

# First City Manager Made Many Changes In Operation Of Municipal Government

## Police And Fire Departments Reorganized By Administrator; Public Works Co-ordinated

(Editor's note: This is the first of a series of articles relating the progress of the city government since the council-manager form of administration has been in effect under the direction of City Manager Neal D. Smith.)

By Peter J. Heller

How well did Santa Cruz fare under the administration of its first city manager? The answer is best provided by a look at the record of the period since 1948, when the modern city charter that had been approved and signed by an elected board of 15 freeholders on December 26, 1947, became effective after popular approval at the polls.

When Neal D. Smith took office by council appointment on August 16, 1948, he found his tasks carefully defined by the charter. Before reviewing the state of the city government, however, it might be well to take a look at the basic law which governed Smith's actions.

Section 806 of the charter states: "The city manager shall be the chief executive officer and the head of the administrative branch of the city government. He shall be responsible to the city council for the proper administration of all affairs of the city, and he shall have power and he required to:

"(a) Appoint and remove, subject to the civil service provisions of this charter, all department heads of the city except as otherwise provided by this charter, and pass upon and approve all proposed appointments and removals of subordinate employees by department heads. No person related to the city manager by blood or by marriage shall be eligible for office or employment in the city;

"(b) Prepare the budget annually and submit it to the city council and be responsible for its administration after adoption;

"(c) Prepare and submit to the city council as of the end of the fiscal year, a complete report on the finances and administrative activities of the city for the preceding year;

"(d) Keep the city council advised of the financial condition and future needs of the city and make

such recommendations as may seem to him desirable;

"(e) See that all ordinances are enforced;

"(f) See that the provisions of all franchises, permits and privileges granted by the city are fully observed, and to report to the council any violation thereof;

"(g) Exercise general supervision over all privately owned public utilities operating within the city;

"(h) Act as purchasing agent for the city." (The charter here elaborates on specific tasks of the purchasing agent.)

"(i) Examine, or cause to be examined, without notice, the conduct of any officer or employee of the city;

"(j) Appoint such advisory boards or committees of citizens as he may deem desirable, with the growth of the city, to advise and assist him in his work; provided such persons shall not receive any compensation;

"(k) Act as personnel director until the council shall establish a separate office therefor;

"(m) From time to time, in order to facilitate the prompt, economical and efficient dispatch of city business, assign officers and employees from any department or office to perform such duties or services in connection with any other department or office or to work in more than one such department or office;

"(n) Perform such other duties as may be prescribed by this charter or required of him by the city council, not inconsistent with this charter."

The charter section was Neal Smith's work sheet when he took office. The newly-elected seven-member council had been in office only a few months. Under the previous, commission form of government, each city department was under the direction of one of the commissioners. The new manager was confronted with a noticeable lack of coordination between departments which resulted in duplication of facilities and failure to make full use of the knowledge and abilities of each department in the overall discharge of the city government functions.

Coordination of the departments, thus became the city manager's first task. He instituted weekly department head meetings that facilitated better understanding of everyone's problems, as well as utilization of each department toward a common goal. The team spirit so promoted soon showed in greater efficiency of the city hall staff as a whole.

During his first year, Smith operated under a budget that had been prepared by the new council shortly after taking office. Even with utilization of the maximum tax rate permitted, it contained little for capital outlay, and the need for additional revenue was immediately evident. The council, therefore, enacted the city sales tax of one half of one per cent which took effect on January 1, 1949. The city license tax was reduced at the same time.

The city tax rate for the 1948-49 fiscal year was \$2.525. It was possible to reduce the tax rate to \$2.33 in the two following years, and when property re-assessment raised the total assessed valuation in the city, the tax rate for the 1951-52 fiscal year was reduced proportionately to \$1.79.

Smith required that every item going into the budget be identified and justified by the department heads. The city council, therefore, can consider items of work and items of material and equipment rather than only proposed dollar expenditures when reviewing the budget prior to its adoption. At Smith's suggestion, all council discussion of the budget is open to the public, and copies of the preliminary budget have been made available to those interested enough to ask for them in advance. Department heads are always present when their phase of the budget is considered by the council.

Under the old charter, purchasing was done almost entirely by the various department heads, most of it at retail prices, and in many instances, purchase orders had been issued after the items were received. Smith instituted central purchasing. Careful preparation of specifications has resulted in competitive bidding. Nearly all items are now purchased at wholesale prices, and advantage is taken of discount for prompt payment.

For effective budget control, availability of budgeted funds now

must be certified by the city clerk before purchase orders are issued. The city manager exercises full budget control, aided by monthly reports of expenditures and encumbrances prepared by the city clerk. In 1948, a modern bookkeeping machine was installed to do the accounting.

Payroll errors have become rare because revised procedures increased accuracy while at the same time reducing the time required for processing the payrolls.

One outward sign of a more centralized and coordinated city government was the installation of a central switchboard replacing individual telephone lines—and numbers—to the various offices and desks in city hall. The switchboard operator also is assigned tasks in the city clerk's office.

Both protective services of the city underwent reorganization during Smith's term of office. The police department was improved through appointment of an assistant chief and an increase in the number of sergeants, each of whom was assigned duties commensurate with their rank. A juvenile bureau was established and has been eminently successful in coping with juvenile problems. The police department also received additional and more modern mobile equipment, and recent re-building of the department offices created more space for the record bureau. One example of police efficiency is the procedure for handling Halloween. Once a night dreaded for its juvenile excesses and vandalism, Halloween has become "safe".

Police radio equipment has been further modernized, and also serves water and street departments. Quick call equipment has been installed in some vehicles to signal drivers when away from their cars. An auxiliary main transmitter has been provided for emergency use.

The story of the fire department development in the past few years is still too well remembered to need much retelling. In 1947 the Board of Fire Underwriters of the Pacific had regraded the city, found 2633 deficiency points, and classified Santa Cruz in insurance class 6. Largely on Smith's initiative, the department was completely overhauled, new top officers were appointed, training programs instituted, equipment modernized, and an active fire prevention program conducted.

Capital outlay items included numerous small items of equipment, much hose, the aerial ladder truck, and a modern pumper. When the fire underwriters again inspected the city in 1950, they were able to reduce the insurance classification to class 4, with consequent reduction in insurance rates ranging from 19 to 40 per cent.

A site for a new fire station for the West Side has been purchased, and once this station is built, a further reduction in insurance classification is expected.

(For other city government activities under the administration of City Manager Neal D. Smith see tomorrow's Sentinel-News).

The states of California, Oregon and Washington, in 1947, joined in creation of the Pacific Marine Fisheries commission.

Sheep raising is important in fourteen Western States.