

Jackson to run municipal business

Planning director subs for Mason

by Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

Valerie Jackson, the city's planning and development director, has been appointed to serve as deputy business director while John Mason, Orange's full-time business administrator, is out due to illness.

According to Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr., Jackson was named to serve for Mason during the City Council's Oct. 4 meeting. Officials said that Mason, who has been out of City Hall for two months due to an undisclosed illness, has worked from home while he recuperates. But Jackson will be the person who will handle most of the business-related issues inside City Hall.

"I have every confidence that she will serve with distinction in her new capacity," Hawkins said.

West Ward Councilman Hassan Abdul-Rasheed said he is also confident Jackson will do well until Mason returns.

He did, however, have reservations about how Hawkins announced her appointment during the council meeting. Abdul-Rasheed added he would have liked to have been given advance notice from the administration about the new situation in the Business and Planning and Development departments before the mayor announced Jackson's appointment.

"We got a memo from the mayor and it was made official at the last meeting," Abdul-Rasheed said last week. Referring to another director, Arlene Kemp of the Public Works Department, he continued, "Director Kemp was out after her knee-replacement surgery, too, so I don't have any problems with absences related to legitimate medical conditions or emergencies. When it comes to Jackson, it's giving her some more responsibilities while Mason is out."

Abdul-Rasheed said he does not believe Jackson will serve in her new position for an extended time. He said she and Mason are working together to make sure the city continues to run smoothly until the personnel situation returns to normal.

"He and Valerie are working together," said Abdul-Rasheed. "The guy's out on medical leave, so I can see how the administration would need somebody to be there part-time to fill in for him."

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