



Township of Belleville
New Jersey

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Mayor Melham, Councilmembers De Peña, Graziano Sworn in for Second Term

BELLEVILLE, NJ – July 5, 2022 – Michael Melham promised more of the same – more events, more quality-of-life initiatives, more steady leadership during inevitable crisis situations – as he was sworn in for his second term as Belleville’s mayor.

Sen. Richard Cody, the former Governor of New Jersey, administered the oath of office during the township’s Reorganization Meeting on Friday, July 1.

“I do not see the need to change course, for finally Belleville is no longer the butt of jokes, but rather we are the topic of conversation,” Melham said, whose remarks drew applause from the room filled with friends, family, Township employees and residents.

Melham’s running mates in the May election, Councilmembers Naomi DePeña and Thomas Graziano, were also sworn in for another four-year term Friday.

Graziano was sworn in by his uncle, Marine Corps retired Lt. Colonel Frank LaMura.

He was also selected as the town’s Deputy Mayor by a unanimous vote of the Council.

De Peña, who just wrapped up her term as the first Latina to serve as Deputy Mayor, took her oath in Spanish as it was administered by her father, Rev. Luis Fernandez.

“This is meaningful to me because it’s my heritage,” she said. “It’s a beautiful language, but what unites us is that regardless of the language in which it was expressed, my commitment is to everyone, to serve with the same love ... ”

The room filled with applause before DePeña could finish her sentence.

Melham said it was an “absolute honor” to have Cody take part in the ceremony and said he stands ready to work with his Council colleagues to build an even better Belleville.

“Now is the time to stop the politics of division and abide by the will of the people, the very constituency that overwhelmingly decided to put the Melham team back in office for a second term,” he said.

Cody, who also administered the oath as Steven J. Martino was reappointed as the attorney for the township, used some of his signature humor to make a point about reaching across political ideologies to find common ground – even if it’s from a former Democratic governor to an Independent mayor.

“We’re all in this together, whether it’s Trenton or Belleville,” he said. “And I know, Mayor, you’re not of my party. I don’t care. Why should anybody care? This is about Belleville, not about some party. We’ll get to the party later because he won.”

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