Council postpones action on millennium bug issue

By David Ryan
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The year 2000 may not bring Armageddon, but a report delivered to the City Council last night suggests that it may bring a world-wide recession thanks to an expected computer glitch known as the Y2K problem.

The problem exists because many computer systems read year dates as two digits, causing system failure when the year 2000 arrives and the date reads "00."

Councilman Bobby Lee implored the council to try to understand the complexity of the problem.

That complexity was demonstrated in a June 2 C-SPAN broadcast shown to council members. In the video, Sen. Robert Bennett of Utah, chairman of the senate subcommittee created to deal with Y2K, addressed a room of business leaders about the decisions made.
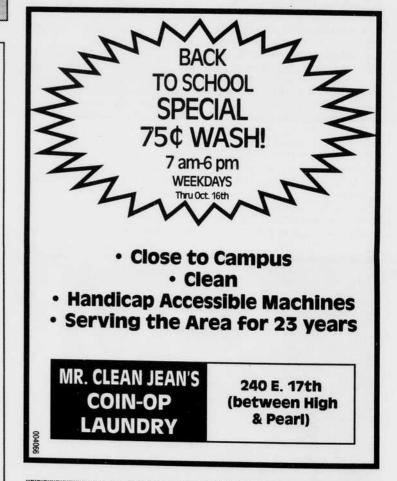
Bennett shared an anecdote to illustrate the proportion of the Y2K problem. "I called a guy who had started working on his company's Y2K problem in 1996," Bennett said. "He told me he had every confidence that his company will have solved its Y2K problem by the year 2000.

"I asked him, 'What's going to happen to your organization if you pick up the phone to call one of your branch offices ... and you don't get a dial tone? There was silence on the other end of the line," Bennett said.

At worst case, Bennett said, the problem would create recession due to the inability of businesses to operate normally.

Bennett outlined seven areas that the government should work on to ease the Y2K problem. Utilities headed the list, and the last item was handling negligence lawsuits against the government.

The council decided to discuss the Y2K problem again Oct. 7.