

Channel 14 remains under fire

By John Fulwider
Senior Reporter

Though the fall Cablevision channel lineup has been shaken up, the fate of public access remains on the slate — for now.

At the Thursday night meeting of the Cable TV Advisory Board, members voted 7-2 to again recommend that the City Council eliminate public access.

While the controversial channel's future remains uncertain, questions about other channels were answered.

Rick Kiolbasa, a Cablevision spokesman, said The Cartoon Network would be offered as part of full basic service beginning Nov. 1.

CNN will retain its place on Channel 22. Cablevision officials had said the network might be moved to a higher service tier, at a higher cost to customers.

WGN-Chicago, now on Channel 8, will be moved to Channel 14 to make room for a new ABC affiliate. Public Access, now at Channel 14, will move to Channel 20. Faith and Values will move to Channel 49, part of the second tier of service.

More than three-quarters of the meeting was spent discussing Channel 14. Much of the debate was about the "Closet Comedian" Scott Harrold of Lincoln.

In the past, Harrold has shown nudity on his program, which airs at midnight Friday and Saturday. On last week's show, Harrold, wearing clown makeup, was shown masturbating.

Some board members expressed frustration that nothing could be done to prevent Harrold's program from airing.

Board member Kent Behlen said he thought the board could approve or disapprove "questionable" programming.

But Steve Huggenberger of the City Attorney's office said the board had no legal authority to remove a program.

Such controversy is not uncommon.

Huggenberger said similar stations in Austin, Texas, and Madison, Wis., enjoyed very active use, but were "fraught with problems" including people committing suicide on camera.

That seemed to relieve (or concern) board member Margaret Griesen.

"I guess it can get worse," she said.



A long line of people wait to get inside the Brass Rail shortly before last call Saturday night.

Jeff Haller/DN

Bars

Continued from Page 1
a wake-up call."

Male and female amateur strippers groove to the heavy dance beat on Thursday nights. On most Friday and Saturday nights, it becomes nearly impossible to move as the young crowd packs the first and second floors of Kaboom's.

About six security guards with rippling muscles stand throughout the dimly-lit club waiting to intervene before a brawl begins. Despite their efforts, 23 assaults were reported to police and four violations were turned in to the state liquor commission in one year.

But the dance club's bad reputation is undeserved, said Manager Pat Doering.

"It's silly to say that it's more dangerous down here. We've never had any knives or guns," Doering said. "Sure we've had a few fights, but tell me a bar in Lincoln that hasn't."

Police officers devote most of their time to patrolling Kaboom's, Peschong said, even though there are 65 other venues in downtown Lincoln that serve alcohol. Officers on bicycle patrol make random checks inside all bars, but after last call they are almost always outside Kaboom's.

"Kaboom's generates a lot of our workload at bar closing time," Peschong said. "Probably more so than any other bar in the downtown area."

About three blocks east of Kaboom's, police responded to 120 calls from Iguana's. However, the majority of the incidents occurred in the street or away from the bar.

"Kaboom's is a problem bar," Peschong said. "Iguana's is not a problem bar. It is one of the best run bars in downtown Lincoln."

There are no security guards under the pink awning at Iguana's. But the bar's reputation is clean with police and the state liquor commission.

"We feel like we can take care of everything," said Becky Smith, a co-owner of the bar. "We don't have a security system. We try to really take care of problems before they start."

The Hurricane, the bar with the third-highest police calls, stands to lose its liquor license because of repeated violations of serving alcohol to minors. While the bar has only 71 police calls, it has six separate infractions with the state liquor commission in the last year.

Owners of the bar, which is the only club in the city with national live music acts, maintain they are being unfairly singled-out.

"We have become a target in Lincoln by certain members of the Lincoln Police Department," Co-owner Jack Hanrahan said. "At the same time we know we have made mistakes, but we feel those are behind us."

Police insist there is no such bar hit-list. The Lincoln City Council will review the Hurricane's case Monday afternoon. The state liquor commission will hear the bar's case Wednesday.

Most of the bars' citations came on college nights, when the minimum entrance age is 19. Those nights have been canceled since May, said Hanrahan, who lives in Kansas City, Mo., where he operates eight other clubs.

"Personally, I don't think you can run a

college night without putting your liquor license at risk," Peschong said. "You probably will make more money, but you might not have your liquor license in the long run."

Hanrahan said he wished people who enjoy The Hurricane — from college students to business executives — would testify to keep the club open.

"We are asking the city council for a second chance to prove what we can do with The Hurricane," he said. "There have been no riots, crowd problems or violent altercations."

The number of calls at other Lincoln taverns aren't a major concern for police.

O'Rourke's — which hosts a mellow, diverse crowd — had 50 calls in the past year, but no liquor commission violations. The Brass Rail, which attracts primarily a young fraternity and sorority crowd, reported 45 police calls, two of which were reported to the liquor commission.

Morgan's Upstairs, which occasionally features live bands, had 42 police calls and four state violations.

Police said Kaboom's could be the next bar reviewed by the city council and the state liquor board. Peschong said police have tested patrons outside the dance club with a blood alcohol content as high as .30.

"Why did someone pump so much alcohol into someone?" Peschong said. "Someone is not doing their jobs inside the bars."

Doering, Kaboom's manager, said the high number of police calls cast an unfortunate negative light over his establishment.

"It's kind of a Catch 22," he said. "If we call them, it goes down as a police call. If we don't call them, the police kind of frown on that and we look like vigilantes."



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