

# COMMUNITY FORUM

## EDITORIALS

### Why the delay?

When Orange Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. presented his proposed budget to the City Council on Sept. 20, he announced it was the first budget that did not contain an increase in the municipal tax rate in at least 10 years.

That is a rarity; now for the usual: The budget was late, three months late, to be exact. Currently, for the city to transition to a calendar-year cycle, it must have a six-month fiscal period. So it took half the cycle — three months — to present a budget that should have been presented at the beginning of the cycle. This follows the historical pattern of Orange budgets. During a 12-month cycle, the city would normally present its budget at the six-month point; in other words, the budget would be six months late.

We understand the city has been without its business administrator, John Mason, since early September due to illness. It should be noted, however, the city administration prepared a projected budget that was presented to the state's Local Finance Board in order to receive permission in May to switch budget cycles.

With that plan as a base, and with no major cost reductions expected, we do not believe it should have taken three months to present a budget to the council.

Four departmental hearings also are planned from Oct. 25 to Nov. 2. Residents who love to ask what services they get



**JULIANO JOINS OHA BOARD** — Joseph Juliano, a captain with the Orange Fire Department and chiropractor, with his girlfriend, Marleane Licciardello, recently was sworn in as a commissioner on the Orange Housing Authority's board. Juliano was appointed to the board by Gov. Chris Christie. It is Juliano's second stint on the board; he served in 1995-98. Juliano is the son of the late City Councilwoman Patricia Juliano.

Photo: Orange Housing Authority