

New TV waves may ride air

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

Television may be a pioneer industry, but one Eugene group thinks the local cable TV company could do a lot more to broaden its scope of community coverage.

According to Catherine Lauris, head of the Friends of Public Broadcasting (FPB), the recent controversy over rates charged by the Teleprompter Cable Television Company of Oregon may be just the opportunity the group has been seeking to establish a public broadcasting station in Eugene.

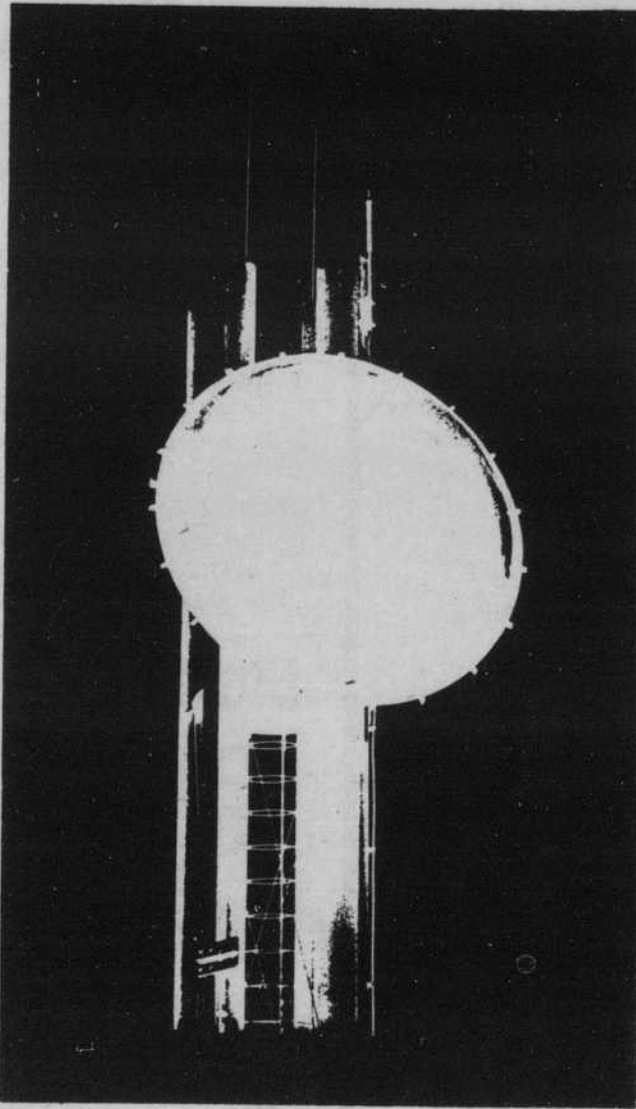
The group, established in January of 1976 by a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, began working to establish a public-access channel for the local community. Two years and several attempts later, the group may be close to their goal.

In a proposal written for the Metropolitan Cable Television/Translator Commission, the group regulating cable television operation in the area, the FPB outlined their plans for the local public access channel to be carried by Teleprompter.

The proposal, Lauris says, was met without a great deal of enthusiasm by the commission members two years ago, but has since been seen as a real possibility.

"It (the proposal) was accepted when we presented it but it wasn't accepted with much enthusiasm, which just may be the commission's style," Lauris says. "But, gradually some of them are beginning to see the reasonableness of the proposal."

The public-access channel, which would allow use by nearly every organization and group inside the city limits with something to say, has so far been received without much enthusiasm by the Teleprompter company,



Emerald graphic

she says.

The FPB group will be able to voice its views along with those of other community members when the question of Teleprompter's franchise extension is brought to a public hearing tonight, 7:30

p.m., in the city council chambers, 777 Pearl St.

If a 15-year extension is granted to the Teleprompter company by the cable television/translator commission, Lauris says the FPB will work with the company to make the channel a reality.

"We presented to them what we think is for the public good," she says. "We proposed a franchise fee increase of 5 percent instead of 3 percent to finance the channel, which isn't unreasonable."

The Lane County Commissioners, in their regular Tuesday meeting, agreed with that fee request by the FPB and placed it with several other requests to be considered by the Metropolitan Cable Television/Translator Commission. Further action by the commission will come after the public hearings.

The proposed access channel will be different from regular educational or public broadcasting channels like the channels operated by the Oregon Educational Public Broadcasting Station (OEPBS) and the National Public Radio, Lauris says.

The channel will offer a variety of programming, from the public hearings and city and county government meetings to selected community programs, she says.

"There are a lot of interesting things that are going on in the community that people may want to see," Lauris says.

While newspapers may hold a permanent record of what happened at a particular public meeting, television coverage by the access channel could make the whole issue "alive" to people who wouldn't normally attend.

"People gain so much more information by actually seeing the whole thing instead of just reading about it later," Lauris says.

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'Maverick' tries for guv

Politics in Oregon have traditionally been considered independent no matter what the issue, and this year's gubernatorial race will prove to be no different.

Clif Everett, a political maverick who championed the ill-fated attempt to change the state's last-use planning laws two years ago, will enter the political arena once again this Sunday at a nominating convention that may put his name on the state ballot.

Everett, 58, a registered independent, will challenge both incumbent governor Robert Straub and Republican nominee Victor Atiyeh for the governorship if the convention can muster 1,000 valid signatures.

The convention will be held at the Lane County Fairgrounds all day Sunday, June 25.

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