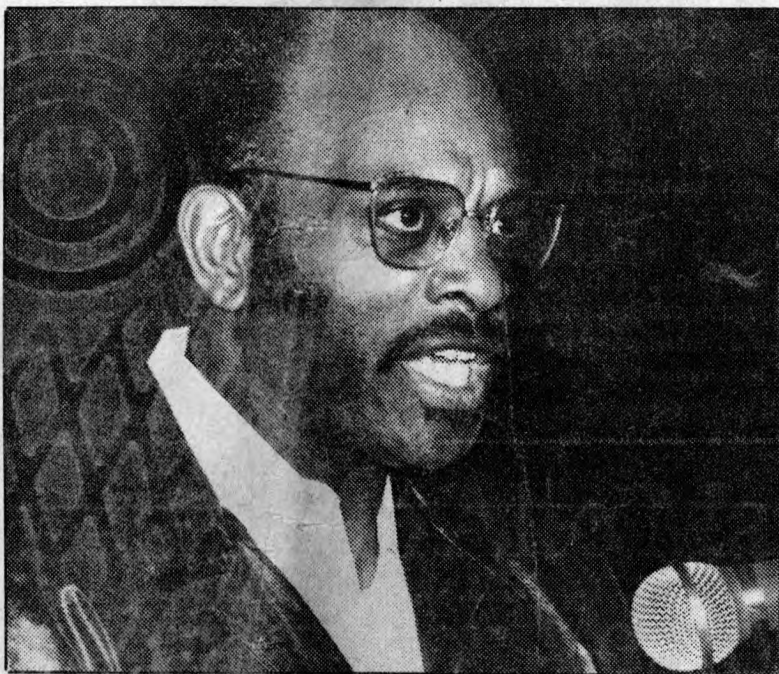


Mayor Coats Accuses Councilman Bill Vines Of 'Misinformation'



William Vines

Editor's Note

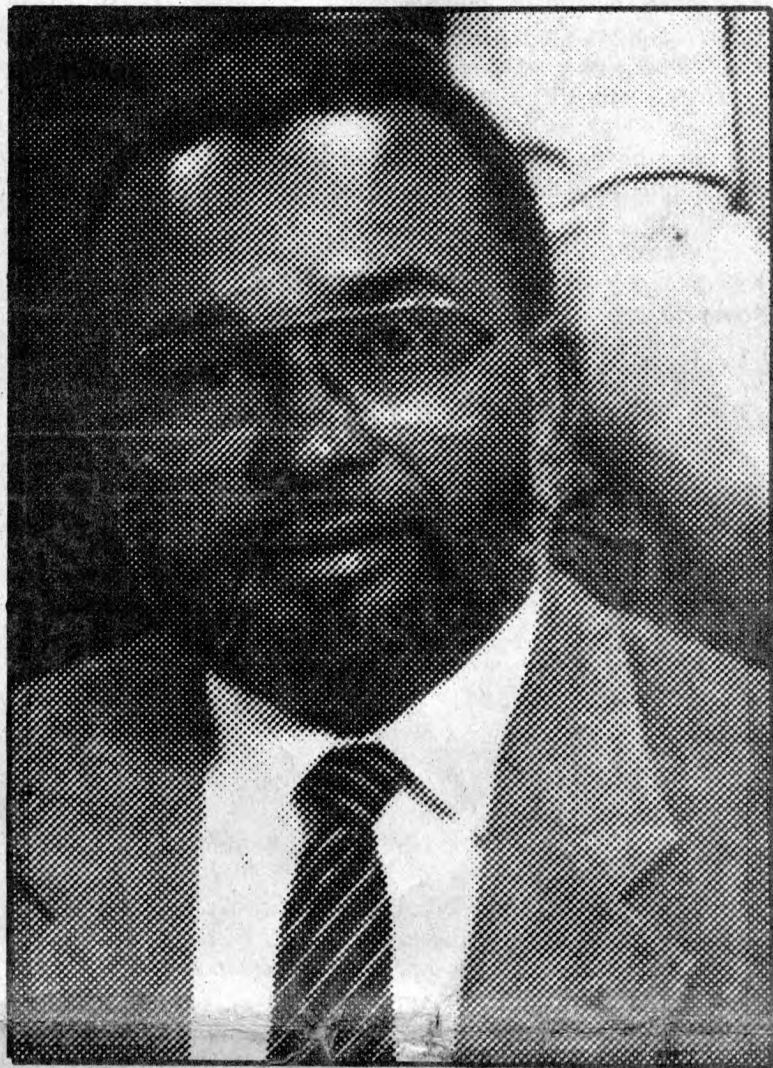
In a fax sent by Romic Chemical, dated January 14, 1991, East Palo Alto Mayor Warnell Coats charged former Mayor William Vines with misinformation given to the citizens of East Palo Alto, referring to an article that appeared on the East Palo Alto Post's front page last week.

