

\$35 housing increase lowest since '71

By Lauri Hoppie

Students planning on living in residence hall rooms next year will have the smallest increase in housing costs since 1971 — projected at \$35.

The \$35 represents a 1.9 percent increase. The total projected room and board cost for the 1983-84 school year will be \$1,835. Room and board costs increased \$130, or 7.7 percent, for the current school year.

"It's incredibly low," said Douglas Zatechka, director of the Office of University Housing. "I'm really pleased with that (the \$35 increase) because I believe students need some kind of relief."

Ten of the 14 students attending the rates discussion Wednesday, open to all students, were RHA members. RHA President Melba Petrie said the small turnout probably was because of the low housing rate increase.

One of the students at the meeting, sophomore Melanie Lewandowski, said she was surprised that the proposed increase was so low.

"I'm not happy that there is an increase," Lewandowski said, "but I am happy that it's low."

Petrie said all RHA member were requested to attend because RHA was to vote on the increase at its Thursday meeting.

Representing RHA at the panel were Steven Bray and Robert Wolz, student rate study co-chairmen. Zatechka and Gary Partridge, assistant director of housing for business services, represented the Office of University Housing.

If approved by RHA and the NU Board of Regents, the increase will be effective July 1983 through June 1984.

Both Zatechka and Partridge said there will be no cuts in services now available through housing.

"This basically is a continuation budget, which is a continuation of the same services at the same level," Partridge said.

The projected budget for 1983-84 is about \$11.06 million; this year's budget was \$10.6 million.

Zatechka said the ability to maintain all services stems from increases of housing revenues other than room and board fees.

"If you get more out of one thing, you have to take less from another," he said.

The major revenue increases came from summer activities residents, such as summer students and non-student groups using the halls, which added \$137,000 to the revenue base. Better utility efficiency netted \$50,000 more, while refrigerator rentals added \$38,000.

Wolz asked what is planned if the halls are not filled as full as projected. Zatechka presented two solutions, the first of which is to completely close a floor in one residence hall.

When asked by RHA member Kathleen Mach how the housing office could count on money from summer groups, Zatechka said he tries to be conservative in his summer estimates and only includes "for sure" — the number of students who come every year — in the estimates.

Other housing revenue comes from vending machine commissions and snack bars in the residence halls, which increased by \$61,000, and from the decrease in cost of raw food from 9 percent to 6 percent of the housing budget.

"I don't want to mislead people, because this really is an unusual year, with a lot of money-makers coming together in one year," Zatechka said. "Next

year the increase might be 5 or 6 percent."

"I hope this year's low rate of increase will attract more students (to live in a residence hall) than a higher increase would," he added.

The second solution would be to close a floor to long-term residents, creating a "mini-hotel" during holidays for visiting professors and foreign students, athletes, students finishing incompletes and student teachers.

"If low occupancy continues, we'll open up a floor as a mini-hotel next fall. It's not confirmed, but it's one idea that we're looking at," Zatechka said.

To predict the rate increase, Zatechka and Partridge considered expected income (from vending machines, refrigerators, etc.), the expected number of students living in the halls, and expected expenses for the upcoming year. Putting the study together takes up to three months, and Zatechka said there is a "pretty good level of student involvement (in the process)."

Such involvement includes RHA's rate study committee meeting with housing officials to information and opinions RHA has gathered from students living in the residence halls, Petrie said.

CHARITY DRIVES Who really benefits?

By Patti Gallagher

In the last half of 1982, Lincolmites pledged more than \$100,000 to four organizations using professional solicitors to conduct telephone fund drives. Of that \$100,000, less than half went to charity.

For example, here's what a donor to a Lincoln Jaycees fund drive got for his \$14.95 donation:

— 30 trash bags with a wholesale value of about \$3.

— \$2.25 donation to the Jaycees.

— \$9.75 payment to the promoter.

In other words, about 65 percent of the donor's money was absorbed by the promoter for expenses and profit.

The permits for the four charity drives were among 71 issued in Lincoln between Sept. 1, 1981, and Aug. 31, 1982, the city's fiscal year. They were the only four that used solicitors, according to Joan Ross, an attorney in the city clerk's office. They were examined by a reporter to determine who gets the money when a charitable group hires a professional solicitor to run its fund drive.

