

# Council gets pay warning

Supervisor Ward issues an ultimatum

By Steve Taylor  
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REDWOOD CITY — San Mateo County Supervisor John Ward today said he would ask for suspension of the pay and powers of the East Palo Alto Municipal Council unless the elected, advisory body "starts operating like a council should."

If it does not, he said in an interview, he will ask fellow members of the Board of Supervisors to order a halt to the council's meetings and monthly stipends until at least November, when three council seats are up for election.

Asked if he meant his proposal to be an ultimatum, Ward said, "Yes."

While he does not know if he can get a majority of the supervisors to agree with such a drastic action, Ward said he "senses" the board's concern over the Municipal Council activities will lead it to consider the idea seriously.

"It's a pretty severe step," Ward said. "I don't look forward to taking it, but I've let a lot of things go by in the past."

In particular, Ward mentioned the council's decision in February 1981 to announce the appointment of Victor James as its administrative officer. The appointment was not supposed to be official until the following month, when the supervisors confirmed James' selection, Ward said.

As a result, the supervisors stripped the council of its power over James' job. Any new administrative officer will be selected by County Manager Dave Nichols, not the council, Ward said.

More recently, Ward said, he was "appalled" by a lack of direction on the council, which has been deadlocked for months over the issue of incorporation. The five-member panel, which now has one vacancy, has been split 2-2 over cityhood and has allowed the dispute to halt action on other issues.

Last week, for example, the council failed to conduct a public hearing on plans to increase garbage collection rates in East Palo Alto because one member, cityhood supporter Brad Stamper, angrily left his seat.

Mayor Barbara Mouton, vacationing at the time, had left instructions that Stamper chair the meeting, but the two other council members, cityhood opponents Gertrude Wilks and Henry Anthony, said they would not participate in meetings chaired by Stamper.

At least three council members must vote in favor of any recommendation forwarded to the supervisors. With Mouton and Stamper absent, Wilks and Anthony could take no action.

Informed at Tuesday's board meeting of the council's lack of action, Ward said angrily, "The public interest is suffering because of politics."

Ward already has suggested that the council members' monthly compensation of \$200 each be cut or suspended unless the panel conducts business properly. The compensation issue may be considered by the board in early September, Ward said.

Two other problems anger Ward. One is Wilks' and Anthony's refusal to recognize Stamper as the council's vice chairman because of his disputed standing on the panel.

Stamper moved from his council district earlier this year but then moved back into it. District Attorney Keith Sorenson's office has concluded that Stamper automatically vacated his seat when he left the district, but Stamper has declined to step down.

Ward's other concern is "the abuse of county staff" during council meetings. Officials such as Housing and Community Development Director Mark Nelson, Planning Director David Hale and Deputy District Attorney Michael Vinson have been chastised publicly or made to wait until late at night before items they are concerned with are taken up by the council, Ward said.

Last week, Ward blistered the council because "they're playing games and it's expensive and they're being paid by the month."