Mayor Snyder steps down temporarily

ALEXANDRIA (AP) — Alexandria Mayor John Snyder, under fire for his long absence from City Hall, stepped down in a surprise move Thursday and named the City Council president as a short-term acting mayor while he has a medical checkup.

The announcement came as the council met to talk about Snyder's extended absences, but the mayor beat them to it. He named Errol Dorsey as acting mayor for 72 hours.

The appointment makes Dorsey the first black mayor in Alexandria history. It is also the first time that the city's mayor has been replaced during his term of office.

Dorsey, who said Snyder did it because the public was growing concerned, said, "This will assure citizens that the functions of the mayor's office are being carried out and show a spirit of harmony and cooperation between the council and mayor."

He said there would be no major changes in the ceremonial switchover and that he will check with the mayor and his staff for any major decision.

Dorsey said Snyder told him he was going to get some X-rays and might be checking into a hospital.

Former City Attorney Chris Roy delivered a letter to the council, announcing the appointment. It acknowledged that Snyder has been ill and bedridden since December 1982 and unable to go to the mayor's office each day.

It added, "However, I have been collaborating with my staff on a daily basis and functioning as mayor."

The nature of the illness has not been made public.

After the letter was read, the council members agreed to the appointment. No vote was taken since none was required. Dorsey then met with the mayor's staff.

The council had conducted a committee-of-the-whole hearing Monday to determine whether Snyder has been absent and whether he is...
performing mayoral duties.

The council subpoenaed six administration officials, but four refused to testify on advice from their attorney.

Charles F. Smith, a mayoral assistant, and Sgt. Ed Christie, a policeman assigned as a full-time investigator at City Hall, testified that Snyder is at a house in Pineville. Both said the mayor is performing his

Pineville Mayor Fred Baden and Rapides Parish Police Jury President L.B. Henry, who visited Snyder on Tuesday, also said Snyder is ill and apparently is refusing to be hospitalized.

“I had been reading in the paper that Mayor Snyder was sick,” Baden said, “so when L.B. came by my office, I told him we should go visit him. I can tell you he is very sick.”

The city’s home-rule charter says the mayor must “actually reside” in

Alexandria.

Under the charter, the council can by a two-thirds vote declare the mayor temporarily absent and install the council president as acting mayor.

The provision says that, if the mayor returns to work, the council, again by a two-thirds vote, must certify his return. If the mayor’s certified absence is more than 30 days, Dorsey would be paid at the same rate the mayor is paid. Snyder makes $44,112 per year.