



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Matt Mahan
Vice Mayor Rosemary Kamei
Councilmember Dev Davis
Councilmember Pam Foley

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: August 15, 2024

Approved:

Date: 8/15/2024

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. Approve item 3.4's recommendations naming the City Hall Rotunda the Janet Gray Hayes Rotunda.**

BACKGROUND:

2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the election of Janet Gray Hayes as San Jose's pioneering and inspiring first woman mayor and the first woman mayor of a major American city. Mayor Hayes was a dedicated public servant, community activist, caring wife, mother, and one of Santa Clara County's most respected public figures.

Ms. Hayes was born to John Paul Frazee, Jr., and Lucile Charman Gray Frazee in Rushville, Indiana, a farming community. Her childhood home was a block from the railroad track. Throughout the Great Depression, daily itinerant or homeless visitors to the Frazee home seemed to know that her mother would give them a sandwich if asked. Ms. Hayes inherited her parents' warmth. Her life in Rushville instilled in her a compassion for the needy and a lifelong interest in social change.

Ms. Hayes graduated with honors from Indiana University and received a master's degree in social service administration from the University of Chicago. There she met Kenneth Hayes, a University of Chicago medical student from Berkeley, California. They married in 1950 and settled in San Jose.

Ms. Hayes' introduction to civic affairs came in 1959, when she appeared before the all-male city council to request a traffic light for a dangerous intersection near the elementary school her two oldest children attended. The council promised action, but no traffic light was installed. Ms. Hayes felt her concerns had not been taken seriously because she was a pregnant housewife. It was then that she began her life as a community activist while raising four children. She was elected President of the League of Women Voters of the San Francisco Bay Area and of Central Santa Clara Valley.

Her community work led to her appointment as the first woman President of the San Jose Redevelopment Agency, before being elected to the San Jose City Council in 1971.

In 1974 Ms. Hayes successfully campaigned for mayor on the promise to "make San Jose better before making it bigger." Her agenda of managed growth led to the adoption of San Jose's first modern general plan, which reigned in urban sprawl and focused on improving neighborhoods.

After her election, a bewildered newspaper reporter asked how to address her, having referred to every prior mayor as "Mr. Mayor." Janet Gray laughed and said just call me "Madam Mayor." She was elected overwhelmingly in a hotly contested election four years later, with wide support throughout San Jose. Yet an Associated Press Headline crudely described the triumph: "San Jose Woman Mayor Keeps Job."

"Janet Gray", as she was known by friends and colleagues, mentored other women, supporting the appointment of Iola Williams, the first Black female councilmember, Susan Hammer who later became the second woman mayor of San Jose, and Zoe Lofgren, who was later elected as a County Supervisor and then to Congress. She championed "comparable worth" pay for undervalued and underpaid female city employees. Her work and leadership brought national recognition to San Jose and Santa Clara County as the feminist capital of America.

During her first term, in a post-Watergate era where voters nationwide wanted far better government, Mayor Hayes steered the city through a corrupt political period. A four-member male majority of the council made city decisions behind closed doors, dubbing themselves the "Fearsome Foursome." With Mayor Hayes leadership, two were defeated at the polls and the third resigned. A new era of open government began in its wake.

Mayor Hayes supported and endorsed "Measure F" in 1978 to create district council seats. Mayor Hayes believed in equity and the need to give a voice to all of San Jose's diverse neighborhoods. The first district elections resulted in a majority of women on the city council and introduced Blanca Alvarado as the first Mexican American female member, who later served as Vice Mayor and County Supervisor. The advent of district elections has brought a continuing wave of diverse representation in city government.

After retiring from public office, Mayor Hayes stayed actively involved in civic affairs. In 1983, she became President of the Board of Directors for the San Jose Museum of Art, just when the museum was on the verge of bankruptcy. With help from the museum's staff and other Board members, Mayor Hayes brought the Anne Frank exhibit to the museum, which broke all attendance and revenue records and was instrumental in rescuing the museum. Today, the museum boasts an impressive art collection and a talented, professional staff.

Mayor Hayes passed away in 2014. Her legacy of an open and representative San Jose government lives on.

We encourage our colleagues to join us in supporting this very important recognition for former Mayor Janet Gray Hayes.

The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.