The groups sponsoring fund drives and the solicitors they hire are within the law. Aside from requiring a permit, Lincoln city ordinances and officials assert little control over such drives. In the words of Assistant City Attorney Rick Peo, "If their overhead is 99 percent, there's really nothing we can do."

The Cornhusker Better Business Bureau likewise is unable to impose stiffer controls. According to President Lois Tefft, the BBB can only file reports, available at the public's request, stating whether a charitable organization or a solicitor meets national BBB standards for charitable giving. But a bad mark from the BBB, Tefft and Ross say, won't cause the city to refuse a group's permit or withhold a permit in the future.

The Nebraska Sheriffs' and Peace Officers' Association got one of the BBB's bad marks for its most recent fund-raiser, a children's Christmas party. In a report

dated Jan. 6, the BBB said the sheriff's lobbying group did not meet national BBB standards because only 15 percent of the profits from party ticket sales went to the sheriff's group while 85 percent went to the promoter, Balentine Enterprises.

But Ron Kontos, executive director of the sheriff's group, said his organization will retain 20 percent of the profits or about \$3,000, with about \$12,000 going to Balentine. How much Balentine spent for the children's party — and how much it receives as profit — only can be estimated.

The party was Dec. 11 in the Gateway Auditorium. It included a two-man musical act, an emcee who served as the magician, a ventriloquist, Santa Claus, refreshments and gifts.

At \$5 a ticket, ticket buyers could bring their own children or sponsor children from places like the Cedar's Home for Children and Lancaster Office of Mental Retardation. According to one reporter's count, about 300 children attended the party. According to Jack Balentine, who operates the solicitation group, about 500 children were there.

Balentine based his estimate on the number of gifts given. He said his workers initially brought 400 gifts to the auditorium, distributed those and then had to bring in an additional 100 or so gifts.

Among the costs of the party were: — the gifts. Items such as Betty Crocker juice blenders, Dukes of Hazzard models, Willy Wonka Chocolate Factories and Fisher Price Rock-a-Stacks were among the gifts given to each child. They cost between \$10 and \$12 at retail prices and between \$4 and \$5 wholesale, according to a Balentine solicitor questioned by a reporter.

But a check with several toy stores indicated that the solicitor's toy prices were inflated. Store managers estimated the wholesale prices of the toys at \$1 less and the retail prices at between \$4 and \$6 less than what the solicitor said.

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Staff photo by Dave Bentz

Saud Zafar, left, a mechanical engineering student, watches the day's headlines go by on the electronic news board, which was installed near the Nebraska Union's TV lounge Wednesday.

... Electronic news board: Innovative way to keep UNL students informed,...

By Ward W. Triplett III

News of the world, the nation and the Nebraska Union now flickers in the union main lounge, thanks to a new electronic news/message board.

The machine is provided by the Electronic News Network of Dallas, Texas, with 600 characters per day of union announcements added to the day's news. The machine, installed in late December, began displaying the news in bright red letters Wednesday.

Steve Hardy, a Union Board member, said the sign has not been purchased, yet is here on a trial basis.

"We have it for a 90-day trial period," Hardy said. "If we decide we don't like it, we can have it removed within that period. After that, we'll have it on a 20-month contract."

Hardy began pushing the board idea at Union Board meetings last semester. The board approved the sign's installation on a trial basis despite concern that the ever-moving messages would be distracting.

Hardy said the ENN sign runs its news in seven-to-eight-minute cycles. ENN

makes its profits from advertising and the only cost to the Nebraska Union is a \$6 to \$10 electric bill.

"I think this is a real good way to serve the student," he said. "It will give people a very general, basic idea of what's going on in the world, and a better idea of what's going on around campus that they might be able to take advantage of."

Union Director Daryl Swanson said he has heard both positive and negative comments about the sign.

"Generally, I'm pleased with it," he said.

Of the 600 characters per day that the union provides, (via letter or phone to Dallas, which programs the day's news at 4 a.m. Nebraska time), Laura Lynn of the Campus Activities and Programs office has been placed in charge of what runs, Swanson said. A policy of who can contribute messages has not been determined.

"I would prefer that we offer it to student organizations," Swanson said. "We may want to give priority to events taking place within the union. But since that criteria has not been established, I assume it is open for suggestions."