

Chirco new vice mayor

By Carol Rosen
Editor

District 9 Councilmember Judy Chirco was unanimously voted in as vice mayor at the Jan. 27 City Council meeting prior to a prolonged discussion about the city's need to review its policy on outsourcing.

Chirco also told the Times she would be entering the hospital on Feb. 4 to have a lump removed from her breast. During December, a routine mammogram exposed the small lump, which a later biopsy proved to be cancerous. The cancer is very small, she said, and has been caught early, so she hopes her hospital visit will be short and she will be back in her new vice mayoral chair soon.

In other council news, after a prolonged discussion, several friendly and not so friendly amendments and several motions, the council voted 7-4 to hold a special meeting of the Community and Economic Development Committee within 30 days to explore methods of changing the 12-year-old policy that set guidelines for outsourcing. Once city staff has time to digest and put together plans, approximately 45 days later, the council will again discuss the situation.

The at-times divisive discussion centers on a Jan. 23 memo from Councilmembers Nancy Pyle, Rose Herrera, Nora Campos and Ash Kalra suggesting a number of amendments to develop an outsourcing policy. The memo stems from City Manager Debra Figone's options to battle the city's continuing operating fund deficits, including a projected \$65 million shortfall in the 2009-10 fiscal year that could lead to layoffs.

The mayor led off the discussion asking council members to explain the exact and recent problems stemming from the 12-year-old law, stating that he thinks the memo provides a solution but questioned if there actually was a problem. He and Councilmembers Pierluigi Oliverio, Pete Constant and Sam Liccardo noted that Figone and her staff had enough work and this would create even more of a burden. The mayor also said that recent steps by the Sunshine Reform Taskforce provided the recommendations necessary to meet transparency for outsourcing.

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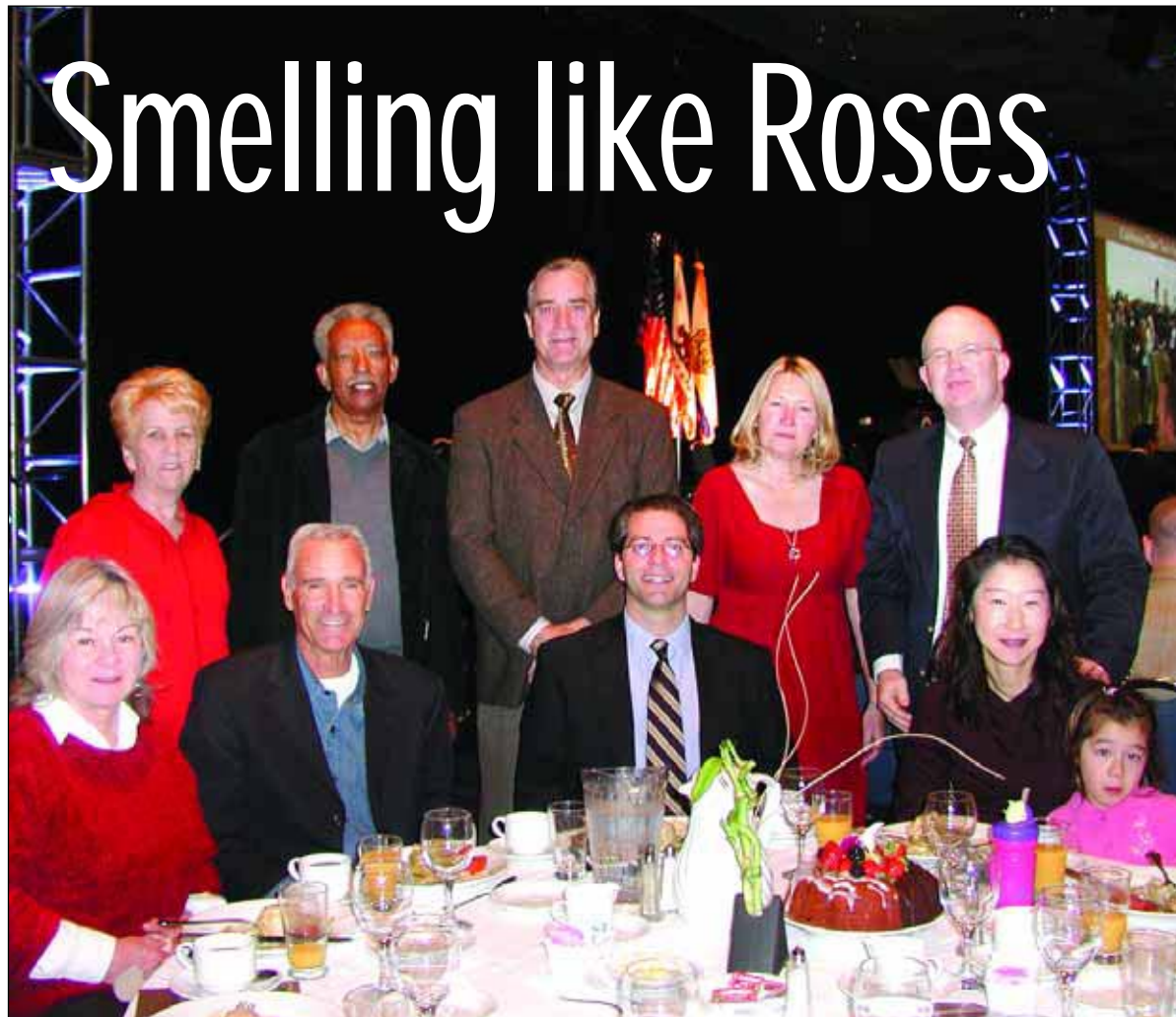
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Smelling like Roses



