

# What has 10 legs and crawls? The Scotts Valley City Council

By LAURIE SLOTHOWER

Sentinel Staff Writer

SCOTTS VALLEY — It's too early to make any definitive observations, but if the new City Council majority were to have a motto, it would be, "We Shall Leave No Nit Unpicked."

Agenda packets as thick as those used by county supervisors, late meetings and weekly (as opposed to bi-monthly) council sessions are just a few of the changes that have occurred since Roger Anderson and Joe Miller were sworn into office June 21.

8-2-84  
Anderson and Miller joined fellow Citizens for Orderly Growth member Barbara Leichter in forming a new majority on the five-member council — a majority which pledged to open city government to the people and to cast a watchful eye on city finances.

And watchful they have been. However, in the process of figuratively crossing every "T" and dotting every "I" of city business, the new council has had a difficult time finishing agendas by the end of the evening.

As a result, City Council meetings have crept along at a snail's pace and City Hall insiders say the staff is being overwhelmed with requests for background information.

Consider:

- The council barely approved the 1984-85 budget at 1 a.m. July 4 and Anderson and Miller still wanted to delay adoption for another week so they could get additional information on some items.

If they had not adopted the budget that

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## Scotts Valley council

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night the council would have had to approve every single check to be written by the city until the council could meet again.

- At one meeting two weeks ago the council spent almost an hour on oral communication, which normally takes less than 20 minutes. The agenda was already thick with items continued from previous council sessions.

- During discussions of the new City Hall, the council spent almost half an hour on whether a new police building should be a "goal" or a "policy."

- Council members met Wednesday for their usual meeting and will gather again today at 4 p.m. to discuss the Hazardous Waste Materials Ordinance, a topic held over from previous agendas.

They are already scheduled for several "special meetings" this month to deal with some of the other holdover agenda items.

This prompted Councilman Ray Carl to say, "Madame Mayor, if you're going to see these extra dates, I request that you review my salary."

It's quite a change from the City Council of yore, which had a reputation for speedy meetings and even speedier approvals for development projects.

Part of the situation comes from the newness of Miller and Anderson.

"No matter how closely they followed the issues during the campaign, there are always matters that you don't have information on," said Councilman Phil Liberty, who was appointed to his post last year.

Carl concurred: "Give us two more

months and the agenda packets will be skinny again and the conversations will be shorter." Carl has spent the longest time — 16 years — on the City Council.

Nevertheless, Liberty thinks the new council members should question city staff before meetings.

"I see members of the public walking out," said Liberty of the leisurely pace of City Council meetings. "I try to do my homework in advance so I don't have to delay the meetings."

"They talk too much and do too little," observed one longtime Scotts Valley resident who did not want to be identified and who has attended council meetings recently. "They get a point settled and then somebody says, 'I'd like to add one point' and they have to regurgitate the whole thing."

Additionally, Liberty and Carl feel the side-issues which come up during oral communications should be placed on a future agenda.

To be fair, one reason for the slow pace of recent weeks is that council members have been tackling thorny issues such as the city budget and a financing mechanism for the long-delayed plans for completing City Hall.

The latter topic involves creating a special "Public Facilities Corporation" under the auspices of the City Council and issuing bonds known as certificates of participation. Even inveterate detail-hound Leichter calls the subject "dry, dull and boring."

Nevertheless, the plan calls for the city of Scotts Valley to borrow about \$670,000,

and requires fine-toothed combing.

Another aspect is that the new council members are not used to dealing with city employees.

Some City Hall sources feel that part of the problem is that the new council members do not trust city staff.

Miller and Anderson are members of Citizens for Orderly Growth, as is Councilwoman Leichter, who was elected two years ago.

Miller and Anderson ran on a campaign of changing the direction of Scotts Valley. Most of the city administrators were hired by the old-guard council and helped implement the city's mega-growth of the past four years.

City employees "say they're being run into the ground with all these requests for reports, that they have so much to do they've had to cancel their appointments for three weeks to keep up with the demands," said one source.

Leichter acknowledges that she wants lots of information before she casts her vote, but says it is not because she doesn't trust city staff.

"When you get into something new, you take a little time. The public can expect that this City Council will be asking a lot of questions."

Leichter — who is alternately addressed as "Madame Mayor" and "Mrs. Mayor" — goes to lengths to answer residents' concerns.

Anderson said he thought the council meetings have been "very positive."

"We're working together pretty well. I don't think it's been moving slowly," he said.