

City Council Inauguration Transcript – 1/6/2021

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[6:02:58 PM]

good evening. I want to thank everybody for joining in for the administrative swearing in of the councilmember elects who were elected during the November general election or the December runoff. It is Wednesday, January 6th, 2021. 6:02 P.M. In the evening, we are going to conduct this swearing in ceremony virtually as allowed under the governor's emergency declaration. And the related suspension of certain open meeting statutes. We are also going to, when the entire council is present at our first meeting at the end of the month have a ceremonial opportunity to again welcome the new councilmembers and the reinstallation of those that are already serving.

[6:03:59 PM]

And I look forward to having that opportunity with the entire dais present. >> I would like to introduce the honorable Sherri Statistic on the who is the presiding judge of municipal court who is going to administer the oath of office in district 4. Judge Statistic on the. >> St AT&T on. >> Hello. We are starting with district 2; is that correct? >> .. That is correct. >> All right. Ms. Fuentes, if you would raise your right hand and repeat after me. I Christian Vanessa Fuentes do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the duties -- >> That I will faithfully execute the duties -- >> Of the office of Austin city council district 2 of the state

[6:05:06 PM]

of Texas and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the constitution, preserve, protect and defend the constitution and the laws of the United States and of this state, so help me god.

>> Congratulations. >> Thank you. . >> All right. Mr. Casar, please raise your right hand and repeat after me. >> I Gregorio Greg Casar do solemnly swear that I will

[6:06:09 PM]

faithfully execute the duties of the office of Austin city council district 4 of the state of Texas and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the constitution and the laws of the United States and of this state, so help me god. >> Congratulations. >> Thank you, judge. >> . >> Ms. Kelly, will you please

[6:07:10 PM]

raise your right hand. >> Repeat after me. >> I Mackenzie Kelly do solemnly swear, that I will faithfully execute the duties of the office of Austin city council district 6 of the state of Texas and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the constitution and the laws of the United States and of this state, so help me god. >> Congratulations. >> Thank you.

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. >> Ms. Pool, if you would please raise your right hand. >> I Leslie pool do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the duties of the office of Austin city council district 7 of the state of Texas and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the constitution and the laws of the

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United States and of this state, so help me god. >> Congratulations. >> Thank you. >> You did good! >> Ms. Alter, repeat after me. >> I Alison alter do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the duties of the office of Austin city council district ten of the state of Texas and

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will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the constitution and the laws of the United States and of this state, so help me god. >> Congratulations. >> Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: I also want

to, judge statman, thank you so much for joining. >> Thank you, congratulations, everybody and god bless. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you so much, judge. Congratulations, colleagues. I want to invite each of the newly elected and reelected members to make any comments they would like to make. We will go in district order again. So let's begin, councilperson

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Fuentes, would you like to say something? >> Thank you. >> Good evening, buenas know chess I am honored for the opportunity to serve and represent the district 2 community, thank you so much .. To the people of district 2 who placed this trust in me. I am incredibly grateful to have forged an independent path to win this seat, one that is rooted in Progressive values and guided by the commitment to ensure that our community is part of the process. In my community we have a saying, no decision about us without us, and I intend to honor that commitment and to do all that I can with the power that is vested in this office to ensure that my community has a seat at the table. I couldn't be here today without thinking that people who have made this possible, so first and foremost I want to thank my parents, Carlos and Guadalupe Fuentes, thank you for the sacrifices you made and the sacrifices you made tone sure I received a quality education and for instilling in me the values of faith, family and hard work,

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you taught me from Ganas he everything is possible and to my Familia, thank you and to my husband, Curtis, thank you four enduring love and support, for supporting me when I made the decision to run during our newlywed year, and only were you understanding about just how important taking this risk would be for me to pursue my passion but you went all in, staying up as late nights to help me proofread my questionnaires, to putting out signs all across the district, to just letting me vent when I needed to. Thank you. And to my incredible team, Quintanilla, campaign manager who brought the energy and grit, thank you for leading our successful campaign and one that was recently recognized nationally by the American association of political consultants to Jacquelyn Uresti for your incredible strategic guidance and support, to Carlos Martinez, helping me launch our weekly taco truck talks as a way

