

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Neal Coonerty is 'ready to go' as the new mayor.

Neal Coonerty chosen new Santa Cruz mayor

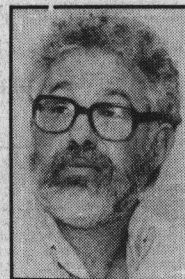
By MARTHA MENDOZA
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — It was an evening of tears and cheers Tuesday at the Santa Cruz City Council meeting, when Don Lane left the mayor's seat and Neal Coonerty was chosen to take his place.

"It's a feisty town, but we seem to get a lot of work done and I'm ready to go," Coonerty said, after his colleagues unanimously chose him as the next mayor.

"I feel a little like Chelsea already," joked his 16-year-old daughter Kasey, referring to President-elect Bill Clinton's daughter.

Also participating in the official shuffle were newly elected Cynthia Mathews and Mike Rotkin, who



Rotkin



Mathews

took their seats on the council, incumbents Katherine Beiers and Jane Yokoyama who were sworn in for second terms, Councilman Scott Kennedy, who was elected vice mayor, and Dr. John Mahaney, who retired after 14 years in office.

About 100 people gathered in the council chambers to witness the historic turnover and listen to the goodbyes and hellos of their elected officials.

Lane concluded his four years in office, including one year as mayor, with a tearful farewell speech.

"My heart is really overflowing because of that ultimate feeling of connectedness to others, whether it's called love or friendship or affection," Lane said. "Many have been so kind, so supportive, have become such good friends, and of course with that comes the sad notion of knowing that after today I might be a little less connected to some of those people."

Please see COUNCIL — BACK PAGE

Council chooses new mayor

Continued from Page A1

Clutching a turquoise handkerchief he had brought along in anticipation of the tears, Lane commended city staff workers, who he said "are really just incredible," and also took time to discuss some of his own achievements.

Lane, co-owner of the Saturn cafe, said he was proud of his work with homeless people, and that he had helped improve relations with UC Santa Cruz and helped get several low-income housing projects built in Santa Cruz.

Councilman John Mahaney, an orthopedic surgeon, also left the council Tuesday, after a total of 14 years in office.

"It's really been great to serve the citizens of Santa Cruz as a councilman and mayor," Mahaney said.

He also had high praise for city staff workers, saying they manage to keep things operating no matter what the City Council does.

"You know, the city sometimes runs in spite of us," he said.

Mahaney left office with a few words of advice to his successors. He urged them to find new water sources, recruit new businesses, pass a stronger no-smoking ordinance, pursue a hotel and conference center and develop an eastern access to UC Santa Cruz.

With five name plaques in front of him, dating back to his first appointment to the council, Mahaney concluded his remarks with the wry comment: "After 14 years, it's time for me to take my blocks and go home."

Mike Rotkin gave what he called

'My heart is really overflowing because of that ultimate feeling of connectedness to others, whether it's called love or friendship or affection.'

— Don Lane

"an uncharacteristically brief set of comments," telling the audience it would be premature to set out an agenda but that he would work to protect the environment and meet the needs of workers.

Thanking everyone from his campaign staff and voters to his cat Motorboat — "who has suffered through all of this gracefully," — Rotkin said he would work to be accessible to the community, holding office hours and listing his home telephone number in the phone book.

Rotkin, a UC Santa Cruz lecturer, served on the council for more than eight years and is returning after a break.

His new colleague Cynthia Mathews, who was elected to her first term this fall, was optimistic about her first experience in elected office.

"I personally think this city has the creativity and resources and goodwill to come together and meet the challenges," she said.

A Planned Parenthood administrator, Mathews made her first

move on the council by nominating Katherine Beiers as vice mayor. Mike Rotkin countered with a nomination for Scott Kennedy.

The council then voted one by one, and when it became apparent that Kennedy had enough votes to win, both Beiers and Mathews threw their support behind him.

Beiers, who served as vice mayor for the past year, had expressed interest in becoming mayor this year. After the meeting, she said she was not disappointed in not being picked for either position because she plans to be picked as mayor at some point during the next four years.

"Being mayor is something I will get to do," she said. "I'm sure I will get that opportunity."

In recent years the council has chosen the top two vote getter from the previous election to serve as mayors in successive years. Under this system, the next three mayors would be Kennedy, Beiers and then Rotkin. Officially, the council can elect any one of their own to fill the one year position.