

# 'Watsonville can't stop making history'

## City seats first Latino majority

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WATSONVILLE — Tuesday was a "historical night" in the words of newly elected Mayor Oscar Rios.

And who could say otherwise.

In addition to Rios' selection, the city's first Latina representative — Ana Ventura Phares — took her seat, helping form a Latino majority on the council for the first time in Watsonville's 130-year history.

"It seems as though Watsonville can't stop making history, which

is wonderful," Rios said. "But it's not a question of Latino vs. Anglo ... it's a question of how all of us can work together and move the city forward."

One of the "experienced" council members, newly re-elected Betty Bobeda, was voted vice mayor. But it really was a night for Watsonville's Latinos, who fought for district elections 10 years ago so the city's majority could have representation in local government.

"We need to remember it's about diversity," said Celia Organista, one of the activists who

waged that battle a decade ago. "Just because we're all Latinos doesn't mean we'll always agree."

Actually there were five Latinos behind the council dais Tuesday. But one, Councilman Tony Campos, will be stepping down in December to take his seat on the county Board of Supervisors. He'll be the county's first Latino supervisor in a century.

Forming the four-member majority on the council along with Phares and Rios are newcomer Ramon Gomez and longtime Councilman Al Alcala.

Tuesday was a night for good-byes, too.

Councilmen Todd McFarren and Lowell Hurst stepped aside

because of term limits, and Mayor Dennis Osmer failed in his bid to win another term, losing to Gomez in a closely contested battle.

McFarren suggested that being on the council is like being a coach: "You're smart enough to know how the game is played, but dumb enough to think it's important. Well, I still think it's important."



**Oscar Rios**  
Mayor