

1983



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Overflow crowd at City Hall Tuesday looked through the window at new Santa Cruz City Council.

Cooperation is the byword as City Council is sworn in

By JOAN RAYMOND
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SANTA CRUZ — It was a time for forgiveness, gratitude, handshakes and choked-back tears.

"Cooperation" was the buzzword for the evening.

Election bickering and political backstabbing were cast aside Tuesday night as John Laird was unanimously selected the city's 55th mayor.

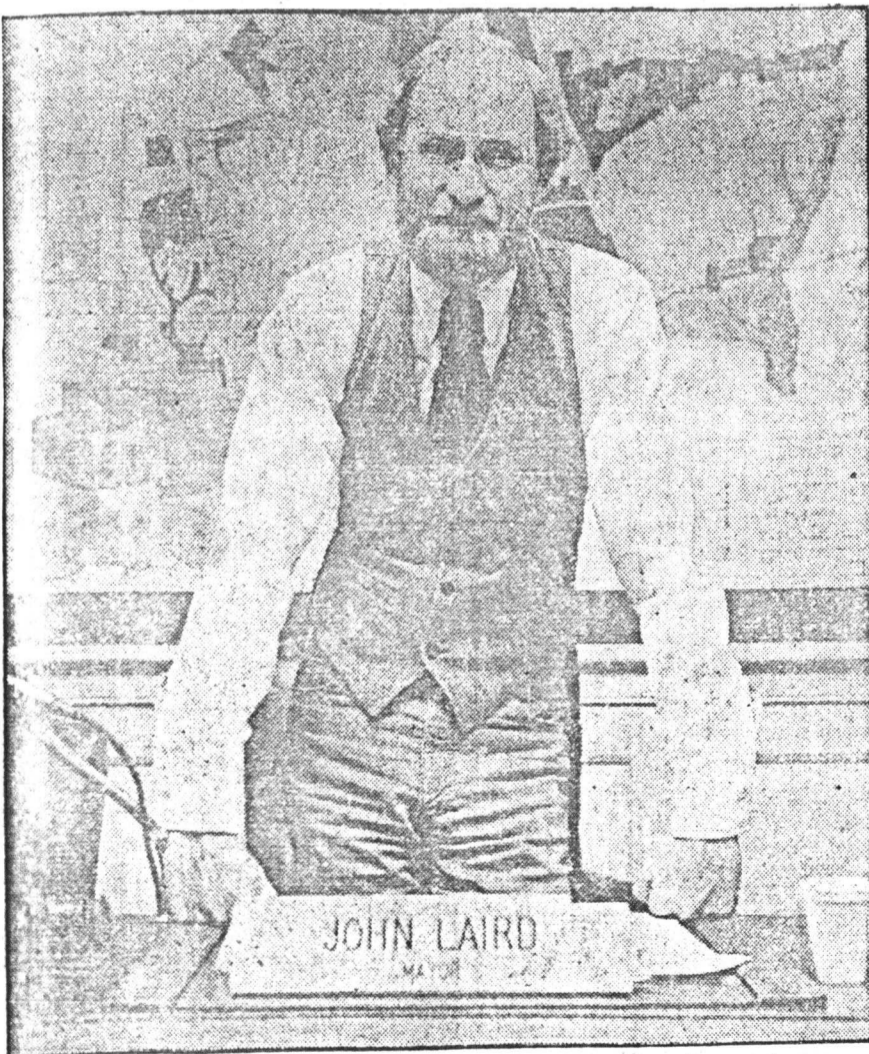
Mardi Wormhoudt was elected vice mayor on a 4-3 vote.

The swearing in of newly-elected councilmembers Arnold Levine, Katy Sears-Williams and Jane Weed and of re-elected Councilman Michael Rotkin marked the end of a bitter election campaign that climaxed with last Tuesday's vote.

"We're looking forward to a new era of cooperation. I think people are tired of dissension," Laird told 200 persons who packed the council chambers. Those who could not get inside stood outside and listened to the speeches through open windows.

In accepting the post of mayor, Laird also made it perfectly clear: "Yes, it is true what was in the papers. I am gay. I think it is important to get it out in the open."

