

Quiet days at T.O. City Hall

Mitnick earns praise as manager

It has been over a week now, and if the calm pervading City Hall is any indication, the naming of Scott Mitnick as Thousand Oaks city manager has gone over well.

Mr. Mitnick, 40, who had been serving as the city's interim city manager, was chosen on a 3-1 vote Nov. 16 following a three-hour closed-door meeting. Like most political decisions in this affluent east county city, this one was tinged with controversy.

By promoting Mr. Mitnick, the City Council chose to forgo a more intensive nationwide search, a decision that brought out the resident critics and prompted the lone dissenting vote from the council, that of Mayor Claudia Bill-de la Peña.

Despite such protestations, it looks like Mr. Mitnick's selection was an excellent one. It is a conclusion even the mayor apparently agrees with, stating at the meeting: "It would have been fairer to have a search and to pick the best candidate and Mr. Mitnick probably would have been the best candidate."

In addition, the stability and institutional awareness he brings to the top post will serve the city well with the imminent retirement of several key city employees.

The selection of Mr. Mitnick comes six months after his predecessor, Phil Gatch, resigned. Mr. Mitnick, named interim city manager by the council in June, not only brings a wealth of knowledge about running city government and a good understanding of the immediate needs of Thousand Oaks, but a determination to keep the council focused on the issues, instead of sniping at each other from the dais. That is a worthy goal that should help to quell the city's volatile politics.

First hired as Thousand Oaks deputy city manager in December 1999, Mr. Mitnick was later promoted to assistant city manager in 2004. Before coming to Thousand Oaks, Mr. Mitnick worked in various city positions for Yuba City, Brea and Burbank. His financial background, along with his job performance as interim city manager, earned him praise from Councilman Dennis Gillette.

His experience is absolutely critical as the city transforms into a "maintenance city," shifting away from dependence on fees from developers, Mr. Gillette said, adding, "I believe Scott has the skill set to serve us very, very well in that area."

Through the years, Thousand Oaks has been well-served by such outstanding city managers as Grant Brimhall and MaryJane Lazz. Mr. Mitnick, now the city's sixth permanent city manager, appears poised to fill those shoes.