

EDITORIAL

Cole should resign

Contra Costa Times

August 24, 2007

JUST WHEN WE thought Pinole politics couldn't get any stranger, now this: Councilman David Cole is joining the Army. Cole left this week to start 10 weeks of basic training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri.

Cole insists that his sudden career change is not a convoluted way of avoiding an embarrassing recall effort launched by disgruntled Pinole residents. That he is merely pursuing his "lifelong" dream of serving his country.

Forgive us for not buying this sudden burst of Pat Tillmanesque patriotism. At 38, Cole has had plenty of opportunity before now to join the armed forces.

Whatever his real reasons, he needs to stop playing games and immediately resign his post on the City Council.

Cole won't be able to serve in his elected capacity for at least two years. His contention that he is holding on to his seat because of his obligation to Pinole voters is beyond ludicrous.

In fact, it is merely another example of the arrogant behavior that has made him the subject of a recall in the first place.

The city attorney's office did the right thing in finding that the council could not grant Cole a leave of absence, as he had requested.

The council could appoint a temporary replacement while Cole is gone, but that makes no sense whatsoever. Cole will either be recalled, or unable to fulfill his council duties because he will be in Iraq or wherever the Army decides to send him.

Earlier this week, recall supporters said they had collected enough signatures for a ballot initiative to remove Cole, fellow Councilman Stephen Tilton, and Mayor Maria Alegria.

Some residents are angry over the threesome's cozy relationship with Pear Street Bistro owner Gary Wong, who owes the city more than \$450,000 in redevelopment loans and interest.

The council's vote not to renew the contract of City Manager Belinda Espinosa also angered residents who contend that she was let go because of her efforts to get to the bottom of the Pear Street fiasco.

Regardless of what happens with the recall, Cole should resign now. That way, the council can appoint someone who will be physically present in Pinole to serve out the remaining three years of Cole's term.