Earlier this week, Laird had been interviewed by reporters about his homosexuality and about the fact he would probably become the city's first openly homosexual mayor.



A new mayor, John Laird, was sworn in Tuesday.

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Outgoing Mayor Bruce Van Allen picks up his nameplate.

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Tuesday night, Laird said, "In Santa Cruz, we have bus drivers, doctors, accountants, lawyers and restaurant workers, people in every walk of life who are gay. And now, a mayor."

Councilmember Mardi Wormhoudt nominated Laird for mayor, saying Laird "is one of the most responsible, hardworking and talented people we have. John knows his stuff, the right stuff. He's smart. He'll do all the right things, and besides, it's his turn."

Laird said it had been six years since the council had cast a unanimous vote for mayor.

Laird also quipped he "is the first UCSC graduate to be mayor; the first lifelong Chicago Cubs fan to be mayor...and the second lefthanded mayor in a row."

Outgoing mayor is Bruce Van Allen, who lost his bid for a second term on the council by 38 votes. He said he's just getting started in politics — "I'm hooked. I have a lifelong commitment to politics."

Van Allen choked back his emotions as he said goodbye. He extended good wishes to those whose political views most often opposed his own — outgoing councilmembers Joe Ghio and Dr. John Mahaney.

Van Allen said the city owes its neighborhood parks to the efforts of Dr. Mahaney — "one of the smartest people around in government."

To Ghio, he said, "I take inspiration from you as someone who loves the town."

Van Allen praised City Manager Dick Wilson, City Clerk Pat Kenyon and city employees.

He turned to say goodbye to fellow socialist Rotkin, joking "Comrade Rotkin, should I say?"

Ghio was also emotional as he ended an eight year, seven month stay on the council.

Ghio was mayor in 1977-78 and 1980-81. He had been re-elected to the council in 1979 for a second four-year term.



John Mahaney



Joe Ghio

A native of Santa Cruz, he said serving on the council was a chance "to give back a little to this community of what was given to me."

Dr. Mahaney was appointed to the council 10 years ago. He was elected in 1975 and again in 1979.

Much has changed in Santa Cruz during those 10 years with a population increase from 33,000 to 43,000, said Dr. Mahaney.

Dr. Mahaney chronicled the events, including development of general plan, neighborhood parks, Nelson Community Center, Harbor High School swimming pool, Wilder State Park, Lighthouse Field State Park, Longs Marine Laboratory, Metropolitan Transit District, historic preservation for Victorian houses, streets program and the Town Clock.

"All of the councils are trying to represent all of Santa Cruz. We've got to work together," said Dr. Mahaney.

Mahaney and Ghio were prohibited from an attempt at re-election by city law that bans third consecutive terms for councilmembers.

Levine said, "We all come with good feelings in our heart."

Sears-Williams projected "a new era of cooperation."

Weed said "It's a time for healing." The feminist assured everyone that "my family comes first next to our city."

The evening of marathon thank yous and promises of cooperation was not all butter.

There was a rancid note during the election of vice-mayor, when Mellis opposed Rotkin's nomination of Wormhoudt to vice-mayor.

Mellis nominated Levine.

Supporting Wormhoudt were Mayor Laird, Rotkin, Weed and Wormhoudt.

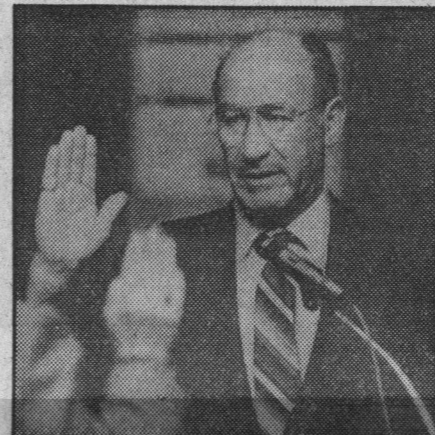
Supporting Levine were Mellis, Sears-Williams and Levine.

In a phone interview Wednesday morning Van Allen said Mellis "didn't need to do that."

Laird's parents, Dorothy and Ralph Laird, who attended the ceremonies, beamed when their son became mayor. "We're proud," they said.



Jane Weed sworn in



Arnold Levine sworn in