

# District Attorney Supervisors lay out plan to pick new DA

By **ROBIN MUSITELLI**

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SANTA CRUZ — When supervisors pick a district attorney next week, they'll use a voting process designed to spare the candidates' feelings.

Instead of going down the list of hopefuls and voting yea or nay, the five supervisors will make rounds of nominations and vote until one candidate receives three votes.

The method was suggested by Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt and endorsed by Supervisor Jeff Almquist, who said it avoids the "blunt" approach of up-or-down voting.

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you're going to be voting against people who are going to continue to be your employees," Almquist said.

The voting process is the latest footwork in the selection of an interim district attorney to replace Art Danner, who was appointed to the bench in December.

The opening has spurred intense

lobbying for the job by eight lawyers, including a former district attorney and four prosecutors from Danner's staff.

The board is scheduled to make a selection Feb. 11. The lawyer chosen will serve until the election in March 2000.

Here's how the selection process

will work:

On Tuesday, two days before it makes its selection, the board will hold a candidate forum and public comment period.

The forum is set for 1:30 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors Chamber.

Each candidate — in an order drawn by lot — will address the board for five minutes. Supervisors may then ask questions.

Written questions from the audience will follow. They will be posed to the candidates by Almquist.

Next, members of the public will be allowed three minutes each to address the supervisors.

Three hours have been allotted

for public testimony.

Audience members will not be allowed to speak directly with the candidates, the supervisors have agreed.

After the testimony, each candidate will be given three minutes to make a closing statement.

Supervisors will then meet at 1:30 p.m. next Thursday to make their selection.

The public will again be allowed to comment, but only for a total of 30 minutes, before supervisors start their deliberations.

Almquist and Wormhoudt proposed that each supervisor be allowed to nominate a candidate. No

seconds will be needed. A candidate can receive more than one nomination.

If no one receives three votes, nominations would be reopened. Any of the candidates could again be nominated, including candidates previously out-voted or not nominated.

The nomination proposal is expected to be approved Tuesday by the other supervisors.

Almquist noted the benefits of the method. "Anyone who wants to put anyone in play can."

Besides, he added, "it'll be interesting mathematics."