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Perris Welcomes Two New Councilmembers

The City of Perris welcomed two new members to the City Council this week, as Tonya Burke and David Starr Rabb were sworn into office following their November election victories.

Also sworn in was City Clerk Nancy Salazar, who won a four-year term after a temporary appointment to the position last year.

A festive atmosphere filled City Council chambers Dec. 9 as the two first-time officer holders raised their right hands and took the oath of office. During their first-ever public comments as elected representatives, Burke and Rabb thanked their families and supporters and credited their strong religious faith with helping them obtain victory.

"I cannot start my duties without giving praise and honor to Jesus Christ," Burke said. "It was God who sent me here. Everything happens for a reason."

Burke attends services at Cross Word Christian Church.

Rabb also highlighted his religious foundation from the dais. He attends First Baptist Church in Perris, where he has served as a Youth Deacon.

"I am a follower and disciple of Jesus Christ and I am not afraid to admit it," he said to cheers from the audience.

Rabb and Burke replace outgoing City Council members Al Landers and Mark Yarbrough.



Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke takes the oath of office from her daughter, Brianna Richardson.

Burke holds a Master's Degree from Pepperdine University in clinical psychology and works as a vocational counselor at the Department of Rehabilitation.

Rabb graduated as valedictorian from Perris High School in 2004, earned a bachelor's degree in American history from Stanford, where he also obtained his law degree. He served as a Gunner's Mate Second Class in the Navy, including a tour in the United Arab Emirates. He works as a criminal attorney but said he may switch to education law. He is an avid runner and enjoys gardening in his spare time. Last year, he planted tomatoes and zucchini.

Burke was sworn in by her daughter, Brianna Richardson, 17, a senior at Nuview Bridge Early College High School. Rabb took the oath of office from his brother, DuBron Rabb. His dad, David Rabb, also attended the ceremony as did Burke's husband, Jason. Burke also has two other children, Devon Richardson, 20, and Jaylyn Burke, 12. Burke said she enjoys Zumba because it helps keep her physically fit.



Perris City Councilman David Starr Rabb is sworn into office by his brother, DuBron Rabb. Rabb's nephew, Isaiah, looks on.

Salazar, who ran unopposed for Perris City Clerk, was sworn in by her husband, Cesar.

"It's beautiful to see everyone one here tonight," she said. "I am so excited for this City."

Both new City Council members said they would like to see Perris continue to pursue the acquisition of more grocery stores, restaurants and other commercial development. Burke said she would like to see the City work with local school districts to develop strategies that improve Perris graduates for 21st Century jobs and favors expanding efforts to beautify Perris neighborhoods.

Rabb said he would like to see the City establish an internship to provide job experience to Perris students. Both said they look forward to helping Perris move into the future.

"Today is a wonderful day," Burke said. "It's a new day and a new chapter for our City. I am honored to be here. I'm am honored to serve you. I take this responsibility very seriously."

Burke noted that the Perris City Council represents a variety of ethnicities, education, experience and age. She believes that diversity will serve Perris well now and in the future.

"I believe this diversity will allow us to move our City in the right direction," she said.

Rabb said that wears Perris pride on his sleeve.

"Perris is my hometown and I am proud to be from Perris," he said.

He encouraged the audience who filled the City Council Chambers to stay active in the community, by joining a local church or civic organization.

"Let's get to work people," Rabb said to a round of applause. "Get involved, get engaged. If not us, who? If not now, when?"



Perris City Clerk Nancy Salazar smiles as she takes the oath of office from her husband, Cesar.

City Council colleagues welcomed the newcomers.

"I know you are going to do well because you want to help the citizens of Perris," said Mayor Daryl Busch. "Perris has a bright future."

Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers said she looked forward to sharing her experience as an elected official with Burke and Rabb.

"It's a great time for Perris," Rogers said. "We'll be all right. I look forward to working with you."

City Councilman Julio Rodriguez, who was elected two years ago, praised the makeup and spirit of the City Council, which he said will benefit all Perris residents.

"Our diversity is unlike any place else in Riverside County," he said.

After the swearing-in ceremony, Perris elected officials and their families celebrated with a staff dinner at the Perris Senior Center.

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