City of Yakima

News Release

Subject: Change in Mayor and Assistant Mayor
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Change in Yakima Mayor and Assistant Mayor

At the August 16th Yakima City Council business meeting, Councilmember Avina Gutiérrez and Councilmember Holly Cousens relinquished their respective roles as mayor and assistant mayor. Subsequently, Councilmember Kathy Coffey was elected mayor and Councilmember Carmen Méndez was elected assistant mayor by their fellow Council members.

The City of Yakima operates under the Council-Manager form of government. Under the Council-Manager form, the Council serves as the "board of directors" of the municipal corporation and chooses from its own members a "chair" (mayor) and an "assistant chair" (assistant mayor). The mayor is primarily responsible for chairing Council meetings and serving as the representative of the Council when directed to do so by a majority of the Council. The assistant mayor carries out those responsibilities in the absence of the mayor. Neither the mayor nor the assistant mayor have any greater authority than does any other Council member.

"Who serves as mayor and assistant mayor are internal decisions made by the Council primarily related to how the Council conducts its own business," said City Manager Cliff Moore. "The City administration and staff are committed to working in partnership with the Council to move forward on policies, programs, and projects that serve our community.+

Councilmember Avina Gutiérrez has issued the following statement:

"It has been a great honor and my distinct privilege to serve as mayor of the City since January of this year. It has been an exciting and eventful eight months as the Council grappled with controversial and long-standing issues that that, at times, highlighted the divisions on the Council.

As mayor, I did my best to seek reconciliation wherever possible and to form a working consensus going forward. However, in recent days it became clear to me that I did not enjoy the consensus support of the rest of the Council.

Therefore, last night before the regular City Council meeting, I informed my fellow Council members of my intention to relinquish the role of mayor, effective immediately.

Whatever the reason for the lack of support from some on the Council, it is not as important as the fact that the mayor serves at the pleasure of the Council and if we are to be work effectively as a Council we must come together in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration, not infighting and bickering.

I look forward to continuing as an effective advocate and champion for the interests of the residents of District 2 and working with my fellow Council members to make our great city even better.

This is an important time for the city of Yakima and the people deserve to have the most effective representation we can possibly provide.

Adelante!"

Councilmember Holly Cousens has issued the following statement:

"After learning that Councilmember Avina Gutiérrez had decided to relinquish her role as mayor at the start of the August 16th Yakima City Council meeting, I made the decision to likewise step down as assistant mayor.

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My business experience has taught me that to be effective, the leadership of any organization relies on the support of the members of the organization. I determined that in an effort to foster unity and cohesiveness during a time of transition, it was in the best interests of the Council to provide its members with the opportunity to choose a new leadership team as it proceeds with the important task of guiding Yakima through an exciting time of growth and progress.

I have thoroughly enjoyed serving our community as assistant mayor for the last eight months. I have learned a great deal from my constituents, other community members, and my fellow Council members that will continue to be of tremendous value to me throughout the rest of my tenure on the Yakima City Council.

I look forward to continuing to represent District 7 as well as the entire community."