

## Lesbian Judge Appointed

Gov. Jerry Brown of California appointed Mary Morgan, the first openly lesbian judge in the nation, to the San Francisco Municipal Court in August.

Morgan, 35, described her appointment as "a momentous event, not only for me but for the entire lesbian and gay community."

"I think it's absolutely a step forward for the gay and lesbian community."

"I think it's important to have more lesbians and gays visible in our society so people can see there's not an enormous difference between us and we don't have anything to fear from each other."

Most likely, Morgan will not be ruling on cases involving lesbian and gay rights. Municipal Court deals only with personal injury and contract disputes of less than \$5000 as well as minor criminal matters.

Morgan hopes to "bring to the bench not only my life experiences and sensitivity as a lesbian, but also my deeply felt commitment to equal justice for everyone in our society."

"I also hope my presence and visibility will be a source of pride and strength for the lesbian and gay community."

According to Gay Community News of Boston, Morgan's August 26 appointment was the second by Gov. Brown involving openly gay people.

In 1979, Brown appointed to the Los Angeles Superior Court the country's first openly gay male judge, Stephen Lachs.

Her Municipal Court post has a \$57,231 salary.

## Lightning Strikes Town Council

Lightning Brown, a local member of the gay community, is currently running for a seat on the Town Council here in Chapel Hill.

Brown, a former Community Education Coordinator of the Carolina Gay Association, became interested in running for Town Council when he realized his apartment was going to be converted to a condominium.

"Chapel Hill Realty, which manages Brookside Apartments where I live gave two and a half weeks' notice to its tenants that it was converting the status of the apartments from rental units to condominiums," Brown said.

Under Town guidelines, any changes in the status of a multiple family dwelling must be approved first by the Town Council, which authorizes a change in the building's Special Use Permit.

The owner must then notify the tenant one hundred and twenty days before the change goes into effect.

"Chapel Hill Realty has not applied for a change in its permit and has asserted that it does not intend to observe the Town zoning ordinance," Brown said.

"In fact, this is not the first time that Chapel Hill Realty has flaunted the law in this fashion.

"Since July, a similar conversion has been underway at University Gardens Apartments as well -- also without a permit," said Brown.

Brown sees condominium conversion as being part of a much larger issue in Chapel Hill.

He said that unregulated conversion, without growth in the rental market, reduces the tax base, hurting all taxpayers. Tenants who can afford neither rent increases nor downpayments are forced out of town, though they may still rely upon Chapel Hill for their livelihood. "Two thirds of the people working at the University cannot afford to live in Chapel Hill," said Brown.

"And yet they still require town services such as water, police and fire protection and highway maintenance."

According to Brown, condominium conversions will increase this number.

Conversions without rental growth also threaten the rental market by driving up costs in remaining apartments.

Brown said that he would like to see a town council with a strong commitment to increasing the amount of rental housing. Since the present council does not have a single tenant in its membership, he said it cannot accurately reflect the interests of its tenant constituency.

Although Brown's gayness is not central to his campaign, his openness about his gayness has made a difference for certain town officials and department heads.

"Gay liberation is not a platform of the Town Council, though it is an issue regarding the changing stereotyped notions of gay people," said Brown. He said that it has changed their ideas about what gay people are like.

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