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Perris City Councillors Sworn in

A new mayor, a first-time elected official and a long-time public servant were sworn in as members of the Perris City Council during a standing-room only meeting Dec. 13 at the Perris City Hall Campus.

Mayor Michael Vargas took the oath of office administered by his four daughters, City Councilman Malcolm Corona was sworn into office by his 91-year-old grandmother and Mayor Pro Tem Rita Rogers returned to the council dais after repeating the oath administered by her daughter.

Following the brief ceremony Tuesday evening, the trio took their seats, joining City Councilmembers Tonya Burke and David Starr Rabb. The full house in the Council Chambers included U.S. Rep. Mark Takano, D-Riverside.

The newly elected officials promised to work together to continue the progress Perris has enjoyed in recent years, which has included new parks, businesses, infrastructure and national recognition for improving community health and safety.

The new council praised the efforts of outgoing Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilman Mark Yarbrough, calling the pair dedicated public service who care deeply about Perris and contributed to its growth, development and prosperity.



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas is sworn into office Dec. 13 by his four daughters—Stephanie Vargas, Brittany Vargas, Yvette Rudolph and Megan Vargas.

A family affair

Mayor Vargas, a retired Los Angeles School Police Department sergeant and former trustee for the Val Verde Unified School District, couldn't hide the pride he felt as he recited the oath of office. Little wonder, as his four daughters—Stephanie Vargas, Brittany Vargas, Yvette Rudolph and Megan Vargas—read the document he recited. Vargas' service to Perris also includes five years as a member of the Public Safety Commission.

"I've taken an oath of office eight or nine times," Vargas said. "But I never had a better one!"

In his first public remarks from the City Council dais, Vargas said elected leaders must "listen to the residents of the City of Perris" and keep them informed at all times about progress, or obstacles, encountered as they move forward with efforts to attract retail companies, restaurants, other businesses or community services.

"If residents ask for something that can't be done right away it is imperative that we let them know why," Vargas said.

He said the City needs to strengthen its relationships with neighboring school districts to enhance the chances for success for Perris students, whether they be in education, job training, mentoring programs or partnerships with local colleges, trade schools or businesses. He said further that the City "should acknowledge the achievements of our youth" and honor several Perris high-school students who have been accepted to various U.S. military academies.

Other topics the new mayor said he supports include returning code-enforcement responsibilities to the City, cracking down on illegal parking on Perris streets and attacking blight, which he said "turns off potential new businesses or residence from moving into our City."

"Let's work together for our community, our youth and our business community," he said. "My number one goal is to make Perris the number one city in the Inland Empire."

Vargas enjoys photography and computer graphics in his spare time.



New Perris City Councilman Malcolm Corona is sworn into office by his grandmother, 91-year-old Dora Bush, during the Dec. 13 Perris City Council meeting.

A real life "Rosie the Riveter"

Corona, a 2003 graduate of Perris High School who now teaches math and engineering at the campus, was sworn in by his grandmother, Dora Bush. Bush worked in the defense industry building B-24 bombers outside Detroit during World War II, joining millions of other American women who did their part to ensure victory.

"She's a real-life Rosie the Riveter," Corona said.

Corona graduated from UC Irvine and returned to teach in 2012.

"It felt good," he said in an interview prior to the swearing-in ceremony. "I felt I was home. I wanted to give back to the community I grew up in and to start my family in Perris."

Like the new mayor, Corona said one of his top priorities is to bring more retail and commercial businesses to Perris, a message he said he heard on the campaign trail for residents who urged him to seek office.

Another issue Corona touted included greater security in Perris parks and school, either through surveillance cameras, private security officer, extra police patrols and greater citizen involvement. He said he will take proposals from the public to his City Council colleagues and give them a fair hearing.

"I look forward to being the voice of the community," Corona said.

The new councilman held a variety of jobs prior to earning a teaching credential. He started his work life as a hot dog vendor at the Lake Elsinore Diamond baseball park. He's also worked in a warehouse and as a census taker and a life guard at the swimming pool at the Patton State Hospital. He has served as a coach for the Perris Panthers track and cross-country teams.

He met his wife, Mila, while backpacking in Venezuela. The couple are the parents of an 18-month-old son, Malcolm. In his spare time, Corona enjoys gardening. This year he plans on growing strawberries and tomatoes.



Perris Mayor Pro Tem Rita Rogers is sworn into office by her daughter, Robin Ellison, during the Dec. 13 City Council meeting.

Fifth win for Mayor Pro Tem

Mayor Pro Tem Rita Rogers took the oath of office for the fifth time this week.

She was sworn into office by her daughter, Robin Ellison, an award-winning school counselor. Rogers was first elected to the City Council in 1999.

Rogers, who served with former Mayor Busch and former City Councilman Yarbrough for more than 15 years, thanked the pair for their accomplishments and the impact they left behind as new representatives begin their service.

She said she feels honored to "echo the legacy" of the many fine people who serve and have served on the City Council during her 17-year tenure. Rogers thanked her supporters for their ballots and urged Perris residents to get out and vote every time the City holds an election. She voiced the same sentiments for those wanting to become part of the governmental process.

"For those of you who are interested in politics and want to get involved, get involved," she said.

Rogers said her top priority is public safety, followed closely by economic development.

"People must feel safe in their community and their homes," Rogers said.

Rogers said the Perris economy is rebounding after the years-long Great Recession, adding "hopefully conditions will continue to improve in 2017 and beyond."

She said she is anticipating a productive future with her council colleagues.

"I look forward to working with our new mayor, my new colleague on the City Council as well as the two returning council members," Rogers said. "I wish you all much success. I believe we are going to keep going forward in a positive direction so we can continue the success of our City."

Rogers' family includes two children, nine grandchildren and two great-granddaughters. She is the founder and chair of the community-based Cops and Clergy Network and has been honored the NAACP, the National Congress of Black Women and the National Association of Female Executives.

Praise from colleagues

Council members Tonya Burke and David Starr Rabb expressed their desire to continue moving Perris forward. Burke said she is motivated to "serve God and to serve God's people."

"I wish all of my colleagues well," she said. "We have an agenda—that is to serve the people of Perris."

Rabb noted that he and Corona attended Perris High School at the same time. He graduated a year later than Corona and like his new colleague, received his college degree and now represents the City where he grew up.

"We have a lot of things planned," Rabb told the packed chambers. "We will be a team, a cohesive team. We may not always agree, but we will work to make Perris a better place. I believe 2017 will be great for our City, our state, our county. Are you guys ready to move Perris forward?"

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