post-meeting? Not likely.

"It's more of a conversation network than anything else and not used by that many people," he said.

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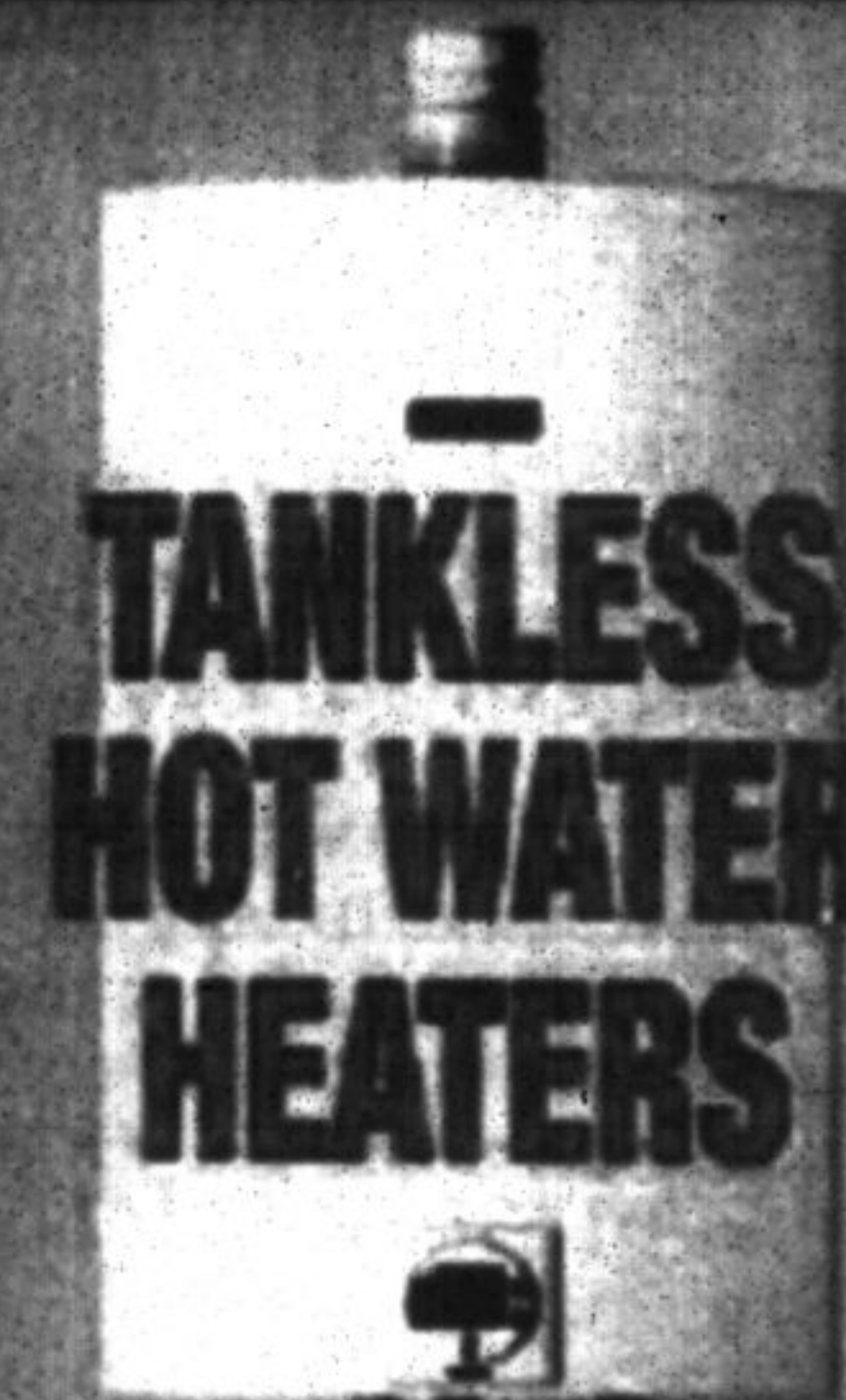
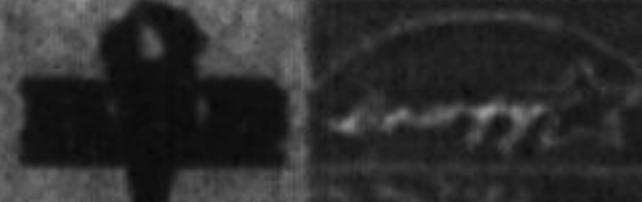


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