

## **Berkeley Says Goodbye to Betty Olds**

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Betty Olds, Berkeley's oldest and prickliest City councilmember, served at her last City Council meeting Tuesday night, entering to a standing ovation in a packed council chambers amid cheers of "Yay, Betty!" A mayoral proclamation set aside the day in her honor, and a long string of friends and constituents came to the microphone to pay tribute before the meeting was ceremonially gaveled to a close.

Olds' term technically ends on Nov. 30, but the next council meeting won't be until Dec. 8.

Jesse Arreguin, who at 24 will be Berkeley's youngest councilmember, is scheduled to be sworn in on Wednesday, November 26, to fill deceased Councilmember Dona Spring's expired term, and is expected to take his seat for the first time at the December 8 meeting.

"I'm sad to be leaving," Olds said in her final words from the City Council dais, "but if anyone thinks it's easy to sit up here to make decisions, they don't know anything about it."

The 88-year-old outgoing Olds was elected to her District 6 Council seat in 1992 after stints on the Zoning Adjustments Board and Rent Stabilization Board. She told Councilmembers and audience members Tuesday night that she had "outlasted four mayors and five city managers. Only Linda [Maio] was here [on the council] when I got here. That shows you women are the strongest."

Maio was first elected to Berkeley City Council the same year as Olds.

Olds is being replaced in her District 6 seat by longtime aide Susan Wengraf, who was elected in this month's voting. Her term will start on December 1.

Two years ago, Olds made national headlines when she was one of three older women (also including Save the Bay founder Sylvia McLaughlin and former Berkeley Mayor Shirley Dean) to climb into the branches of an 80 foot tree to join protesters trying to save a grove of live oaks near the UC Berkeley stadium.

The action was indicative of Olds' championing of environmental causes during her time on Council. She was also a tireless protector of Berkeley's animals, whether they were domestic or wildlife.

Olds was also famous for what have come to be known as "Bettyisms," pithy, quotable statements that delighted reporters and council spectators but often skewered political opponents.

One audience member Tuesday night offered one of the more memorable, recalling that once during a council discussion about an overpopulation of deer in the city hills, Olds suggested solving the problem by "starting with sterilizing all of the males." The audience member said it was never apparent whether Olds was talking about deer or some of the male opponents to thinning out the deer population, but added that as a protective measure, "half of the audience that night crossed their legs."

Olds offered no new Bettyisms on Tuesday, but instead read from an old Herb Caen column she found while cleaning out her desk. The column described a man running against a woman for a City Council seat who declared that one of the problems in the city he aimed to correct was the fact that "we don't have enough balls to keep things rolling." "I don't have any balls," Olds quoted the woman candidate retorting in the Caen column, "but I've got all my marbles, which obviously you don't." Though the Missouri-

native Olds didn't make the anecdote up, it's clearly something she might have if Caen hadn't written it down first.

Councilmembers and several audience members paid brief tribute to Olds, but perhaps the most appropriate words were given by fellow Councilmember Laurie Capitelli. After one audience member said that Olds always answered constituent calls and "never said no," Capitelli said that if Olds never said no to constituents, "then I guess you saved them all for us [City Councilmembers]", acknowledging the fact that Olds was famous for speaking her own mind on the council and often taking positions that were contrary to the general flow. But Capitelli added that because Olds "can say no in such a gracious way," it left no permanent bad feelings.

Arreguin told the Planet that Alameda County Registrar of Voters Dave McDonald promised him that his election would be certified next Tuesday, or Wednesday at the latest, which would pave the way for the swearing-in ceremony, to take place in the Redwood Room on the 6th floor of the Berkeley City Hall at 5 p.m. He said he's anxious to take office because his district has been without representation for months since Spring's death.

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<http://www.berkeleydailyplanet.com/issue/2008-11-20/article/31625?headline=Berkeley-Says-Goodbye-to-Betty-Olds-Arreguin-to-be-Sworn-in-Wednesday>