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Campaign letter raises ire

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SANTA CRUZ — Councilman Spiro Mellis has pushed some buttons with the progressive City Council majority by accusing its four members of seeking "the suspension of representative government in the city of Santa Cruz," among other bad practices in office.

His attack "outraged," "disappointed" and "saddened" the progressives and socialists on the council, who say the charges were made without proof, or bases in fact.

Mellis' accusations were widely distributed in a piece of campaign mail that was printed with a letterhead that identified him as a councilman.

It was paid for by the All Santa Cruz Coalition which handles most of the campaigning for the candidate-slate of Katy Sears-Williams, Jim Felich, Wilson "Bill" Fieberling and Arnold Levine.

Mellis, a moderate who's in the three member minority on the council, supports the slate.

His written attack is aimed at blocking socialists Michael Rotkin and Bruce Van Allen from winning a second term. It also indicts progressive Councilmembers Mardi Wormhoudt and John Laird.

Mellis says the two incumbents running for office and two other candidates with progressive platforms want to capture all four seats.

"Now, these self-proclaimed socialists are asking for a six-to-one domination of city council, and with it the power to control hiring and firing of the city staff.

"I can assure you that the price of the absolute power they seek is the suspension of representative government in Santa Cruz. We must not give them such power."

He accuses the progressive majority of causing "the children in our parks to be displaced by transients and and undesireables" and leaving the storm drains clogged which will add to winter flooding.

He also says the majority "gives lip service" to providing jobs, but blocks "well-planned and environmentally safe projects."

Wormhoudt responds, "It makes

me immensely sad that any councilmember would use the council title to lie to the people."

Mellis says he's not lying, and while he's short on detail concerning storm drains that are clogged and projects that are blocked, he comes out swinging at the majority's reaction and record.

"I'm saying that even though I'm

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Councilman's letter

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part of it, the council has failed to provide the necessary leadership to solve these problems. It refuses to include service areas into our sphere of influence and the council has refused to plan capital improvements."

Mellis says that both Wormhoudt and Van Allen have used their council titles in campaign literatures. "They set the precedent," he said.

Rotkin calls Mellis' campaign letter "pretty outrageous."

He says he doesn't know what Mellis is talking about when he charges the council with failure to clean the storm drains, and says he'd like to know which projects the council turned down that would have provided jobs.

He concludes, "I thought better of Spiro than this."

Van Allen says, "I'm really saddened that Spiro Mellis has sunk this low. Why is he and the coalition stooping to these kind of lies?"

"It's the only kind they know," Wormhoudt chipped in.

Van Allen warned, "Mr. Mellis and the All Santa Cruz Coalition will have to answer to the community, regardless of the outcome of the election; to answer for the bitter tone they've created."

Councilman John Laird said, "I've only had the letter read to me over the phone just before you (the reporter) called, but the comment that I would somehow be part of an end to representative government in Santa Cruz is outrageous."

Laird said the letter is indicative of the campaign's getting to the desperate hours of the last week.

"I look forward to the end of the rhetoric and a time to get down to work with whomever is elected."

Mellis said the moral outrage of Laird and Wormhoudt has to be carefully viewed as they "are doing everything they can to get the candidates they like elected. I'm just doing the same."

"The council majority is just planting trees in the streets when they should be doing traffic improvements."

"All I'm saying is that when it is needed, the leadership to solve the city's major problems is not there."

Laird said he believes the coalition's hired campaign firm, Marathon Communications from Los Angeles, prepared the letter and put it down in front of Mellis "and he closed his eyes and signed it."

Mellis said it's his own work and he stands behind it.