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Quiroz-Carter Sworn In as New Watsonville City Councilwoman | Good Times Santa Cruz

3-4 minutes

Vanessa Quiroz-Carter was sworn in as the new representative for the Watsonville City Council's 2nd District at Tuesday night's virtual meeting.

Quiroz-Carter, a Watsonville native who most recently served on the city's Parks and Recreation Commission, said she was excited to continue the work of former councilman Aurelio Gonzalez, celebrate Watsonville's diversity and help guide the community through the ongoing pandemic.

Her mother, Sandra Quiroz-Carter, administered the oath of office from their Watsonville home.

"We are not a city divided," Quiroz-Carter said during her first remarks in office. "Diversity of opinions and views is not a symptom of division. It is the cornerstone of our democracy. It is our responsibility and our pleasure to welcome those voices. To seek out that diversity and build a thriving community of engaged community members."

Quiroz-Carter, 35, was [elected to the city council in last month's special](#) election triggered by [Gonzalez's abrupt resignation](#) in September—he stepped down from office because of a family health emergency. The relative political newcomer beat Frank Barba for the right to represent the neighborhoods east of Main Street through Beck Street, including the communities surrounding Watsonville High School. The district also contains portions of California Street and Palm and Hill avenues.

She will remain in office through 2024, and serve as mayor in her

final year in office.

She serves as an adjunct professor at Hartnell College, and holds a bachelor's degree in English literature from UC Berkeley and a master's in communication from Cal State East Bay.

Along with her time on the Parks Commission, Quiroz-Carter has also been a part of the Santa Cruz County Women's Commission and is the vice-president of the board for nonprofit Families In Transition.

December's special election was her second time running for public office. She first ran unsuccessfully against Gonzalez in 2020.

Quiroz-Carter was endorsed by the majority of the Watsonville City Council—Mayor Ari Parker was the lone elected leader to side with Barba—and numerous community leaders such as County Office of Education Superintendent Faris Sabbah, retired Santa Cruz County Clerk Gail Pellerin and former Watsonville City Councilman and vice-mayor Ramon Gomez.

She also received endorsements from several democratic clubs and organizations throughout the county, including the Pajaro Valley Cesar Chavez Democratic Club and the Santa Cruz County Democratic Party.

Several people congratulated her during public comment at Tuesday's meeting. That included a person who said she was her former pupil at Ceiba College Prep, Zurya Rodriguez.

"She was such an amazing teacher, and I can only imagine the things she'll do as a councilwoman," Rodriguez said. "Y'all are so lucky to have her."