

New City Council members sworn in; Wisler elected as Vice Mayor

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In a short but jolly ceremony, three newly-elected City Council members were sworn in on Dec. 1 at City Hall.

Before that bit of business, an honor guard from the Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) at Asheville High School led the Pledge of Allegiance. Accompanying herself on guitar, Asheville Senior Firefighter **Bentley Andrews** sang the National Anthem.



And in an only-in-Asheville bit of whimsical good cheer, **Dr. Ron Manheimer** (father of Mayor **Esther Manheimer**) led the audience in singing *Asheville is our Town*, lyrics he wrote for the occasion, set to the melody of *This Land is Your Land*.

Surrounded by members of their families, **Brian Haynes**, **Julie Mayfield** and **Keith Young** received the oath of office from Buncombe County Chief District Court Judge the Honorable **J. Calvin Hill**.

The new council members join sitting members Manheimer, **Cecil Bothwell**, **Gordon Smith** and **Gwen Wisler**.

In remarks following the swearing in, Haynes said, "I'd like to thank our city voters. I'm very proud of them, and I think they did a good job," earning an appreciative laugh from the audience. He asked those energized by the election to stay involved: "Join committees, attend meetings and let your voices be heard."

Mayfield commented that running for office was a "new existence" for someone who hadn't done it before. "Ultimately, this is an incredibly humbling experience," she continued. "Several thousand people who I don't know voted for me, and for Keith and Brian, and put their trust in us to lead this city to a better future."

"Our city is in a very transformative time," said Young, "and these six other people up here have the city's best interest at heart. I am looking forward to rolling my sleeves up and working with each and every one of you."

Manheimer lauded the themes raised by her new colleagues on Council: "We are representing our community, trying to make Asheville a better place and learning to work together in that process. We will certainly have differing opinions, and I hope we do. Otherwise, we are not a functioning body, but what I already hear from you, and what I look forward to, is working with you through those differences to find an outcome that betters our community."

As the agenda turned to the election of a new **Vice Mayor**, Councilman Smith, who has announced his candidacy for a District 1 seat on the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners, took the floor to express thoughts about the role. "The vice mayor has a unique opportunity to bring the community together," he said, noting that Mayor Manheimer "gets ten times more requests [for events] than she can fulfill." Smith also referred to Manheimer's recent election as the Chair of the N.C. Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, congratulating the mayor and saying, "So she's going to be marshaling not only us here in Asheville, but helping to bring together coalitions statewide to work with the legislature."

Smith went on to nominate, "someone who is a unifier, who has been showing up to more stuff than any council member since I've been on here, who has an unquestioning integrity: **Gwen Wisler**."

Wisler is “a dove out in the community and a hawk when it comes to the budget,” continued Smith. Bothwell was quick to agree, seconding the nomination. The new Council unanimously voted to select **Wisler**, who smiled and accepted congratulations on her new title and role.

During the reception that followed the meeting, Manheimer said there had been a bit of “jockeying for position” surrounding the selection, but that all council members concluded that **Wisler** was the best choice.

Council’s next regular meeting will be held on Dec. 8 at 5 p.m. in Council chambers at City Hall. According to City Clerk **Maggie Burleson**, Council will hear public comment on the following topics (which are subject to change):

- Amendment to a previously approved conditional zoning at 671 Sand Hill Road to add a two-story, 8,000 square foot building for an established private school.
- Permanent closure of an unnamed alley off Jarrett Road.
- Conditional use permit for the co-location of wireless telecommunications equipment on the existing concealed telecommunication support structure located at 300 Merrimon Avenue.

Council had previously scheduled a public hearing for conditional zoning for the renovation of the BB&T building at One West Pack Square and the construction of a related parking structure at 11 Patton Avenue for its Dec. 8 meeting. That hearing has been rescheduled for Council’s Jan.12 meeting at the request of the developer, McKibbon Hotel Group.