Even though Coats had previously stated that he would never submit any information to this publication, he responded to the article. The Post, being a responsible newspaper, is presenting this article in its entirety. TN

By Mayor Warnell Coats

In the past I have refrained from participating in mud-slinging in the media because I don't believe it serves the best interests of the city and its residents. But after the appalling and blatant misinformation given to East Palo Alto readers by Bill Vines in last week's Post, I felt it my responsibility as mayor to provide you with a more complete and accurate picture.

Yes, we as a city council have approved some expensive projects in recent months. Voters have made it clear to us that after eight years of watching East Palo Alto deteriorate, you want to see positive results. You expect progress, and results and progress cost money. There are very few things we, your elected City Council, can accomplish for free. It is our responsibility to spend your tax dollars



Mayor Warnell Coats

as wisely as possible and to get the most for your money.

It is also true that since I was elected mayor in November the council has approved several projects that were not previously budgeted. But nearly all of these measures will end up saving the city more money than they cost. It's like spending \$100 to install insulation in your home, then saving \$15 a month in utility bills. You don't need to identify "new" revenues in your budget to pay the \$100 because it will pay for itself in less than seven months.

That's not to say the budget does not need to be reviewed and mod-

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Mayor Coats

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ified — it does. I and other councilmembers have already met with staff to get information, and the full council will begin budget review in the next couple of weeks. Getting good, competent management is the first step in this process, and that is finally being addressed. We will also be looking for ways we can save money that is currently being mismanaged or spent unwisely.

Now I'd like to address the specific examples Mr. Vines raised in last week's article. I need to begin by stating that Mr. Vines exaggerated his doomsday predictions shamelessly, and should be chastised for causing unnecessary worry to the residents of East Palo Alto in order to further his own political agenda.

In the first example, he claimed that the city voted to spend \$5,000 to hire a consultant to address smoking in public facilities. That covers less than 1 percent of what the consultant was hired to do, a fact Mr. Vines is well aware of because he spent a considerable amount of time at the City Council meeting discussing the complete proposal in depth. This consultant will be writing grant proposals to bring hundreds of thousands of dollars to East Palo Alto. Among other things, this money will fund programs to support neighborhood beautification, public health education, public information, identification of corporate resources to meet city needs, etc. And \$5,000 is the maximum amount the city is going to pay for these services. I and the council majority felt this was one instance where the money invested was not only well spent, but would quickly pay for itself. As to the issue of not following proper bidding procedures, procedure stipulates bids must be sought only for contracts over \$5,000.

Next, Mr. Vines stated that the council agreed to spend \$30,000 to give police detectives uniforms and an extra week of vacation. The truth is, we voted to spend \$7,000 to give all city employees an extra week of vacation after five years of employment. This is in keeping with most employers' practices and provides an incentive for employees to remain with the city. The high turnover we have experienced costs a great deal of money in increased insurance, as well as costs associated with advertising, interviewing, selecting and training new employees. We also voted to spend \$3,000 for a clothing allowance for detectives, which is also a standard practice in police departments and is much less than what most departments pay. We considered this \$10,000 well spent, as it enabled the city to finally negotiate a contract with the Police Officers Association after 11 months of stalemate under the old regime.

Mr. Vines was correct in stating that the county is now charging the city for booking fees and tax collection costs. This is being done to all cities and is something we had no control over. However, we

are meeting with county next week to try to find ways to resolve this issue.

Mr. Vines was also correct in pointing out that the city has recently approved expenditures to keep the Senior Center from having to close its doors and to keep the sheriff's deputies patrolling our streets until our own police department is fully staffed. I will make no apologies for these expenditures, which had strong community support. In fact, I will accept complete responsibility for them. However, it is ironic that Mr. Vines failed to note in his criticism that he also voted in favor of these measures. He was deliberately deceitful when he said that no revenues had been identified to pay for the sheriff's patrol. Mr. Vines knows full well our agreement with the county defers payment until the funds are received from the University Circle development.

