

# Pinole Councilman David Cole resigns

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By Tom Lochner

**P**inole City Councilman David Cole resigned Monday, a move increasingly seen as inevitable after he joined the U.S. Army.

His resignation is the newest twist in a campaign to recall him and two fellow council members over their vote to oust the former city manager and what critics deem a "suspect" relationship with a restaurateur in default on city loans.

A spokesman for recall sponsor Concerned Citizens of Pinole said Monday that Cole's resignation will have "no effect whatsoever on the recall" and that the group will submit signed recall petitions to the city clerk Thursday.

"Instead of recalling three council people, we have to recall two," said the spokesman, Jeff Rubin.

The two remaining targets are Mayor Maria Alegria and Councilman Stephen Tilton.

Cole resigned effective immediately in an e-mail to the city Monday afternoon.

"It has been my privilege and pleasure serving the citizens of Pinole, and alongside all of you, these many years," wrote Cole, a council member since 2000. "I wish you all the best in your endeavors while continuing your service to this great community.

"I now turn my focus on serving our Country in the United States Army. While in Basic Training, I am unavailable by phone; however, I look forward to personally addressing all of you upon my return."

Cole left last week for what is expected to be 10 weeks of basic training in Missouri and will likely be out of the area for at least two years, according to a report by Assistant City Attorney Inga Lintvedt. Cole told the Times two weeks ago that he would wait to complete basic training before deciding whether to resign, but the prospect of his prolonged absence prompted his political foes as well as some friends to urge him to consider resigning.

The council has 30 days to decide whether to call for an election or appoint someone to serve out Cole's term, City Attorney Ben Reyes said late Monday. Cole's term runs to November 2010.

Alegria late Monday said Cole had served Pinole residents "selflessly" for many years and that he has been "a tireless advocate for our youth" on the City Council.

"I'm sure David will serve his country with the same commitment that he showed in serving his community," Alegria said. "Like many of the good men and women who have chosen to serve our country, I wish him godspeed."

Councilwoman Mary Horton, a recall backer, said:

"I wish him luck. I hope he finds his way."

Tilton said: "I wish David Cole all the luck in the world serving our country. I know that all that he has done for the youth and the city of Pinole will not be forgotten and is greatly appreciated.

"This might be a wonderful healing process for the council to come together and select one of the many qualified people in our community by 4-0," Tilton added.

Horton later agreed that the council has "a golden opportunity."

Alegria said she is "open to hearing what the other council members think."

A vacancy last occurred during an unfinished term on the Pinole council in 1999, when Gretchen Mariotti died. The council then opted for a special election, which Cole won in March 2000.

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