



Iorio Pledges Her 2nd Term To Mass Transit

By ELLEN GEDALIUS The Tampa Tribune

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TAMPA - Mayor Pam Iorio centered her re-inauguration address Sunday on the region's need to develop a mass transit system.

Embarking on her second term, Iorio said the city must reconfigure transportation impact fees so developers don't help to pay only for roads but for transit, too.

The council, she said, must start determining where rail stations could be built. And a regional transit authority must be created, she said.

Once a financing plan is developed, a referendum must be presented to voters for approval.

"We must take the lead … showing the courage to see it through to reality," Iorio said. "On this issue, we must not waste a day."

Iorio, standing with her husband and two children, took the oath of office Sunday at the Tampa Convention Center. The oath was administered by Judge Barbara Fleischer, who has sworn Iorio into every office she has held since 1985.

Iorio chose poet Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" as the framework of her speech. She hit on the familiar focus areas of her administration: replacing crumbling infrastructure; lowering the crime rate; and making Tampa a safer city for pedestrians and bicyclists.

She also talked about redeveloping downtown. A redesign of Curtis Hixon Park and the construction of a new Tampa Museum of Art and Children's Museum are priorities.

And she vowed to build the Riverwalk.

"This project will enliven downtown as no other single project can," Iorio said.

Before the mayor's remarks, city council members took their oaths of office. They entered the ballroom with their spouses - in Joseph Caetano's case, a friend - while a choir sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Mary Mulhern, Tom Scott and Caetano took the oath for the first time. Gwen Miller, Linda Saul-Sena and John Dingfelder are returning members. Charlie Miranda also is back, having taken a four-year hiatus from the council.

After the celebratory mood of the oath of office ceremony, the new council met in a smaller room to pick its leader.

It took four rounds of votes.

In the first round, Scott nominated Miller. The two have served together on the expressway authority board.

Caetano nominated Miranda.

And Saul-Sena nominated Dingfelder.

"Twenty years ago, council acted like a rubber stamp," Saul-Sena said. "It's a new day. We need an active, strong voice to lead council. He is a strong, clear voice."

In the first vote, Miller got two votes, hers and Scott's.

Miranda got two votes, his and Caetano's.

Dingfelder got three votes, his, Saul-Sena's and Mulhern's.

With no majority, the process started anew, but nothing changed.

After the identical scenario played out a third time, the council decided to vote between Miranda and Miller, with the winner to face Dingfelder.

In the end, Dingfelder got three votes: his, Saul-Sena's and Mulhern's.

Scott, Miranda and Caetano backed Miller.

With Miller winning the chairmanship for the fourth consecutive year, the board elected Dingfelder vice chairman.

Miller then flexed her muscle by denying Saul-Sena an appointment to the Metropolitan Planning Organization, a board on which Saul-Sena has served for 20 years.

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