

Local News

Ousted mayor in tears

Mouton 'pays the price' in incorporation battle

By Phyllis Brown
 Times Tribune staff

East Palo Alto Mayor Barbara Mouton burst into tears Wednesday night when she announced she has been dismissed as director of the East Palo Alto Senior Citizens' Center, in part because of her avid support of incorporation.

Mouton made the announcement in opening remarks at a candidates' night sponsored by the South San Mateo County League of Women Voters, held at the East Palo Alto Municipal Services Center.

Mouton is running for a seat on the proposed East Palo Alto City Council. The city council would be formed if incorporation is successful at the ballot box April 13.

"You will have to excuse my being so emotional, but I have just been handed my walking papers," Mouton told the audience of about 40, her voice trembling.

Mouton said that one of the allegations of the senior center board of directors "is that I was too involved in incorporation."

"If this is the price that we have to pay for cityhood, then I gladly pay it," she said, bursting into tears.

Upon that, Mouton sat down. The audience stood up and applauded her.

Mouton's has been one of the most constant voices for incorporation since the beginning of the movement in 1980.

Senior Center Board Chairman Dr. Robert Walker, reached by telephone this morning, would not confirm whether or not Mouton has been dismissed.

He said, however, that as board chairman he would know whether or not Mouton will continue to be the center's director.

"Well, I will make no comment on that. If she is the source of your original information, I will not comment," Walker said. "I really don't want to get into that at this time," Walker said.

From the moment of Mouton's announcement, the candidates' night had an air of emotional tension.

Candidate Theotis Nelson, who has worked with Mouton to promote incorporation, rose after she sat down.

He accused Senior Center Board member Joseph Sanders, who also is a candidate for a city council seat, of having some part in Mouton's firing.

Sanders has said in the past that

Please see TEARS, B-2

TEARS

Continued from B-1

he opposes incorporation. Sanders did not participate in the candidates' forum.

He also is president of the East Palo Alto Sanitary District.

"Sanders is the one," Nelson said. "Sanders and Wilks, these are the people who have torn our community down," Nelson said, refer-

ring also to Municipal Councilwoman Gertrude Wilks.

Other participants in the forum accused former East Palo Alto Municipal Council members Wilks and Henry Anthony of "destroying the community."

One of them was city council candidate A. Peter Evans.

"We should not fear incorporation," Evans said. "If we can survive 16 years of Henry Anthony and 12 years of Gertrude Wilks, we are immune to destruction."

Candidate Dorothy Romes concluded the forum with a poem on incorporation.

East Palo Altans will vote Tuesday on whether or not the community of 18,000 will become a city or remain an unincorporated part of San Mateo County. They also will choose five city council members from among the 15 candidates running.

If the incorporation initiative is successful, East Palo Alto will become a city July 2.