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New mayor takes office



Mayor Jerry Robinson (left) stands next to Mayor Emeritus R. Gerald Hethcoat.

Story, Photos and Video

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WILLISTON – Tuesday night (April 10) made another memorable mark in history for the City of Williston as a new mayor took the oath of office.

<https://youtu.be/L8GAGGzfFWI>

In this three-minute video, Mayor Jerry Robinson reads the proclamation in regard to Mayor Emeritus R. Gerald Hethcoat.

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Williston Police Officer Doreen Casolo is administered the oath of office by Mayor R. Gerald Hethcoat as one of his final acts.



Williston Police Officer Doreen Casolo is ceremoniously pinned with the WPD badge by WPD Officer Rich Peters.

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City Councilwoman Nancy Winger takes the oath of office.



City Councilwoman Nancy Winger shakes hands with Levy County Court Judge Tim Browning after her investiture.

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City Councilman Charles Goodman takes the oath of office.



City Councilman Charles Goodman shakes hands with Levy County Court Judge Tim Browning after his investiture.

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City Council Vice President Marguerite Robinson



(from left) City Councilman Justin Head, City Council Vice President Marguerite Robinson and Mayor Jerry Robinson are seen Tuesday night.

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(from left) City Councilman Charles Goodman, City Council President Nancy Wininger and City Councilman Elihu Ross are seen Tuesday night.



Mayor Jerry Robinson (left) stands next to Mayor Emeritus R. Gerald Hethcoat soon after Mayor Robinson had read the proclamation and presented the sign to the outgoing mayor.

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(from left) Providing a posed group shot after the ceremony are Levy County Court Judge Tim Browning, City Council Vice President Marguerite Robinson, City Council President Nancy Wininger, Mayor Emeritus R. Gerald Hethcoat and Mayor Jerry Robinson.

Beyond that point in time and space for landmark action, two women were elected as president and vice president of the Williston City Council, and another woman joined the Williston Police Department -- continuing her career as a sworn officer of the law.

Some may say there was a whole lot of swearing (or affirming) going on in the former Band Room of the former Williston High School as this temporary Williston City Hall was the place of change that night.

Williston Mayor R. Gerald Hethcoat became Mayor Emeritus Hethcoat, too, as he retired but retained the honorary title.

In one of his final acts before retiring, Mayor Hethcoat conducted the first investiture of the night, swearing in Williston Police Officer Doreen Casolo.

As the mayor read the oath of office and Casolo repeated the words, she had placed her left hand on a bible and WPD Lt. M. Fortney held it. After WPD Officer Casolo was sworn-in, WPD Officer Rich Peters pinned her with the badge.

After the ceremony, WPD Chief Dennis Strow explained that Peters had worked with Casolo in Marion County before they both eventually became part of the WPD. Chief Strow said he knows the newest member of the WPD officers is very good and very ethical. He said the city is truly blessed to have her join the force here.

The next man to perform the ceremony at which honors and rank were formally conferred on a particular person was Levy County Judge J.T. "Tim" Browning.

Judge Browning performed the investiture for Williston Mayor Jerry Robinson, City Councilman Charles Goodman and City Councilwoman Nancy Wininger.

After those next three leaders accepted that they would support, protect and defend the United States Constitution and the federal government, and to do the same for the state constitution, the city charter and the state and municipal governments; and they swore or affirmed that they were qualified for their offices. They also all swore or

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affirmed that they would well and faithfully perform the duties of the offices they were there and then entering.

Once the mayor and City Council members were sworn in, a proclamation was read by Mayor Robinson to honor Mayor Emeritus Hethcoat.

In the proclamation, it mentioned Hethcoat's wife and other family members as well as his two decades of service as a member of City Council (July 1975-August 1995) which included six years as president of City Council and nine years as vice president. The proclamation continued as it noted Hethcoat served as fire chief of the Williston Volunteer Fire Department from 1995 to 2002.

On July 23, 2002, Hethcoat was first elected as mayor, and for each of the following two-year terms for eight terms he was reelected, serving 16 years as mayor, until he chose to retire on April 10, 2018. Former Levy County Judge Joseph Smith swore in Mayor Hethcoat for his first term and for other terms in years past.

Mayor Emeritus Hethcoat's legacy over the past four decades, as is noted in the proclamation, has made a permanent and profound positive impact on the city of Williston for the betterment of all of its residents and visitors.

Mayor Robinson then presented Mayor Emeritus Hethcoat with a framed copy of the resolution and a big sign that showed the latitude and longitude of the City of Williston.

Hethcoat gave some parting remarks.

"I want to thank all of y'all," Hethcoat said. "It has been my privilege working with the staff – our clerk, our city manager, all of the Council. There have been several staff and several Council members over the years. And I have enjoyed each and every one of them. And it has been my honor to serve the citizens of this city."

The outgoing mayor said he appreciates the people who gave him the opportunity to serve them, and he is certain Mayor Robinson will do the same as he has done in regard to serving the people.

Then City Council President Goodman and City Council Vice President Wininger, City Councilman Elihu Ross, City Councilman Justin Head and City Councilwoman Marguerite Robinson voted on the next City Council president and vice president.

The unanimous vote on a motion by Goodman, seconded by Councilwoman Robinson (who is the wife of Mayor Robinson), was for Wininger to be president. Then on a motion by Goodman, seconded by Head, the unanimous vote was for Robinson to be vice president of City Council.

President Wininger shared some thoughts as she accepted the post of City Council president.

She said former president Goodman has served as a mentor for her. Wininger said she sees a trend of building on the solid foundation formed by so many people before her who have served on City Council as members of the city staff.

President Wininger said she is excited about her new role on City Council, and she thanked everyone for their confidence and their trust in her.

City Clerk Fran Taylor mentioned that she believes this is the first time in Williston history where the president and vice president of City Council are women.

Refreshments were available after the ceremony was adjourned.

The next regular meeting of Williston City Council is set for April 17 at 7 p.m. in the Williston City Council Room (the former WHS Band Room) of temporary Williston City Hall (the former WHS Multi-Purpose Building) at 427 W. Noble Ave. (U.S. Alt. 27), in Williston.