

It'll be a wide-open city election



Mayor Ann Soldo calls it quits....



...leaving an opening for Betty Murphy...

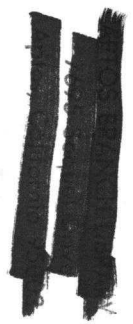


...and causing Rex Clark to consider his options.

Photos by Diane Varni

Mayor Soldo, Ingersoll withdraw from the race; Murphy to run for mayor

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REFERENCE

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STAFF WRITER

Watsonville Mayor Ann Soldo is calling it quits.

So is City Councilman Roy Ingersoll.

And Betty Murphy wants to follow in Soldo's footsteps.

Councilmen Rex Clark and Joe Marsano said they, too, would think about possibly running for mayor.

These political announcements all came during the course of a lengthy City Council meeting last night. They make the May 12 election a real free-for-all.

The mayor's job and three council seats are up for grabs, and it seems that at most, one incumbent will be seeking re-election. The terms of Soldo, Ingersoll, Murphy and Councilman Vido Deretich all expire this year. Deretich is the only incumbent still undecided; he has until March 5 to make up his mind.

Ingersoll made the first announcement last night, telling reporters during a break in the meeting that he had decided four years on the council is enough. Being on the council is "a slow death," Ingersoll said,

and though he'd still like to be involved in city affairs, he felt it was time to take it easy.

He later jokingly told his colleagues on the council, "While brushing my teeth this morning, I decided not to run for City Council for the next four years.

"It's surprising what you can do when you're brushing your teeth. I started to gag ..."

Those comments were followed soon after by Soldo's announcement that she also had decided not to seek another term. Her announcement came as a surprise to most of the council and city staff, especially since she had said before that she'd seek re-election.

"It looks like everybody brushes their teeth," quipped City Attorney Don Haile after Soldo's announcement.

Soldo said she had been going back and forth on whether to seek a second term as mayor, but during a recent short trip out of town, she had time to think it over.

She said that after four years as a council member and four as mayor, it was time to relax and enjoy her retirement. Soldo was a teacher and school principal for 37 years and was retired for only one year before she was elected to the council.

Now she wants to be able to take more trips with her husband, Andrew, and not have to attend meeting after meeting at City Hall. She said she has no plans to seek any other elective office.

Councilwoman Murphy was apparently the only council member with advance warning of Soldo's decision. Murphy said she will run for mayor because she wants to continue the programs and policies begun under Soldo's leadership.

"I think we agree on an awful lot of things," Murphy said. "I'm so disappointed she's not running again; I've really enjoyed working with her."

She said her husband, Bill, a former Watsonville mayor himself and the current county treasurer-tax collector, had nothing to do with her decision to run. He did, however, go down to City Hall first thing this morning to pick up nomination papers for his wife.

Councilman Rex Clark, taken by surprise by Soldo's announcement, said he may

take another shot at the mayor's job, but would have to "think about it."

"It's no secret that I've wanted to be mayor," he said. Clark lost to Soldo in the mayor's race four years ago.

Councilman Joe Marsano also said he will give some thought to the possibility of running for mayor.

Either Clark or Marsano would have the advantage of retaining his council seat in the event of losing the election, since both were elected to four-year council terms two years ago. Murphy, whose council term expires this year, would not have that luxury.

Former Councilman Frank Osmer, contacted this morning, said he would also give some thought to getting back into local politics, now that Soldo is bowing out.

Council members Vido Deretich and Gwen Carroll said they wouldn't even consider running for mayor.

The mayor's job is meant for someone who is retired and can spend all day going to meetings, Deretich said, and it's for someone who doesn't mind getting dressed up every day. "That's not for me," he said.

Three candidates have already surfaced — Robert Chacanaca and Melvin Ott

have taken out nomination papers for mayor and Juan Morales has taken out papers for the City Council.

Chacanaca and Morales both spoke during the council's "oral communications" period last night. Morales commended Ingersoll and Soldo for their work on the council.

Chacanaca questioned the way the police handled several arrests last week in connection with violence at the Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food plant, and why the police are giving out parking tickets on McKenzie Court, where he lives. The council did not discuss Chacanaca's concerns.

It is likely several more candidates will surface now that some of the incumbents have dropped out.

Candidates will have until March 10 to file nomination papers with the City Clerk's office.