

November 2004 Council pick shows promise

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Newport Beach has a new city councilman. Wait -- to be more precise, it has a new city councilwoman.

On Tuesday night, after eight interviews and three rounds of voting, the city's six city councilmen decided to appoint Planning Commissioner Leslie Daigle to complete the final two years of Gary Adams' term. The councilmen praised her as a quick study and having a fresh outlook. Councilman John Heffernan and Mayor Tod Ridgeway were straight-forward in their belief that the council needed a woman to represent the city better. Now Daigle has the responsibility of proving she was the best choice -- a different burden than being the choice of the voters.

It is a burden made heavier by the quality of the other applicants for the position, which Adams vacated after he relocated to the East Coast for a job promotion. The other hopeful to receive votes, Planning Commissioner Barry Eaton, has long been a community leader in Eastbluff and is a learned and thoughtful man. Businessman John Blom, Parks Commissioner Tim Brown and Chamber of Commerce President Richard Luehrs all have solid resumes and provided thoughtful, reasoned answers to council members' questions, as did Michael Browning, Charles Griffin and Gerald Hegger. Residents of Newport Beach are fortunate to have such a depth of talent and commitment ready and willing to lead the city.

The challenges ahead for Daigle and her colleagues are many. All of the applicants mentioned the expansion of John Wayne Airport as the most pressing issue, especially in their part of town, which includes Eastbluff and the newly annexed Santa Ana Heights. Traffic, housing and water quality all made the list as well. None will be easy to solve. But we are confident Daigle and the rest of the council are ready to meet them. She certainly presents herself as intelligent, capable, compassionate and committed. She undoubtedly will provide the fresh perspective the council sought. She has background in city governing and a knowledge of development issues. We expect her to serve the city well and in the tradition of previous councilwomen such as

Evelyn Hart, Jean Watt and Jan Debay.

Congratulations to her. And good luck.