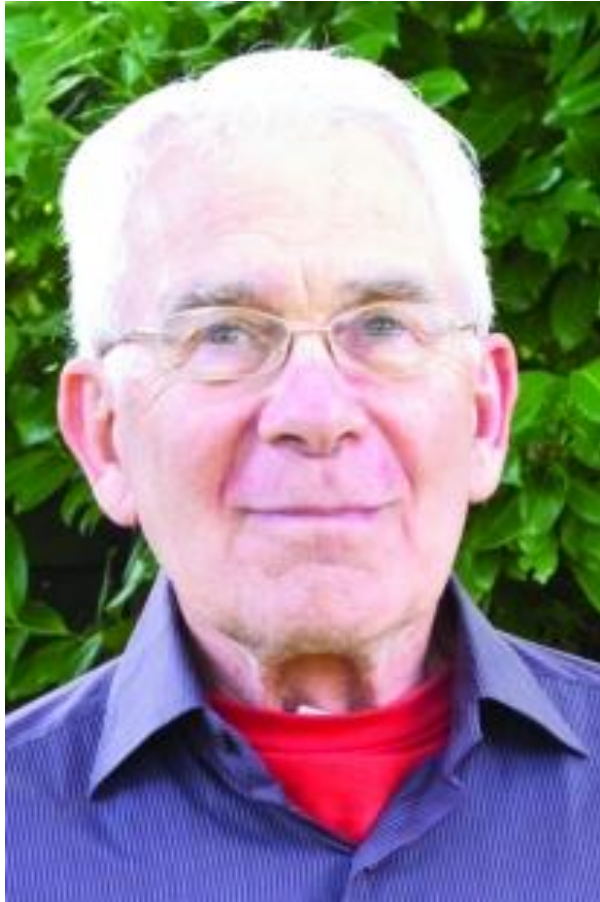


Andy Cohen

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by Barbara Wood / Almanac



Andy Cohen

Andy Cohen, a former Menlo Park mayor and two-term council member, was found dead in his Menlo Park home yesterday, Dec. 29, after police and firefighters received a call for assistance.

Menlo Park Police Department spokesperson Nicole Acker said that no foul play is suspected and that the San Mateo County Coroner will be determining cause of death.

Mr. Cohen, 75, "was just a big-hearted guy," said Mayor Rich Cline, who served on the City Council with Mr. Cohen for six years. "He cared about everybody," he said. "He genuinely struggled with the big issues," such as development, the downtown-El Camino Real specific plan, and anything that might increase traffic, he said.

Mr. Cohen especially cared about the lower-income residents of Menlo Park, Mr. Cline said, and "he did a lot to keep people in their homes in Belle Haven."

Mayor Cline said his former council colleague "was probably the strongest voice for the residential slow-growth community" when he served on the council.

"He always wanted to do right for everybody," Mayor Cline said.

Although the two were sometimes on the opposite sides of issues, "I did genuinely like Andy a lot," Mayor Cline said.

Mr. Cohen served on the Menlo Park City Council from 2004 to 2012, when he chose not to run for re-election. According to his LinkedIn page, he was a former judge who served on the California Workers' Compensation Appeals Board from 1989 to 1994 and was the presiding judge on the board from 1994 to 2003. He had a law degree from Stanford University and a bachelor's degree in economics from Dartmouth College.

Mr. Cohen had his own law offices in Palo Alto and Menlo Park between 1974 and 1989, and taught law at Lincoln Law School in San Jose, San Mateo Law School, and Magna Carta Law School.

He served for a short time as the executive director of the Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, and volunteered for the Sierra Club and Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Cohen was also a painter who in 2009 had a show of 25 years of his landscapes and local scenes at Little House in Menlo Park.

Mr. Cohen also served in the U.S. Navy from 1961 to 1965.

While on the council Mr. Cohen put together three panels of community leaders on homelessness and post-traumatic stress disorder, youth violence and cooperation between schools and municipal governments.

He ran for a seat on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors in 2012, but received only 5 percent of the vote.

Menlo Park Fire Protection District Chief Harold Schapelhouman said Mr. Cohen "certainly was a colorful character on the public stage." In issues the two worked together on, Mr. Schapelhouman said, Mr. Cohen "had a way of cutting to the quick, rather than the double-talk you get sometimes from politicians.

"He didn't always tell you what you wanted to hear but I respected the fact that he gave it to you straight, shooting from the hip, so to speak, and he seemed to have a way of talking on behalf of the average person."