I think it is particularly offensive for Mr. Vines to claim that the current status of City Manager Stan Hall will cost the city a quarter of a million dollars. The cost to buy out Mr. Hall's contract, a perfectly legal option discussed in his contract, is \$47,000 plus benefits. Many of those benefits are built-in costs such as retirement money which would have to be paid whether he remained with the city or not. I would like to point out that one of the reasons the cost to terminate Mr. Hall is so high is because of the provisions of his contract, a contract which Vines approved and I and Pat Johnson voted against. Even so, the council majority feels strongly that the cost for removing Mr. Hall from office is much less than it would cost to keep him on. The city has already spent nearly \$200,000 defending and settling sexual harassment lawsuits against Mr. Hall. The city has lost several top administrators, many of whom are also using due to actions by Mr. Hall. With Hall gone, we believe we can eliminate or negotiate many of the 26 lawsuits brought against the city primarily as a result of actions by Hall and the former city council majority.

I don't believe bringing hundreds of thousands of dollars into East Palo Alto and saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in unnecessary expenditures can be construed as "fiscally unsound decisions," as Mr. Vines charges. Neither do I believe that any of the actions we took were frivolous or unnecessary. You elected me and the rest of the city council to make East Palo Alto a better place to live. I'd like the opportunity to do that, without being distracted by having to defend false accusations or fight recall attempt after recall attempt.

I ask Mr. Vines to overlook his personal feelings and work with me for the good of the citizens of East Palo Alto.

Stan Hall was contacted regarding points raised in the letter by Mayor Coats as it related to him specifically.

The courts will be the ultimate judge of the amount of funds that

will be forthcoming as a result of any ultimate termination by the City Council in East Palo Alto," stated Hall regarding his pay.

He said that much had been written about the sexual harassment lawsuit.

Hall makes it clear when he says, "There was no sexual harassment settlement agreement for \$200,000.

"There has been much publicity regarding an agreed-upon amount of \$80,000. The plaintiff, in order to gain my support for the settlement, had to drop all actions and allegations against me, and had to admit in writing that there were no judicial findings of fact against me, and that there existed no evidence to support the original allegations and causes of actions. This was agreed to in writing, and Coats knows about it.

"There was, however, a judicial finding against the city. The city attorney failed to prepare a report on his investigation of Perkins' allegation. This was one of the original causes of action, and the courts ruled a summary judgment in favor of the plaintiff which prejudiced the city's position in the case. Coats knew this, as well.

"Coats is using this issue for his own political football and believes the public is so misguided it would not understand the true facts as I have outlined them here.

"Coats was among those who authorized legal council to proceed with city's defense, not me. I was in fact kicked out of the closed sessions whenever the subject was discussed. The benefit of my professional input was not utilized.

"Regarding the Brenda Flagg matter, it was Coats and Ms. Johnson (Pat Johnson) who met with Brenda Flagg, encouraging her to file a claim and subsequently a lawsuit, to try and demonstrate a potential pattern of sexual harassment.

"Ms. Flagg's claim was defective and never officially filed. Legal counsel has filed a motion to dismiss Ms. Flagg's lawsuit, which was filed without benefit of legal counsel on the grounds she did not exhaust all administrative remedies.

"Of course, Johnson and Coats know nothing about the exhausting of administrative remedies and therefore urged the lawsuit against the city, Mr. Averhart and me. Any employee, upon exhausting of administrative remedies, as his or her final course of action may file a lawsuit. No one can be stopped from utilizing this final remedy. It is a part of due process guaranteed by law.

"Coats and his ghost writer infers I have caused 26 lawsuits to be filed against the city. I would simply urge all citizens to check the facts. This is not true. This is simply a fabrication of the truth. The facts are that the majority claims and lawsuits have been police related. This is not uncommon, unfortunately the level of sophistication has not been reached to understand or properly address the problem. There is a constant search for a scapegoat, when it is not necessary. Yes, petty differences have seemed to be the impediment of progress in East Palo Alto.

"It will take a lot of prayers and the help of God above to straighten out the crooked road being traveled in East Palo Alto.

"This city will constantly remain in my prayers.

"It is hoped that Mr. Coats and his colleagues will mature to the extent that they all have a desire to achieve together, using a constructive approach rather than a destructive approach, which requires less energy, and you get more done.

"Finally, it is important to note that no one individual on earth can exist alone. One person's fantasy is another person's reality. The question is, how do you transform fantasy into reality which all sides can accept?" he concluded.

Bay Crossing Study Reveals New Bridge Would Not Reduce Traffic

Oakland (BCN)

A transit analysis presented at a Metropolitan Transportation Commission committee meeting in Oakland Jan. 10 shows that a

25 percent by the year 2010, with or without construction of a new bay crossing. He said construction of a new crossing would not create a significant additional increase in transbay travel

which options, if any, should be pursued and funded.

Nolan said he personally does not see an overwhelming case for a new transbay bridge and that a public policy decision

peoples' attitudes and behavior."

Nolan said transit officials must provide "available, convenient and cost-effective alternatives to automobile use."