

Cable TV ✓

# ✓ Cable complaints surface again

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WATSONVILLE — After hearing complaints about Sonic Cable TV's service for a second meeting in a month, the City Council Tuesday night decided to establish a cable review committee to try to resolve problems.

The committee members will be named at the next council meeting and will likely include a member of the council, several residents and Sonic representatives.

Viewers aired numerous complaints about Sonic Cable, which serves the Watsonville area and Capitola. Lousy service, poor reception, repetitive programming, station blackouts and steep rates

topped the list of gripes.

Sonic General Manager Les Johnson declined to answer the charges, saying he'd prefer to meet with dissatisfied customers one-on-one.

Noting the city had established a cable TV committee before, Johnson said, "If you want to have (a committee) we'd be happy to meet with you anytime any place. ... Except for power failures we've got pretty darn good service."

Johnson's rosy outlook on the service ran counter to the half-dozen people who protested the service.

"A lot of the time the system's out," said Neil Rathke. "You call them up and get a nonsensical

tape-recording."

"It's very bad reception and when you do call on the weekend they don't have anyone working. I think it's very rude," said Beverly Ratlich.

Robert Chacanaca, who complained bitterly about Sonic's service at a previous meeting, conceded that some improvement has been seen in the reception.

But Chacanaca urged the council to demand a public access station, or at least establish a committee to air gripes.

"United Artists charges less, gives 51 channels and broadcasts in stereo," said Chacanaca. "Sonic could do the same.

Sonic Cable offers 29 stations,

some of which are blanked out, for \$17.50 a month.

Former Mayor Ann Soldo was the sole supporter of the cable company. When she was mayor in 1983, the City Council approved a 20-year agreement with Sonic to provide service to the Watsonville area.

Soldo said she hasn't heard complaints about the service or reception, and added she thinks a small minority of people don't like the service.

"We could have committee upon committee upon committee," Soldo said. "If we had a committee every time someone complained, we'd soon be a bureaucracy of committees."