

Neighbors may appeal decision

\$1.8 million parking garage approved

By JAS SAUND
Of the Emerald

The State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA) approved the Sacred Heart General Hospital plan to construct a six-story \$1.8 million 464-car parking garage on the southwest corner of 13th Avenue and Hilyard Street Friday.

The order follows a June 13 hearing held at the request of West University Neighbors (WUN) to reconsider an earlier SHPDA decision approving the project.

State law requires state agency approval for any new health service, or for any project costing more than \$150,000 in health facilities.

WUN challenged the agency's earlier decision to approve the hospital parking building on six

counts, including the impact of the structure on the neighborhood environment and on patients' fees.

SHPDA director Robert Oliver ruled that the environmental issues raised were outside the state agency jurisdiction.

"The issue may well be substantial," he said. "But it must be settled with the local government."

Responding to the charges that his agency has been "unduly casual" in determining whether patient fees should be raised to help pay for the facility, Oliver said, there was no indication that the proposed 72-cent a day increase will cause the hospital to raise its patient charges. SHPDA expects Sacred Heart to absorb the increase by reducing its profit margin.

Oliver also noted that the delays

have forced the hospital to reduce the number of parking spaces from 481 to 464 due to the impact of inflation on the construction costs.

Dick Williams, Sacred Heart's assistant administrator, considers SHPDA's decision good news.

"We are encouraged that the state has reinforced its earlier decision, we appreciate this reaffirmation by the state."

WUN spokesperson Harold Lannom will not comment until the neighborhood group has a chance to see the official order and discuss it. WUN has 30 days to appeal the decision to the state Certificate of Need Board.

SHPDA was formed last year to scrutinize the state hospital industry, closely. One of its main responsibilities is to make certain the new health care projects in the state are needed. The creation of

the agency took place at a time when hospital care costs were rising at the rate of \$17-million a year. The total cost of hospital care in Oregon is presently between \$300 and \$400 million.

Bowing to public pressure against spiraling hospital costs, Gov. Robert Straub called a conference of 100 people representing consumers, labor leaders, businessmen, hospital and government officials to study the problem. The group recommended that the state-enforced regulation would not work, and opted instead for the voluntary regulations.

During early spring 1977, the Oregon Association of Hospitals, a lobbying organization, stepped forward promising not only to stop the rising cost of hospital care but to cut the costs by \$10 million.

It is too early to say if hospitals like Sacred Heart will honor this promise; SHPDA's report to the state legislature is not due until January 1979.

As to Sacred Heart's promise not to pass the cost of its parking garage on to its patients, Liz Fobes of SHPDA says, "We are keeping a close watch on the situation."

City anxious for cable pact, but negotiations are slow

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

Despite fears that Springfield could be left without an alternative when the Teleprompter of Oregon cable television corporation's franchise expires next April, negotiations with the Metropolitan Cable Television/Translator Commission won't be completed until the middle of August.

The commission, which met Thursday to consider alternatives to the existing cable system if negotiations between Teleprompter and the commission broke down, said a final draft of the ordinance, which would govern cable operation in Lane County for the next 15 years, wouldn't be ready before August 17.

According to Les Swanson, commission negotiator, the ordinance is near completion, but final wording of several clauses will delay the final draft for at least three weeks.

The commission and Teleprompter have made "substantial progress" in negotiations since a public hearing on the cable sys-

tem last month, Swanson said. Most of the provisions of the ordinance have been agreed to by Teleprompter, including a clause to reopen negotiations on the franchise every five years, or "as the need arises," he said.

The negotiations could be reopened, Swanson said, by any organization or group that felt there was a need for a review of the ordinance. A review could also be called to renegotiate the public access programming time established by Teleprompter's television station-KOZY.

While the rest of the commission was satisfied with the negotiation timetable, Springfield representatives Gene Hulett and George Vinson asked that a final draft of the cable agreement be sent to the Springfield City Council before the third week in August.

"We asked for an ordinance by July 1, and that was delayed," Hulett said. "Unless we can get a document by at least August 1 we will have to pull out and explore other possibilities."

According to Vinson, Springfield Finance Director, the city

council wanted a draft of the ordinance to review during its August 2 meeting. If the council has to wait much longer, it may have to negotiate on its own for a cable system, he said.

"The negotiations seem near completion, but if they take too long and we have to tell Teleprompter to pack it, we'll have just four or five months to come up with an alternative," Vinson said. "And that is an unreasonable amount of time."

"We want to remain part of the negotiations, but we cannot dilly dally," Hulett added.

Tom Williams, chairman of the cable commission, warned that the negotiations were too near completion to cut the deadline by a week.

In other business, the commission decided not to explore alternatives to the Teleprompter cable system. The commission had contacted 18 major cable television firms operating in western states to find out if they would be interested in supplying a cable system for Lane County.

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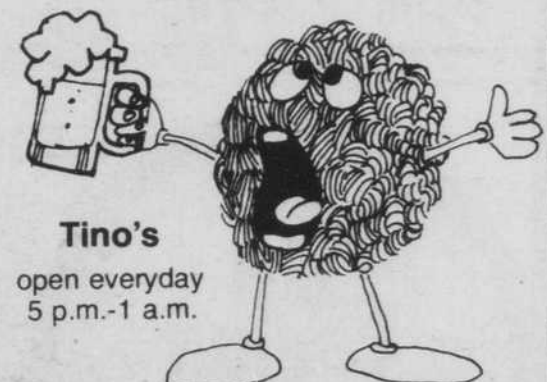
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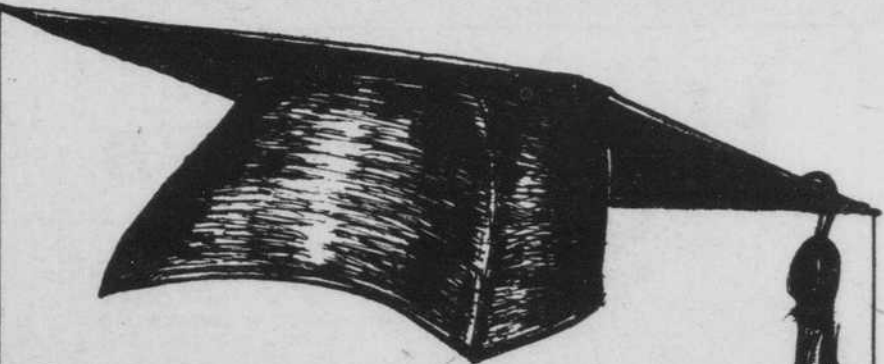
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