

# East Palo Alto City Manager Quits in Dispute

By Bill Workman

East Palo Alto's first city manager has resigned in a dispute with the City Council over the new city's pace of development, taking with him \$45,000 in severance pay.

"East Palo Alto has to get on with being a city, and I have to get on with my life and my career," said Fred Howell, 48, after a divided council accepted his resignation Thursday.

The council voted 3 to 2 to part company with Howell, a former community development director in Davis before he took the East Palo Alto job in March 1984. East Palo Alto voters approved incorporation as San Mateo County's 20th city in 1983.

Howell and the council have been at odds for months, largely over the council majority's dissatisfaction with the slowness in implementing community development plans and improving the economic base of the predominantly black city.

"It was decided it would be best if we got a divorce, so we got a divorce," said Howell.

"He's a talented man and I wish him well," said Mayor Barbara Mouton. "But we felt that the city's agenda for improvement was not being carried on and we felt we should move on."

However, Councilman Warnell Coats, who opposed Howell's forced resignation, said the decision was prompted by disagreements between Mouton and Howell over how the city should be run.

"The mayor wants to run the city. . . . They'll have the same problem with the next city manager," Coats predicted.

Assistant City Manager James White was named acting city manager. Mouton said she expects the council to hire a consultant to assist White until a new city manager is appointed next year.