

Cable TV pact near in Capitola

After nearly two years of negotiations and extensions of its cable TV franchise with Sonic Cable TV, Capitola city officials believe they have reached an acceptable agreement.

City Manager Steve Burrell Thursday asked the City Council to schedule a public hearing May 9 on the proposed franchise agreement and a master cable TV franchise ordinance.

The Congress has stripped cities and counties of the power to control cable TV charges and even of the right to tell a cable TV operator which television stations and services must be carried on the system.

Sonic's Capitola system will have a capacity of 35 channels, Burrell told the council, 34 of those channels will be activated immediately.

One of those channels will be allocated to Capitola Community Channel 8, a local group that broadcasts City Council

meetings and community events over the cable network.

The group has been plagued with faulty equipment and interference on the cable from commercial broadcast channel 8.

Burrell said that a channel will be assigned to the group and it won't be either channels 8 or 11 — the two most interference-prone channels in Capitola.

The company has agreed to pay the city a 5 percent franchise fee and to purchase \$20,000 worth of new television, sound and lighting equipment that will be used in the City Council chambers to televise City Council and, possibly, city Planning Commission meetings to the community.

The company will also maintain that equipment for the life of the franchise, Burrell told the City Council Thursday night.