Volunteers from the Friends of the Rose Garden surround District 6 Council member Pierluigi Oliverio at the Mayor's State of the City Breakfast. Oliverio honored the group that through more than 4,000 volunteer hours and city employee's help managed to get the San Jose Municipal Rose Garden back in shape so that the All-American Rose Selection took the garden off probation and gave it accreditation.

Oliverio honors Rose Garden volunteers

By Carol Rosen
Editor

Every year for the State of the City breakfast, San Jose's 10 city council members choose a person or group to honor. Last year's District 6 honors went to Our City Forest.

This year Councilmember Pierluigi Oliverio saluted the Friends of the Rose Garden volunteers who have managed to return the garden to the prominent rose display it had been after more than 4,000 hours of hard work. When Oliverio first took office in March 2007, he noted to the council his campaign promise to help get the Rose Garden back into shape and take the garden off probation by the All-American Rose Selection.

Financial straights had caused previous councils to cut much of the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services budget and its full-time

staff resulting in a garden that wasn't getting much care. When the city council voted not to outsource garden care, area volunteers stepped in to save a beautiful part of San Jose.

"It is the goal of the Friends of the San Jose Municipal Rose Garden to secure these roses this winter and have our volunteers plant them," according to the volunteer group's Web site and that's what has been done.

On Dec. 2 the All-American Rose Selection committee removed the garden from probation. On that day, the AARS held a ceremony in San Francisco that officially reinstated full national accreditation to the park.

But it's the volunteers' hard work that deserves the credit. The people organizing the group and those throughout the neighborhood and the city of San Jose who worked hard to ensure that the garden became just as beautiful as it had been. During that ceremony, Bill Mann, AARS Public Garden chair noted the community's "phenomenal response to revive this civic treasure."

"Everyone should be very proud of their part in making this happen; from the volunteer who just

made it to one event, to the master volunteer who has the ability to spend hours at the garden. Special thanks must go to the San Jose Parks Department, which has been supportive of our efforts, and working with us from day one. This public/private partnership has broken new ground. For any volunteer who has been at the events, you have seen the city workers side by side with us. We continue to enjoy their dedication and full support," according to the Web site.

And, the work goes on. During September and October, volunteers performed an inventory of the approximately 164 different rose beds in the Garden. The goal was to identify where new roses are needed. There are several places where whole beds need to be replaced. Some roses are so old, they don't produce good roses anymore, and many cases where a rose or two were needed to fill out a bed. In all, the Friends found they need to replace nearly 600 roses.

Like many public parks, the San Jose Municipal Rose Garden has limited resources, but volunteers can make the garden bloom again. Many feel a special connection to the Rose Garden, the location for countless graduations, weddings, and family picnics. The Rose Garden also is a welcome respite from the hectic pace, a peaceful place to "stop and smell the roses."

Besides the recognition at the State of the City breakfast, Oliverio has awarded the Friends a \$1,000 HP grant and Mark De Mattei has donated another \$1,000.

Oliverio noted at the breakfast that he is very proud the residents and volunteers who have helped to make the garden what it once was and who now will help keep it in shape.

And, of course, there's always room for more volunteers and others who would like to help. This spring, the Friends will offer a weekday drop-in supervised program where park staff will provide a brief lesson on rose care and maintenance. The group is also interested in building a team of master volunteers who have demonstrated the skills to the city staff and can assist in teaching other volunteers. The plan is to have master volunteers identified with special vest signifying their commitment and hours they have put into the garden. After a trial period, this program will include a drop-in weekend program for certified and vested volunteers.

Those interested in helping can e-mail Web@FriendsSJRoseGarden



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