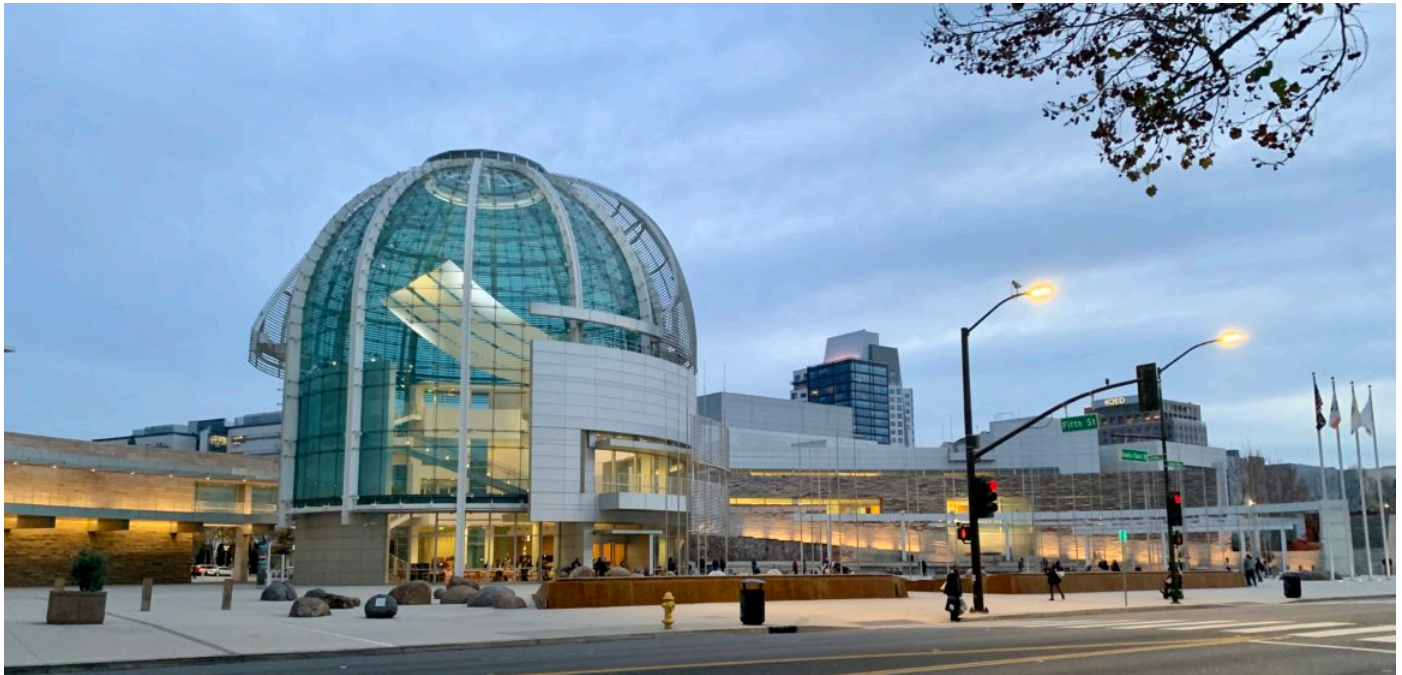


Faria: San Jose City Council vacancies must be filled through special elections

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After the November general election, two vacancies were created on the San Jose City Council, leaving the residents of Districts 8 and 10 in limbo. In January, [Sylvia Arenas](#) will vacate her District 8 council seat to take office as county supervisor and [Matt Mahan](#) of District 10 will vacate his council seat as he is sworn in as the next mayor.

The residents of those two districts deserve the opportunity to vote for their next representative. However, some on the San Jose City Council are being pressured to fill the two seats through special appointments and not through the democratic process of [special elections](#).

Historically, San Jose has held special elections in the past to fill vacant council seats. In previous special elections, Nora Campos was elected as San Jose District 5 councilmember in 2001, Madison Nguyen for District 7 in

2005 and Manh Nguyen for District 4 in 2015, among others. These special elections enabled the citizens to choose their own representation. We should continue this longstanding tradition of democracy in our city and allow the people, not the politicians, to decide their representatives.

For those that argue about the costs involved with special elections, is there a price tag for democracy? Elections are a bedrock of democracy and residents must have the opportunity to make the choice for themselves about who would best represent their district. There is no price tag for the democratic process and having special elections over making special appointments is the right thing to do. We invest so much time, money and energy to empower voters and encourage voter turnout, and sidestepping special elections would only diminish the faith voters have in the electoral process.

If the vacancies are filled by the council, only 11 people will vote to approve the appointment—the mayor and the 10 councilmembers. Of those 11 people, only one actually resides in the district. Handpicking a councilmember of their choice over the choice of residents does not constitute a democratic process and would be an overreach of power.

District 8 and District 10 residents deserve the opportunity to elect their representative, and the entire San Jose City Council must vote to preserve the democratic process by calling for a special election to fill the vacancies.

Lisa Faria is board president of the Santa Clara County Association of Realtors.