

E. Palo Alto names first manager

Davis development director to take job

By Thomas G. Keane
Times Tribune staff

Frederick A. Howell, 45, the director of community development for the city of Davis, is East Palo Alto's first city manager.

Mayor Barbara Mouton announced Monday night at the City Council meeting that Howell will assume the post March 1. The contract is for three years at \$45,000 a year, the mayor said.

"We feel very, very good to get Mr. Howell," Mouton said after the meeting. "He certainly has the experience and professional skills for the job."

Mouton's announcement came after council members met in executive session to discuss Howell's response to its formal offer. The council unanimously approved the deal.

Howell, reached by telephone this morning said, "I'm very excited about the opportunity to build my own organization and build my own system. Typically, a city manager is hired to replace another one, and a staff is already in place."

Howell said each individual city has its unique concerns, and he welcomes the problems and challenges in East Palo Alto. "I'm a person who looks at problems as opportunities in disguise. If East Palo Alto were an easy task, I would not be as interested in it as I am," he said.

Davis City Council member Sandy Motley, the mayor at the time Howell was hired by Davis, praised his work. "Fred Howell is a very, very competent manager," she said. "They're very lucky. It's a fantastic opportunity for them to have his skill and professionalism in the new city."

Motley said Howell's responsibilities included supervising all planning and building inspection in Davis and managing the city's housing policy. Howell, who is paid about \$42,000 a year, began working in Davis February 1980.

She also said Howell worked well under current Davis City Manager Howard Reese. "Howard Reese's style is team management; everyone works together," Motley said, adding that Howell would probably bring that same style to East Palo Alto.

Howell's resignation comes as a surprise to the Davis community. "But it's a professional advance he cannot turn down," Motley said.

Howell's professional background is primarily in city planning. Before taking the job of top

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city planner at Davis, he was a senior planner for San Mateo, where officials say he established himself as a resourceful and respected planner. Davis hired him to run its program after an exhaustive statewide search, Motley said.

He also was active in community activities in San Mateo, leading the effort to build the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center and heading a coalition of neighborhood minority groups called the Community Workers Program.

Howell replaces interim City Manager Robert Allen, who served in the position from July 1 to Jan. 31.

At the meeting, the City Council gave Allen a certi-

cate of appreciation for his service during the seven months.

"During that time, Mr. Allen was instrumental in making sure that the city received various revenues for which it was entitled and worked toward addressing the goals and objectives as established by the City Council," the certificate said.

In other business Monday, Mouton and Councilman Ruben Abrica volunteered to write the council's position on the April 10 rent-control referendum. Their argument, which will appear on election materials mailed to each voter's home, will be in favor of the rent-control ordinance and will not exceed 300 words. It will represent the opinion of all council members except Gertrude Wilks, who voted against the rent-control measure.

Those in favor of the rent-control referendum, a move to rescind the ordinance, also will have the opportunity to place a 300-word argument on the ballot. Both arguments must be filed by Feb. 15.