[6:13:36 PM]

to creatively engage our community amid the pandemic and to support small business to the woody's Roy and Susanna for welcoming me to the community and for being one of the first to believe in the movement we were building, Bianca Garcia, my incredible campaign treasurer, who has raised is now what is district 2 and to our volunteers who powered our movement. Tanya, Taylor, Riley, sol, Carmen, Lauren, Virginia, Ann Lawrence, so many, many more, very special thank you and thank you to my

mother-in-law, Nancy Smith and to our Arlene Nixon who joined our weekly phone banks for months every week to help get word out. New choice ma gracias for those who participated in the taco truck parks .. For every volunteer hour logged and for each contribution made to power our successful grass roots victory. Thank you. Running a campaign amid a pandemic has made the stakes

[6:14:39 PM]

very clear and continue to be in Austin as just divided today as it was nearly a century ago or continue the tough work or addressing these inequalities demanded by our communities. I firmly believe we should judge Austin standing as one of the best cities to live in but just how well the every day austinite is doing, my immediate focus will be in serving my community during this time of crisis, to ensure that our vulnerable communities receive equitable access to covid vaccines and to help build trust in our community where the vaccine is safe and effective. And as I think about this moment that we are in as a nation, amid the chaos we have witnessed today at the U.S. Capitol as a state and as a community I stand committed to the pursuit of justice until justice is realized for all, for these are matters of life and death and I believe that our government has a role in the safety of our community, safety in having a

[6:15:39 PM]

roof over your head, food on the table, healthcare as a human right, not a privilege, safety and a job that pays a liveable wage and the ability to secure a loan to start or to save a business and the safety of living in a well lit neighborhood with connected sidewalks and decent streets and quality schools nearby. And safety and being able to call a first responder who is willing to put their life on the line if a dangerous situation arises and most importantly, safety and in knowing that our systems and our institutions recognize and honor our humanity and our dignity. Thank you so much, Austin, for getting this small town girl from the heart of Texas a shot new chos gracias. .. Thank you. >> Muchas gracias. Thank you. >> Congratulations councilmember and congratulations to everyone.

[6:16:40 PM]

I want to start out by thanking my district for entrusting me with this important role, for thanking my supporters, for thanking my family that is watching today, the love of my life sitting right here on the other end of the table, and thanking every day austinites. Our democracy has never been more important from the federal level down to the local level it never has been more critical for people to come together to be able to determine our collective destiny. Recently we felt constant attacks on our democracy. Today's violence storming of our nation's capitol is among the most disturbing and blatant of these attacks, but our community and our city has stood strong these last few years in demanding

more democracy, not less. Austin has been dedicated to tong door wider for more people to have self-determination and dignity and prosperity. Even in the face of unprecedented actions from the

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federal and state government we have stood by principles we can be proud of because our constituents, our community and our morals have demanded it. When in retaliation for our immigrant family policies federal agents were sent to our district to tear families apart we didn't back down. We led the country with our anti-deportation policies and our deportation defense funds. Austin rallied and said no matter where you born or where you come from you are a part of our family, you are a part of our city, we raised wages for the lowest paid workers in our city from \$7.25 to \$15 an hour in the last few years, closed inexcusable tax loopholes for the most expensive properties in the city so that we could pay for the vital programs that communities need. We invested in public transportation and in affordable housing in a way that this city and the state has never seen before. For all of that we should be proud of who we are and for what we stand for. And I am so grateful to be a

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part of a city that cares about those values and has pushed us even when we are swimming upstream. When state leaders tried to close planned parenthood or override our covid protections or take away our sick day rules Austin didn't give up. We kept, kept clinics open and rallied our community to wear masks and take care of each other and provided assistance to those in need. In this moment of public health and economic crisis, our local government, that's not just us the elected officials, but folks in the community have rallied together with our local democracy to save lives, when an unprecedented number of austinites and Americans March saying that black lives matter we responded, we aren't perfect but on this dais we came together in a way that almost no other city in this country did bypassing a transformative budget that begins to truly prioritize racial justice, truly prioritize civil rights in a budget that can make our city safer for all people.

