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# Houseal Elected Mayor Pro Tem, 1987 March 06

Rogers, Ernie (Valdosta Daily Times)

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# Houseal Elected Mayor Pro Tem

By ERNIE ROGERS

Times Staff Writer

The election of Valdosta's mayor pro tem was accomplished Thursday night with one nomination and a unanimous vote by Council.

"I nominate Willie Houseal for mayor pro tem," said Councilman Sonny Vickers.

"I move the nominations be closed," said Councilman David Drumheller, immediately.

Council approved the motion and Houseal became Valdosta's first black mayor pro tem by acclamation.

Words of congratulation to Houseal and gratitude to Councilman Jimmy Rainwater, who held the post for one year, filled the last few minutes of the meeting.

"Jimmy Rainwater has been a big help to me," said Mayor Gill Autrey of the man who held the post for the past year. "He probably attended 30 percent of the functions the mayor was asked to attend."

That frequency of service demand has been discussed in and out of Houseal's camp as a concern. A question as to whether Houseal will be regularly available to effectively serve in the post continues to be asked.

Houseal discounts those concerns and said he expects to have the time necessary in meeting the demands of the job.

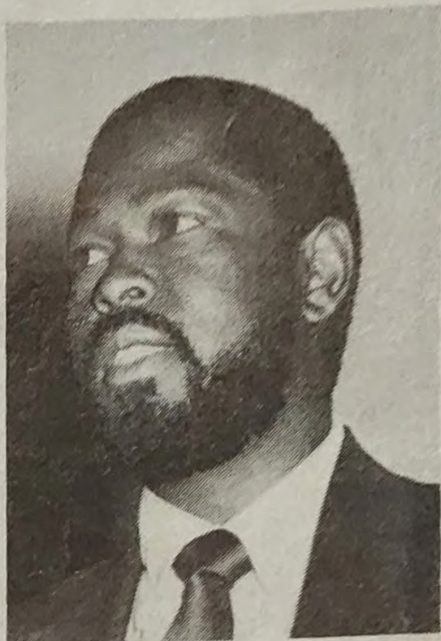
Being mayor pro tem places more responsibility on me as a servant of the city," Houseal said. "I am available each morning and on Fridays. I'm pretty sure I'll work it out.

"The experience will be gratifying to me. I feel fortunate that my colleagues put their trust in me."

The agreeable mood of Council in smoothly electing Houseal to a one-year term followed a path charted during last year's negotiated election of Councilman Jimmy Rainwater to the post.

Rainwater had expected to be elected mayor pro tem last year as a matter of course after winning the at-large seat on Council. The course wound around a move to limit the term of the mayor pro tem to one year — a move aimed at ensuring that one of the newly elected black councilman would have an opportunity to hold the office.

Negotiations to limit the term began with three blocked efforts to elect Rainwater at the first meeting of the new council one year ago today. Mayor Gill Autrey was forced to recess that meeting and lead further, less public and strident negotiations among councilmembers that resulted in an



WILLIE HOUSEAL

agreement on the one-year term and in the unanimous election of Rainwater on the fourth vote.

An effort to avoid another prolonged confrontation that could have damaged the internal workings of Council eased Houseal into the post he had eyed for the past year.

Rainwater said the business of government and the more important priorities of Council could not be sidetracked by council politics.

However, there is evidence that a cordial brand of internal politics lingers in the wings amid speculation that the term of mayor pro tem could be expanded to two years starting with the 1988 election. Rainwater is expected to seek the post for a second term.