

Troy Edgar Elected Mayor, Handed Recall Petition--All in the same night!

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Los Alamitos City Council Member Troy Edgar was elected Mayor of Los Alamitos on a 3 to 1 vote. Shortly thereafter, a member of the public handed the City Attorney a recall petition to recall Edgar from his seat on the Council. The previous Mayor, Dean Grose, resigned his position as Mayor and stepped down from his City Council seat in response to criticism over a racially stereotyping e mail message he forwarded.

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Although we must hasten to point out that the 50 to 100 people present may or may not represent public opinion in Los Alamitos at large, the public opinions expressed in the City Council meeting were generally not favorable to either Edgar or Grose. Before an overflowing crowd, TV, and radio coverage, a stream of public speakers denounced the previous Mayor for his racial insensitivity. Only a very few speakers voiced support for Grose. Almost as many people expressed dissatisfaction with Edgar as those complaining about Grose. The loudest applause of the evening was heard when a speaker called on Edgar to resign his Council seat. This same speaker, when he finished his remarks, handed the City Attorney a recall petition to recall Edgar. This was also followed by strong applause. When he finished, the newly elected Mayor Edgar thanked him for his comments. after the meeting Edgar said "If the citizens of Los Alamitos have a concern, they need to take the right steps and I would encourage that. I think it's {the recall against him} a diversion from what's most important which is the focus on our budget and City Management turnover and now the healing through this process. I would say it's a priority after that."

With the resignation of Grose from the Council, the Council has 60 days to either appoint a replacement for Grose or schedule a special election. Several of the public speakers called on the Council to appoint previous Mayor and Council Member Ken Parker to the vacant seat. The Council did not take any action on replacing Grose. Other public speakers called on Council Member Ken Stephens to take a position independent from the current Council majority.

It was very clear from public opinions expressed, that the schism which surfaced during last year's election, is still alive and well in Los Alamitos. For lack of any better means of characterization, the public speakers can be divided between the pro-Mejia group and the pro-Edgar group. On this occasion, the pro-Mejia group seemed to dominate the meeting. Before the election in November, Council Member Mejia was aligned with then Mayor Ken Parker, and the two were part of a 3 to 2 majority. The person who fills Grose's seat will affect the balance of power on the Council.

When Mayor Edgar was asked what he thought of appointing Ken Parker to the vacant seat, he said "I'm open to every option." with regard to appointing the new Council Member or holding a special election, Edgar indicated that the Council should first try to reach agreement on an appointment, but he stopped short of calling for an unanimous agreement, saying "I would be interested in hearing everybody's perspective and I would wait until I heard that."

Despite the calls for his resignation and the recall petition, Mayor Edgar said "This part of it's done and now we've got to start working on the healing." He added "A month from now, or six months from now, people will look back and say this was a very tough time, but I think every day that goes by, it will start getting a little bit better."