

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PTT 1/7/87

Press failed to understand Howell's departure

IT IS WITH profound regret that I am forced to respond to the Dec. 19 article by Mary T. Fortney entitled, "E. Palo Alto Split: Manager forced to resign," and your editorial of Dec. 22 entitled "The post-Howell era."

Of necessity, my response is constrained. There is, however, the duty owed particularly to community residents, and in retrospect, to residents in nearby cities, to balance the inadequate investigation and irresponsible reporting of the reasons leading to the City Council's action. In our humane attempt to move the city's agenda and simultaneously allow an employee to depart with integrity and honor, to which he was certainly entitled, your coverage has placed the council majority in a bad light.

Historically, in communities such as East Palo Alto, the failure of the established press to adequately and intelligently respond to the social, political and economic life of those communities has been harmful.

You stated that the "narrow" City Council majority owes residents an explanation for its decision to force Howell out. Please permit me to comment on a few things: We agree, Mr. Howell is a talented human. However, his biggest problem was not "his personality clash with Mouton and her council allies," as you alleged. You conveniently forgot that it was this council majority which helped to bring him aboard in the first place.

There is a continuing frustration to provide programs and improve recre-

ation in the community. The city is still impacted by needs and concerns in the arts and cultural enrichment. Our community development and economic development agendas have stagnated. An imminent increase in staff will resolve these problems. The Rent Stabilization Program has begun to provide the caliber of services that tenants and landlords both merit.

Relative to our police department, we are justifiably proud of our very professional and efficient department. Did you realize that unlike in most Peninsula municipalities, our police chief reports directly to the City Council, not to the city manager?

Barbara A. Mouton
Mayor

EAST PALO ALTO