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Our work is far from over and too many lives have been needlessly lost but our communities bravery has set us on the right path. So my message today is really of gratitude to the people in our city. Because it is not elected officials that make democracy work, it is you, the people who love our communities so much and who continue to demand better, not just for yourself but for everyone. I recognize that we have been entrusted with this major responsibility today. My mental is to continue to expand the scope of our democracy and its promise. It is hard to feel like your city is working for you if you no longer afford to live in it so our housing and economic policies must change in the interest of every day folks. It is hard

to feel like our city is working when there are so many people who are forced to live on the streets. We must end homelessness for thousands of our community members without homes and really for the soul of our city. The virus continues to cause deep harm to every day families

[6:20:43 PM]

and to jobs while in the well-being and taking lives. We must get everyone vaccinated and have a fair and inclusive recovery, in each case, the responsibility rests with all of us and I know that despite challenges the answer is a more inclusive democracy that prioritizes the needs of people who are too often left out. I know we are up to the task. As Austin because I know the hearts and the commitment in this city and so I am confident that we who have been trusted in these roles can get it done because of you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. And now councilperson Kelly, would you like to make a statement? >> Yes, thank you, mayor, thank you, colleagues for being here and thank you, neighbors, all across the city who are watching tonight. I am deeply grateful and humbled

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to be serving as your district sexy councilperson, I am thankful for the work that our previous city councilperson was able to accomplish and I look forward to representing the needs of our district in a way that is more collaborative and less divisive than our current climate politically. I am concerned about public safety, I am concerned about homelessness, and I will work to help make those problems be solved. I will collaborate with the community and I will ensure that everybody is equally represented regardless of a few, if you voted for me or not. Finally, the disturbing violence that we saw at the capitol today was unacceptable and it should not be tolerated by anyone and my thoughts are with those that were involved in that incident today. I hope that as a city we are able to shine brightly as an

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example for how we can work together in order to accomplish the same goals which should be to increase the quality of life for our residents. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Councilmember pool. >> Pool: Thank you, mayor. Good evening, everyone. I would like to start by thanking my constituents for trusting me to continue as your councilmember for district 7. It is an honor to serve this district and the broader Austin community. I want to take a moment to acknowledge what a challenging and difficult year 2020 was for our city and to recognize the strength of our community coming together to help and heal each other. I know this would not have been possible without the help of our generous local organizations and leaders, particularly atx emergency supply and the Austin Latino coalition. Thank you. Most of all I would like to recognize our incredible city

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staff, who show us every day with their hard work and fierce dedication to our residents what public service truly looks like. Thank you all. The covid-19 pandemic has devastated our families and exposed long standing inequalities and injustices that the nation has tolerated for too long. In following the deaths of George Floyd and Mike Ramos the peaceful protests that continued over many weeks could not be denied. As community and as a council we took bold steps to acknowledge and address these inequities and I am proud we moved so swiftly with determination to you the night, unite around positive change. Along the way, however, and largely in forming these major challenges of 2020 was the extreme partisan discourse at the national level. And its affects were inescapable

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and I don't receive, even at, or receive, even at our local level .. We often talk about wanting to go back to normal after this pandemic, but it seems to me that there is a lot to keep, lessons learned, perhaps, such as when we all pull together we can really make a difference and when we do that we foster a sense of strength in unity for our communities, as I begin this next term I promise to strive for that strength in unity for the benefit of my constituents and all of us. It is this goal of unity that gifts me hope gives me hope. It is in unity we will most successfully tackle the biggest priorities ahead of us. In my next term the greatest priority of course will be guiding our city through our pandemic response and we must keep on working together to protect people's lives and livelihoods.

