

Mahaney Gets Post Of Mayor

By **BILL NEUBAUER**
Sentinel Staff Writer

A philosophically divided Santa Cruz City Council Tuesday elected Dr. John Mahaney mayor and Joseph Ghio vice mayor for the 1979-80 term.

Each election was by a 4 to 3 vote, with Councilmen Larry Edler, Spiro Mellis, Mahaney and Ghio backing the winners and with Councilmen Michael Rotkin, Bruce Van Allen and Bert Muhly backing the losers.

There was no move to make the elections unanimous, and Muhly expressed deep concern that the victory by the conservative majority on the council not lead to two years of divisiveness that would tend to pull the city apart.

Muhly was nominated for the mayor's chair by Rotkin after Ghio had nominated Mahaney. Muhly and Mahaney were lauded by their supporters in brief nomination speeches, then Mahaney was elected on the first ballot.

Ghio's nomination and success drew a strong reaction from Muhly, who had nominated Rotkin for the post of vice mayor. Muhly said in part:

"I would hope that this choice that eliminates two newly elected councilmen from a chance of advancement for two years does not mean we fear people who have strong constituencies."

Muhly charged that on election night, after Rotkin and Van Allen had turned out to be the top vote-getters, Ghio had stated "he sees two divisive years ahead."

Muhly warned "You are totally blocking out two young men with the energies to pull the city together. I know I am going to do all I can to make sure we do not have two divisive years."

Mahaney retorted that Muhly had no right to "take one volatile statement on

election night and use that without talking about other statements made the same night."

Muhly's push for Rotkin was based on his own experience in 1973, he said, when a conservative council made him the vice mayor after he had won election with the top tally of any candidate. He stressed that Rotkin was the top vote-getter on March 6 and deserved the chance to be the vice mayor.

Mahaney sought strongly to take the bitterness out of the political event. He said he had been on the council for 5½ years, that he had first been appointed to the council because it was split, and he pledged: "I will try to be entirely fair. We are all here to serve the city, you know."

For Mahaney this is his second term as mayor. He was mayor during the 1976-77 term and won plaudits for his role in helping the city to celebrate the nation's Bicentennial.

Ghio also has been both mayor and vice mayor. He has made no secret of his desire to be mayor again, and the talk was common at City Hall Tuesday night that the council majority will make him the mayor in 1980-81, when an unusual 20-month term will be up for grabs.

Mahaney is numbered as the city's 54th mayor, as well as the 51st, since city incorporation in 1876. Mayors who serve consecutive terms are given but one number, while mayors who do not serve consecutive terms are given a number for each term.

Mahaney saluted Edler, whom he succeeded, on a job well done and presented him with a plaque, a badge and a calculator.

Mahaney urged the council to work together and said: "I am looking forward to a lot of help from you."



SANTA CRUZ SENTINAL
March 28, 1979

SC Mayor John Mahaney, left, congratulated by Michael Rotkin, as Bert Muhly looks on.

(Sentinel Photo by Pete Amos)

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