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Heiman mayor of Belmont

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BELMONT — Unity, a rare trait in Belmont politics, which last year included a recall election, was the theme as Donald Heiman was sworn in as mayor Friday.

Joe Green was unanimously elected vice mayor.

The ceremony preceded a reception in the balloon-decked Ralston Hall at the College of Notre Dame.

Heiman said it was indicative of his unity theme that a Congregationalist minister had come to a Roman Catholic school to present the invocation while a black judge (San Mateo Municipal Court Judge Phrasel Shelton) helped swear in a Jewish mayor to lead four Christian colleagues.

Heiman noted that the upcoming year will be busy as the city tries to find solutions to the problems of development in San Juan Canyon, storm drains (voters rejected attempts to assess property owners for renovation), downtown and the start of the senior center.

"If I were to ask everyone in the room to give me \$358, you'd probably think I was crazy," said the new mayor, pointing out that was the amount tendered to city government by every Belmont resident. He said that sum entitles the community to good government.

"Along with that right, you also have the responsibility to participate," he said.

"This city's interest in community affairs is legendary."

The reception itself was an attempt to promote unity and heal the wounds of the past year's divisive political climate, according to city staff.

In the past, the election of mayor and vice mayor have been handled as a brief portion of a regular City Council meeting. The mayor's duties are largely honorary.

About 100 guests, including County Supervisors Bill Schumacher and Jacqueline Speier, sipped champagne and nibbled cookies and strawberries in the ballroom. Heiman and other council members paid for the event.

The outgoing mayor, William Hardwick, received a plaque and a flowering tree. He said he preferred not to remember the last year as the year of the recall but the year when the city decided to build a senior center at Twin Pines and when the city negotiated obtaining the playing fields at Barrett, McDougal and Cipriani schools.