



home > city hall > press releases

## Several City of Perris Employees to Retire at the End of the Year



Retiring Perris Executive Assistant Marilyn Fernholz at a Nov. 27 retirement ceremony in which she was honored for nearly 30 years of service with the City. With her are Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona, City Councilman David Starr Rabb, City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, Mayor Michael Vargas, City Councilwoman Tonya Burke and City Manager Richard Belmudez.

The City of Perris said goodbye recently to four employees who together served the community for 65 years in a wide variety of roles—from spearheading parks and infrastructure improvements to keeping the City Council’s calendar to managing a variety of housing and public works projects and publicizing those achievements.

Executive Assistant Marilyn Fernholz is retiring after more than 29 years of service.

Assistant City Manager Darren Madkin is leaving after 15 years with the City and 28 years of municipal government service. Project Manager Susan Almanza and Public Information Officer Joe Vargo are wrapping up 10 years in Perris.

Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez thanked the quartet for their contributions during the Nov. 27 City Council meeting, saying that “without their contributions we would not be the community that we are.”

### Parks to public works

Madkin joined the City in 2004 and currently manages the City’s two largest departments: public works and community services. He previously worked with Belmudez in Pomona and came to the City at a time it was experiencing major growing pains.

“At that time, I thought Perris was a little overlooked and undervalued,” Madkin said. “But today it is a nationally recognized city.”

During his tenure, Madkin oversaw the development of many new parks, the development of the highly successful Mercado and Verano family apartments, a new Senior Center and new Youth Center and a major expansion in community events such as the annual Health Fair, the End of Summer Splash, ongoing hikes and bicycle rides at various City venues and the recent opening of the Motlagh Fitness Court at Paragon Park.

Madkin thanked the department heads who he supervises—Community Services Director Sabrina Chavez, Public Works Director Daryl Hartwill and Chief Information Officer Arturo Cervantes.

They help create a seamless and cohesive team committed to providing top-notch services to City residents. He also singled out retiring City Councilwoman Tonya Burke, who is leaving after four years on the dais, saying “nobody has contributed so much in such a short amount of time.”

The father of three children—son Drake and daughters Paige and Brooke—Madkin will expand his duties as an ordained minister at Shield of Faith Christian Center in Pomona.

### The matriarch

Fernholz’s career in Perris spans 12 City Managers and dozens of City Councilmembers.

Her duties include managing the travel and appointment schedules of the mayor and councilmembers, running the City Manager’s office, supervising the creation and posting of City Council and Planning Commission meeting agendas, dealing with numerous telephone inquiries and including more than a few from irate residents.

Belmudez called Fernholz the “matriarch” of the City, adding that she is often the person who arrives first to the office and turns the lights on for co-workers.

“To characterize her as only a public servant would be an understatement,” he said.

Fernholz, in comments following her presentations, said she looks forward to spending more time with her family and grandchildren in retirement. But leaving the City is bittersweet.



Retiring Assistant City Manager Darren Madkin holds a “Perris Eagle” presented to him at the Nov. 27 retirement service honoring his 15 years with the City. With him are Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona, City Councilman David Starr Rabb, City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, Mayor Michael Vargas, City Councilwoman Tonya Burke and City Manager Richard Belmudez.

“I have a very heavy heart,” she said. “I have enjoyed working with each and every one of you. I thoroughly enjoyed working for the City of Perris. I have seen it grow and thrive. It is run with excellent leadership. I will always call Perris my home.”

### Praise and well-wishes

Perris Mayor Michael Vargas and City Councilmembers cited both long-time workers for making the City a better place for families, seniors, teen-agers and visitors. Vargas noted Madkin’s calm and professional demeanor. City Councilwoman Rita Rogers agreed, calling Madkin “silky smooth,” an administrator who “never got frazzled, upset or lost his cool.”

Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona praised Madkin as “very professional.”

“I want to thank you for doing your job and doing it very well,” he said. “You’re a professional who we’re all going to miss.”

City Councilman David Starr Rabb thanked Madkin for multiplying the number of Perris parks, some of which were paid for by development impact fees and grants.

“You will not be forgotten,” he said.

Fernholz also earned accolades from the dais.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do without you,” Vargas said. “You look after us. You keep my schedule intact.”

Corona thanked Fernholz for “keeping the City Council organized.”

“I am very thankful for all your years of service,” he said.

Rogers called Fernholz “the glue that keeps the City running smoothly.”

“I know you truly love the City and we all love you,” she said. “It’s time to say goodbye to protocol. It’s time for fun and games. I will truly miss you. I love you.”

Councilwoman Tonya Burke summed up her feelings toward Madkin and Fernholz by saying: “I wish you very well. Anything you do will be successful. Good luck to your future endeavors.”

Madkin and Fernholz also were recognized with certificates from Assemblyman Jose Medina, State Sen. Richard Roth and Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley.

Almanza has worked behind-the-scenes on numerous successful projects while assigned to the Engineering, Community Services and Public Works departments. Her efforts resulted in Perris receiving accolades for its recent street-light retrofitting project. Vargo has been responsible for writing press releases, taking photos and posting content to the City’s social media portals. Vargo started with the City after a 30-year career in journalism covering crime and punishment, military affairs and municipal government, including a two-year stint covering Perris while working at the Riverside Press-Enterprise. Vargo was very familiar with the leaders of Perris having covered many City Council meetings, and hit the ground running as the primary source of information and media coverage in the City. He not only produced thousands of press releases over the years, he documented in writing and photographs the City’s major events which are posted on the City’s website. Vargo is an avid reader (books not Kindle), reading as many as two or three military-related books a month. He enjoys travelling with his family around the country and he recently completed a road trip with his son to drive through all 48 states in the Continental United States; attending conventions for history buffs and rooting for his favorite drivers at NASCAR, sprint and midget racing events. In retirement Joe looks forward to spending more time with his wife, Joy, and son, Michael, and continuing to help those in need in the community as a volunteer at his church.

Almanza and Vargo were unable to attend the recognition ceremony.

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