



Erik Chalhoub/Register-Pajaronian

Oscar Rios (left) is sworn in Tuesday as Watsonville's mayor and Lowell Hurst as mayor pro tempore by Santa Cruz County Superior Court Judge Rebecca Connolly.

^{Mayor} Rios returns as mayor

Councilmembers sworn in Tuesday

By ERIK CHALHOUB
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WATSONVILLE — When Oscar Rios took the mayor's seat in the center of the dais Tuesday, it was familiar territory for him.

Rios was sworn in as Watsonville's mayor for a fifth term after he narrowly eked out a victory in the Nov. 8 election by three votes for the District 2 seat on the city council.

"I'd like to thank the voters of District 2 for giving me the opportunity to be here," he said. "Everyone of you that voted can say, 'I was one of the three that made it happen.'"

Rios said his goal is to get the council to work together, as well as finding ways to improve the housing situation in the city, among other issues.

"We have to be able to carry the things that people have asked us to do when we were knocking on their doors and they gave us their vote," he said.

Rios, a 30-year resident of Watsonville, previously served as mayor for four terms in the 1990s.

"It sounds like you might have done this before," Councilman Lowell Hurst quipped as Rios took his seat.

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Santa Cruz County Superior Court Judge Rebecca Connolly (from left) congratulates Felipe Hernandez, Oscar Rios and Trina Coffman-Gomez after swearing them in to the Watsonville City Council.

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Hurst was sworn in as mayor pro tempore. "We are very fortunate to have an experienced leader."

Trina Coffman-Gomez and Felipe Hernandez were also sworn in by Santa Cruz County Superior Court Judge Rebecca Connolly after reclaiming their seats in the election.

Hernandez, the outgoing mayor, and Karina Cervantez Alejo, who is leaving the council, were honored during the meeting.

Cervantez Alejo said she will continue to be active in public service, as she will remain on the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, where she was appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown in 2014.

"I want to thank the residents of District 2 for the incredible opportunity and privilege to be able to represent you in this capacity," she said.

Hernandez said he was proud of what the city council achieved during the last year, such as approving more than 300 new homes.

"We've accomplished a lot," he said. "I've got a whole list here."

But what he said he was proud of the most was the opening of the new skate park at Ramsay Park in May.

"Kids are always excited about that," he said.

For the last time as mayor, Hernandez presented proclamations to a number of community members:

- Paul De Worken
- Pat Fohrman
- Maria Carrasco Leonor
- Jenni Veitch-Olson
- Robby Olson
- Jenny Sarmiento
- Tony Tapiz
- Alan Hicks