

# Santa Cruz-area cable rates to be increased 92 percent

By KATHY SALAMON

STAFF WRITER

The basic rate for Santa Cruz Cable TV within the city of Santa Cruz will increase by 92 percent — from \$7.03 per month to \$13.50 — beginning Jan. 1.

Santa Cruz Cable TV serves the city of Santa Cruz and the unincorporated areas of Mid-county. The rate increase will first affect only subscribers within the city limits.

When the new rates take effect, the number of channels available under the basic rate will go from 11 to 28.

Those extra channels had previously been available to customers for an extra \$5.95 per month, but the majority of Santa Cruz Cable TV subscribers within the city chose not to subscribe to them.

As for the unincorporated areas of the county, rate increases are planned as soon as the company can get the system ready in that area. That could happen as soon as the

next few months, a telephone operator for the cable company said.

Officials at Santa Cruz Cable could not be reached for comment this morning.

But Santa Cruz City Councilman Mike Rotkin, who has been involved with the city's battle with the cable company for many years, had much to say on the matter.

"It's absolutely outrageous," he said. "People should be able to have a choice in whether they want more channels or not.

"This kind of high-handed behavior is one of the reasons the city and county persist with fighting the lawsuit against the current cable company."

Rotkin was referring to the complicated court battle the city and unincorporated area of the county has had with the cable company when they tried to discontinue its franchise because of complaints of poor service and high rates. The current cable service was then

run by Group W.

A new, locally owned company, known as Greater Santa Cruz Cable TV, was chosen as the successor to Group W.

This, however, was challenged in court by the old franchise holder.

A U.S. District judge ruled in the original cable company's favor, and the city and county have requested a reconsideration of the matter.

If the reconsideration fails, Rotkin said the city and county will take the matter to the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, Rotkin said dissatisfied cable subscribers should write the Santa Cruz City Council or County Board of Supervisors and register their complaints about the cable company.

"We can use them in our court case," he said. "Their rate increases demonstrate better than anything we can say in court why we should have a locally owned cable company."