

## REORGANIZATION MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

January 2, 2024

The meeting was called to order by City Clerk Brenna Murphy McGee at 10:33 AM

The Clerk called the roll. Present Members in person 13 (Anderson-Burgos, Bartley, Devine, Givner, Greaney, Jourdain, Magrath-Smith, Murphy-Romboletti, Ocasio, Rivera\_I, Rivera\_J, Sullivan, Vacon).

Motion was made and seconded to go to the first ballot for President.

### UNDER DISCUSSION:

Councilor Jourdain offered congratulations to all councilors being given the opportunity to serve as elected representatives of the people of Holyoke as members of the City Council. He then stated that Holyoke had many successes and challenges that would be addressed over the next two years. He then emphasized that the Council was the institution closest to the people, adding that it had tremendous power as a force for advancing public good and accountability. He then observed that this was a sacred trust the Council had to hold, protect, and exercise with wisdom. He added that the Council was a check to make sure government served the people, as they were the top of the organizational chart. He also expressed gratitude to the people for express appreciation for balance and common sense on their City Council by returning a new Council that had both. He then suggested that this Council should ensure that everyone's experience and talents were put to work, and that balance is embraced as a strength. He then stated that the Council deserved a highly qualified and experienced leader who understood the mission, someone who was well versed in how the Council functions and should be led, emphasizing that he had been a demonstrated leader as former president of the body. He then asked for the votes of his colleagues to serve as Council President. He then emphasized that whether he was selected or not, he was committed to working with closely with whomever was selected to ensure the traditions were oriented to the public interest and not for private agendas or other interests within City Hall.

Councilor Devine stated that it was an historical date for the city, noting that there were seven women on the City Council for the first time in its history.

Councilor Greaney offered thanks to the voters for returning him to the City Council.

---> Tessa Murphy-Romboletti received 7 votes (Anderson-Burgos, Devine, Givner, Magrath-Smith, Murphy-Romboletti, Rivera\_I, Rivera\_J) for City Council President. Kevin Jourdain received 6 votes (Bartley, Greaney, Jourdain, Ocasio, Sullivan, Vacon) for City Council President. Tessa Murphy-Romboletti elected to City Council President on the first ballot.

City Clerk Brenna Murphy McGee performed the swearing in of President Murphy-Romboletti.

President Murphy-Romboletti offered thanks to everyone in attendance, as well as welcoming in new and returning councilors. She then thanked her fiancé, Paul, who could not be in attendance due to being at work but noted that the two of them met at City Hall. She also thanked her family. She then thanked Mayor Garcia, expressing that it had been an honor to work with him the last couple of years. She further expressed an intent to continue to have a collaborative relationship even while not always agreeing. She added that it was refreshing to have a mayor who attended many subcommittee meetings and was always available to listen. She then commanded the dedication of outgoing councilors, thanking them for

their service and being a part of her first term. She then observed how odd it was to not have former councilors, McGiverin, Tallman, and McGee after their decades of leadership. She added that their commitment had left an indelible mark on the city's history and had supported her much in her first term. She then emphasized that she had been drawn to public service most of her life and loved local government. She then quipped that Leslie Knope from the television series, Parks and Recreation, had been her hero. She then emphasized that local government was about ensuring safe streets, nurturing environments at schools, and vibrant neighborhoods where everyone felt a sense of belonging. She added that it was about understanding that challenges were nuanced, multifaceted, requiring collaborative solutions beyond political affiliations. She noted that the Council used to get together after meetings no matter what they agreed on during a meeting, emphasizing that it was not that long ago and that the Council should try to get back to that kind of atmosphere. She added that the Council could set an example for other communities that the Council could unite around a love for Holyoke and dedication to its progress despite differences. She then recognized that she did not claim to have all the answers or skills to single-handedly navigate the coming challenges, and promised to listen, learn, and lead with humility and an open mind. She then asked for patience and guidance. She also stated that in addition to recognizing strengths, she planned to acknowledge and learn from shortcomings. She then expressed her intent to treat the position with respect and lead with impartiality, making decisions with Holyoke's best interests in mind. She expressed her intent to lead meanings that would value diverse perspectives and lead to meaningful, actionable outcomes. She also recognized that every opinion comes from experiences, beliefs, and aspirations for the community. She also emphasized that disagreements could be spirited while also leading to consensus. She further emphasized that the tone of meetings needed to change, adding that the people deserved the best versions of their city councilors. She also recognized, as the first woman in the position, the sacrifices of those that came before her. She noted that her grandmother was elected as Tax Collector in Meadville, Pennsylvania in the 1960's. She further recognized that many women in Holyoke had paved the way for a female City Council President, adding that she looked forward to when a person of color served as president. She then reiterated that the Council was made up of a majority of women. She then asked that the Council embrace diversity, celebrate differences, and foster mutual respect. She then thanked those who voted for her and promised those who did not that she would work to earn their trust.

Meeting adjourned at 10:49 AM.