

Cervantez chosen as city's next mayor

By ERIK CHALHOUB

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — Karina Cervantez was appointed Tuesday as Watsonville's next mayor, becoming the second Latina in the city's history to hold the position.

Councilman Felipe Hernandez was chosen as vice mayor.

"I'm looking forward to working with other community members and other community leaders," Cervantez said. "I'm very honored to have the opportunity to serve in this position."

Cervantez was elected to the Watsonville City Council in 2012, and served as vice mayor for the past year.

Cervantez graduated from Porterville High School and is the daughter of farmworkers who continue to work in the Central Valley's fields. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology from UC Santa Cruz. She is currently completing her doctoral degree in psychology at UCSC.

Cervantez is a lecturer at CSU Monterey Bay and is a community outreach liason for a not-for-profit program working with immigrants and their families seeking to naturalize and become U.S. citizens.

She previously served on the Planning Commission and has also served on the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee, the Santa Cruz County Girls Task Force, the Pajaro Valley Cesar Chavez Democratic Club and the County Immigration Action Group.

Cervantez was nominated for mayor by Hernandez, using a process that the city has utilized for the past 15 years, according to City Clerk Beatriz Flores.

MAYOR

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Four councilmembers — Hernandez, Eduardo Montesi-no, Daniel Dodge and Lowell Hurst — sought to nominate a fellow councilmember for mayor. Hernandez drew a card with number one, allowing him to nominate first.

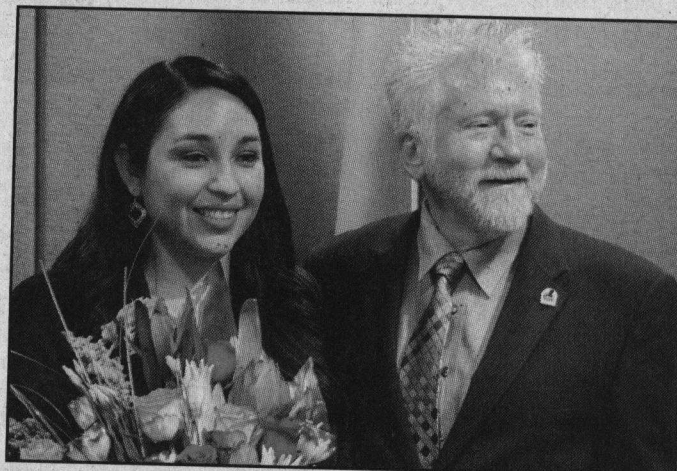
All nominated Cervantez after Hernandez stated his nomination.

The process for appointing the mayor has come under scrutiny recently, as a group of Watsonville residents have formed the group "Let the People Vote."

The group seeks to have the mayor chosen on a rotating basis, among other issues, and is currently gathering signatures for the petition with the hopes of getting it on the June 2014 ballot.

During Tuesday's meeting, some members of the audience praised Cervantez.

"She is very bright, hard-working and committed to Watsonville," said Planning Commissioner Pedro Castillo.



Erik Chalhoub/Register-Pajaronian

New Watsonville Mayor Karina Cervantez poses for a photo with Councilman and former Mayor Lowell Hurst Tuesday.

"You cannot do wrong with Karina as your mayor."

Cervantez is the second Latina to serve as Watsonville's mayor, with Ana Ventura Phares in 2004-2005 being the first.

Hurst wrapped up his second term as mayor, having previously served from 1993-1994.

"I think I have a set of these now," Hurst said, referring to the gavel presented to him by

Cervantez. "It's an important symbol of the office. I'm certainly honored and pleased to represent the city as mayor."

"I often receive glowing reviews for Lowell, saying he is a very visible mayor and the most charismatic mayor in Santa Cruz County," Cervantez said.

Hurst will continue to serve on the Council. His term ends in November 2014.