[6:25:51 PM]

We may face the very worst of the pandemic in the coming weeks and we must prepare ourselves for a potential hospital crisis. Simultaneously we must successfully distribute and administer vaccines and ensure our community is doing all it can to slow the spread and we must tap into every resource to ensure a strong economic recovery and to safeguard the city's financial position. In 2020 I was proud to bring the shop block initiative to help businesses safely operate during the pandemic and now we must seize every potential tool and funding opportunity that comes along lest we lose the workers and the businesses that make our city so special. Local restaurants in particular are struggling and we need to do more. We must use the lessons learned here to empower people toward resilience in the face of

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disastrous inequity. Community and climate resilience will be a focus for me in this term as we work to emerge stronger and better together. Two more policy areas, homelessness and public safety continue to be a community priorities for me. Our cities reimagining public safety effort is making important progress and I anticipate that we will be truly ready for a new cadet class immediately following this fiscal year. We are all anxious over these open issues but committed to making sure we get this transformational change right for our communities and our police officers. Our efforts around reducing homelessness in Austin continue, we must redouble our efforts on housing, necessary wraparounds social services and employment readiness, the housing first model where it has proven a success so let's expand upon it in terms of infrastructure and

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public assets, project connect could not be more timely, as you all know I am committed to taking on a new leadership role at cap metro serve the broader community. I look forward to improving service and efficiency with our transit authority partners. I remain committed to protecting the city's charm and environmental quality. This city has always regarded its environment as one of its greatest assets. Every citizen regardless of income deserves access to parks, greenery, and beauty, scientific studies have demonstrated access to parks and fresh air improves physical and mental health, so let's redouble our efforts to acquire even more open space and parklands. We should explore regional, political, compacts with surrounding cities and counties to coordinate the acquisition of additional green open spaces that all can share.

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Cities are more than concrete. And finally a few Benedict Friday words of gratitude .. As a public servant keenly attuned to the current burdens we face, I owe much to the many women leaders who have done this work in the past and those who now serve our community, the list of women who have served our local area is long and the women are legendary and powerful and inspiring and I thank them for their insights and diligence and presence of mind. I lean on their accomplishments to inform mine. And now after the storms we have weathered this council has renewed energy to tackle the challenges of the year ahead. I am deeply honored to be on this dais. I look forward to continuing the work of this council for this community in the company of so

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many dear friends and valued colleagues. Restoring equilibrium through consensus is our job one. And to close, and reflecting on the images we all observed in our nation's capitol today, tonight we honor the sacred rituals of the peaceful transfer of power that safeguard our democracy. Thank you all so much.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Councilmember alter. >> Alter: Thank you. Good evening, everyone. As a swearing in this should be a night that is full of lots of positive emotions, of gratitude, excitement, and new beginnings. Today in the world we live in it is also full of caution, responsibility, adaptation and frankly in the last 24 hours

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emotional whiplash. I won reelection less than a month ago but in some ways, December 15th or even frankly January 5th feels like a year ago, given all that is going on. And as I reflect on what I wanted to say tonight I kept returning to the irony of swearing in both to preserve, protect and defend the constitution and laws of the United States on the very same day that the failure of other elected officials to do so has been so obvious and on display for the world to see. Today more than any other day I can remember, we had quite an eventful time since we have been in office. Each of us has been forced to bear witness to the mockery of our democracy, to bear witness to the double standards exemplified by the starkly different response to today's terrorist actions by protesters compared to the summer's calls for racial justice. We are processing these events in DC, still unfolding as I

