Costa Mesa makes history with first directly elected woman mayor and new council members by district

A new Costa Mesa City Council was sworn in Tuesday, Dec. 4.

This brought with it several firsts; Mayor Katrina Foley as the first directly elected mayor, and the first council members to be elected to represent distinct council districts—Andrea Marr, Manuel Chavez and Arlis Reynolds.

In addition, the formation of this City Council brings with it a majority of women (Foley, Genis, Marr and Reynolds), the first Latino/a council members (Chavez, Marr and Reynolds) and the youngest person to hold office in Costa Mesa (Chavez).

“I am extremely honored to serve as the city’s first directly elected woman mayor,” Foley said. “I look forward to working alongside my fellow council members—especially our newly elected members that bring such diversity, youth and excitement to the dais. We know residents elected us to ensure that they can live, work and thrive in our great City of Costa Mesa. We will do that through a spirit of collaboration and civility, while prioritizing public safety, neighborhood improvement and community services for our youth, families and seniors.”



In November of 2016, Costa Mesa voters adopted Measure EE, which created six councilmember districts and a directly elected mayor. This year, Council Districts 3 (Marr), 4 (Chavez) and 5 (Reynolds) were on the ballot.

Districts, 1, 2 and 6 will be up for election in November of 2020. Council Members Sandy Genis, John Stephens and Allan Mansoor still have two years left on their terms.

Foley served as Mayor in 2016-2017, and has been on the City Council for 10 years. She was first elected in 2004 and served through 2010, when she was elected to the Newport Mesa Unified School District Board of Trustees. She served on the school board until 2014, and then ran successfully for the council in 2014. That term expired in November of 2018.

As the first directly elected mayor, she will serve a two-year term that will expire in 2020.

Foley is an employment law attorney and business owner. She graduated from Seattle University School of Law and UCLA as an English major with Women's Studies emphasis.

For more information click Mayor Foley's webpage here.

Prior to being elected to City Council District 3, Marr served on the city's Cultural Art Committee, where she helped spearhead a number of different community art projects and events. She also previously served on the Bikeway and Walkability Committee where she focused on cyclist and pedestrian safety.

Marr is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy of which she was nominated to attend by Vice President Al Gore. During her time at the Academy, she held multiple leadership positions and competed with the Academy Karate team. She was recognized for her leadership by the Naval Academy Superintendent and graduated with a degree in Aerospace Engineering.

Marr also holds an M.S. in Engineering Management from Old Dominion University where her coursework focused on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building program. She was a 2013 recipient of the White House Champion of Change award for her work in energy as a veteran. She is a licensed professional engineer in the state of Washington and is a Director at Willdan Group, a publicly traded energy solutions company.

For more information click Council Member Marr's webpage here.

At the age of 23, District 4 Council Member Chavez is likely the youngest person to serve on the Costa Mesa City Council.

Chavez grew up on the Westside of Costa Mesa and attended local public schools through high school. While a student at

Estancia High School, he became heavily involved with the Save Our Youth program (SOY).

After graduating from Estancia High School, Chavez attended UC Irvine where he studied Political Science and became very involved with both the UCI College Democrat Club, where he was elected President his senior year, and the Orange County Young Democrats.

For more information click Council Member Chavez's webpage here.

District 5 Council Member Reynolds served as Vice Chair of Costa Mesa's Parks and Recreation Commission and as Commission liaison to the Fairview Park Steering Committee.

Reynolds grew up in the Freedom Homes neighborhood of Westside Costa Mesa where she attended local schools. After graduating from Estancia High School, she went on to attend Massachusetts Institute of Technology where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. She is currently a member of the Executive MBA Program at the UCI Paul Merage School of Business. She works as a consultant in the clean-energy industry, specializing in evaluation of energy efficiency and clean energy projects and technologies.

For more information click Council Member Reynolds' webpage here.