

CP CITY HALL 11/25/87 RP

Laird chosen SC mayor

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In Santa Cruz City Council chambers packed with friends and supporters, John Laird became the new mayor of Santa Cruz last night, taking the gavel from Jane Weed.

Laird was elected to the position on a 6-1 vote with Councilwoman Katy Sears-Williams dissenting.

Councilwoman Mardi Wormhoudt was elected vice mayor on a 4-3 vote with members Sears-Williams, Joe Ghio and Arnie Levine dissenting.

Once again, acrimonious politics emerged in the election of the mayor and vice mayor in Santa Cruz.

Sears-Williams charged the liberal-progressive council majority with discrimination and abusing power.

"We always talk about discrimination," she said. "Evidently, it's all right to have



Outgoing mayor Jane Weed replaces her nameplate with one for incoming mayor John Laird.

See LAIRD page 2 ►

CP CITY HALL 11/25/87 RP

LAIRD

► From page 1

discrimination on political grounds. I don't feel that is right."

Sears-Williams likened the liberal-progressives' insistence on electing their own to the mayor and vice-mayor posts to situations that create war.

"I think it's really unfortunate when a majority does not take into consideration a minority," she said. "It doesn't matter what group takes power, it's still an abuse of power."

Sears-Williams' fellow minority members, Ghio and Levine, however, voted to elevate Laird.

Ghio said his vote fits in with his philosophy that the mayor should be the top vote-getter in the general election. Laird was a top vote-getter, he said.

Levine said he would vote for Laird in an effort to improve relations between the council majority and minority. He urged Laird "to take all members of the council into confidence as we sail into the next year."

Laird said he would do so.

Laird also added that he would offer a seat on the city Wharf Commission back to Sears-Williams in an effort further improve council relations.

Sears-Williams bitterly resigned from the Wharf Commission and her other commission appointments more than a year ago because she said her voice as a minority member of the council was not heard.

In his address to the council, Laird said the issues of offshore oil drilling, protecting the greenbelt lands, UC-Santa Cruz growth, a strained city budget, beach-area development and water resources would be pressing matters in his coming year as mayor.

"When I spell it out like this, it makes me wonder why I want to go through with this," he said. But he added that he would "try my damndest" to fulfill his responsibilities as mayor.

Laird, who served as mayor

once before, said his being gay didn't cause the same turmoil it did last time he became mayor.

"I think really what's happening is that it's becoming less and less of an issue," he said. "It's a tribute to the voters of Santa Cruz that I was one of the top vote-getters in the last election."

Weed also gave a parting speech just before the mayoral election.

She noted as milestones of her one-year tenure the implementation of curb-side recycling, extra police protection in city parks, the city's decision to proceed with secondary wastewater treatment, and receiving the Soviet delegation from Santa Cruz' sister city of Alushta and then visiting the Soviet Union with other Santa Cruz representatives.

One of the most trying issues of her term, Weed said, was the visit of a United States Navy ship to the Santa Cruz harbor.

When the Navy at first said it would not send a ship to Santa Cruz for the Fourth of July, Weed was accused by many local veterans of sabotaging the Navy's visit.

But the ship did eventually visit, and Weed said she had "many interesting, new experiences" because of it.

Laird presented Weed with a plaque of appreciation on her leaving office.

"She was a trooper," he said. "Excuse the military analogy."

For the vice-mayoral post, Wormhoudt faced opposition from Ghio, who was nominated by Levine.

That vote, however, split down traditional majority and minority lines, with council members Mike Rotkin, Wormhoudt, Weed and Laird voting for Wormhoudt. Conservative minority members Ghio, Levine and Sears-Williams voted for Ghio.