

# City Council approves 20-year cable contract

By STEVE SHENDER

With next to no discussion and absolutely no to-do, the City Council Tuesday night unanimously approved a 20-year franchise for Sonic Cable TV. The council action rang down the curtain on a controversy that began last spring when an article in the Register-Pajaronian sparked a storm of public pro-

test over a proposed 30-year contract with the cable company.

The 20-year pact, renegotiable at five-year intervals instead of the 10-year intervals in the 30-year contract originally proposed to the council, requires that public hearings must be held prior to any future rate increases.

The council backed off from approving the 30-year franchise last April after a newspaper article questioned the manner in which it was negotiated — by a council committee which never consulted with the public — and raised questions about its substantive merits. The council subsequently surveyed cable subscribers and held a public hearing on the franchise proposal. The proposed franchise's length was the major concern of hearing witnesses, who worried that the city would soon find itself locked into an outmoded system if Sonic was granted a 30-year contract. City Attorney Don Haile said at the time that the move to grant Sonic a 30-year franchise had been a "policy decision" influenced by

the company's need to secure bank financing for equipment purchases.

Sonic's previous franchise expired last November.

In another matter Tuesday night, the council voted to increase park and recreation fees for new apartment buildings, mobile home parks and single family homes. With council members Frank Osmer and Rex Clark opposed, the council voted 5-2 to impose a fee of \$75 per bedroom on new homes and apartments and \$125 per space on mobile home parks. The new fees replace the \$51 per bedroom and space previously assessed for apartments, single homes and mobile home parks. The city staff had proposed to hike the fees, which had not been raised in years, to \$125 per bedroom on homes and apartments and \$250 per space in mobile home parks, but that proposal was rejected by the council at the urging of Councilman Vido Deretich.

Deretich complained that the city was trying to raise the fees too much, and too fast. "It's highway robbery," he said. "They (the parks department) must need it," but I think it's too much."

Park and recreation fees will continue to be imposed on residential subdivision developments according to a formula based on acreage and property values.

The new "bedroom tax" on apartments, single family dwellings and mobile home parks, which is to be collected at the time building permits are issued, is aimed at seeing that such developments pay a fairer share of the city's park costs.

City officials noted Tuesday night that such costs had been escalating for residential subdivision developers because of escalating land values, while being frozen for developers of apartments, mobile home parks and single family residences.