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speak while observing an outpouring of democratic commitment and participation from a multiracial coalition of African Americans, Jews, hispanics, white sox, Asians and Georgia, as elected leaders as a community, as a country I hope we find strength to work together to get through this crossroads in the days, months and years to come. Here in Austin tonight as my colleague just mentioned we gather to mark a waysful transition of power in our own city. We remember that those of us being sworn in are assuming or reaffirming our commitment to lead responsibly and lead by example, let's today's events remind us every day of the oath that we have taken to our city and our country. Nothing is normal or usual about this day, but I do want to extend a heartfelt welcome to our new colleagues, have a in -- Vanessa Fuentes and Kelly and

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congratulate my colleagues Greg and Leslie and really look forward to working with you and the rest of the dais to improve Austin. For me it is an honor and privilege to continue to serve Austin in district ten. I am so grateful to the voters volunteers, donors, friends and family who believed in my leadership and joined in support of my reelection campaign. Thank you to the many neighborhood leaders precinct chairs, unions, environmentalists, elected officials 0 organizations and every day austinites of all stripes who stood with me in support of proven leadership, experience and integrity in these challenging times. Your commitment to democracy and good government inspire me and show us that Austin's best days

are ahead of us. I wanted to say a couple of specific thank yous because one doesn't get to a day like this alone. I would like to thank my campaign team at -- strategy, especially Michael Tomlinson and to my amazing district ten team

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at city hall, Kurt, April, Nina, Nina and Melissa and thank you to my family, my mother, Natalie, Jeremy and Zachary and thank you to district ten for trust knowing represent you. I am proud of in my record to make Austin a place where all can thrive and feel safe and look forward to building on my work in my second term whether it is championing the environment, we imagine a public safety, preventing wild fires, improving our medical response, ensuring public health and economic recovery during and beyond the pandemic and managing growth responsibly. We live in a complicated world and it is an understatement that we face many crises at once. Together, as a council and as a city, we must find ways to use these crises as catalysts to solve longstanding chance in our city. It is my hope that we can prove to be curious, deliberative, collaborative. >> Mayor Adler: Oh, no.

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Let's give Alison a moment to see if she will come back on. >> Mayor Adler: I just texted her. Let's give her a second. You are back. You were -- you are muted,

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though. >> Alter: All right. It may not be 2021 may not be that different from 2020. My computer didn't like being on off of the other space, so we are just going roll with it as we have. But we are going learn from our mistakes is one of the things I wanted to say. And it is really my hope as a council and as a city we can be curious, deliberative, collaborative, inclusive, effective and empathetic. We will need to be innovative, learn from our mistakes, find common ground as we focus on the problems and the opportunities before us. We asked to learn to be really resourceful and adapt over the last year and I hope that we take those lessons and they allow us to innovate and solve what is before us. I believe the best days for Austin are in front of us and as we finish here I am really pleased that our federal legislators are returning to the capitol to continue their work

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to certify our next president as outlined in the constitution tonight. We must all work together in the spirit of honesty, integrity and commitment, to what Abraham Lincoln called at the end of a dark period of our history the better angels of our nature. Thank you. I appreciate your forbearance with all of the technology. >> Mayor Adler: I want to congratulate my longstanding and new colleagues both beginning to feel it is beginning and filled with such wondrous promise and potential. City manager, thank you for managing, joining us as you always do and thank you all for watching our council's first virtual swearing in. I will remind you that we will have another opportunity at our first council meeting the last week in January to welcome again with with the entire council

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present on the dais. I want to thank judge statman, I especially want to thank the city hall team .. For pulling this off and at a time when we have pretty much uncontrolled spread of the virus in our community. That is no small feat. I do take this opportunity to remind everyone that this is really the mom to double down on wearing masks and social distancing, staying home, when you can certainly avoid large groups, as we are doing here tonight with our virtual ceremony. With that, I think we have accomplished everything we need to accomplish and at 6:38 I would wish everyone a good evening