

# Pacheco, Mendes take seats as new Fresno County supervisors

By Marc Benjamin and Jim Guy

Debbie Poochigian takes over as chair of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors

## SPECIAL TO THE BEE

Two new Fresno County supervisors were sworn into office Monday along with a board chair and elected department heads.

Brian Pacheco and Buddy Mendes took their seats as supervisors, and Supervisor Debbie Poochigian began her second stint as the board's chairwoman.

Pacheco, 46, was sworn in by newly retired supervisor Phil Larson. Mendes, 58, was sworn in by Larson's fellow recent retiree Judy Case McNairy.

Also sworn in were District Attorney Lisa M. Smittcamp, Sheriff Margaret Mims, County Clerk/Registrar Brandi Orth (in her first run for the office), Assessor Paul Dictos and Vicki Crow, treasurer/tax collector/auditor.

### Pacheco takes seat

Pacheco defeated Fresno City Council Member Blong Xiong to earn the District 1 seat in November. Five men campaigned for the seat in the June primary.

He pointed out that it was the first time in years that two new county supervisors joined the board. The last time was 2000, when Bob Waterston and Susan Anderson won election to the board.

He pointed out that the five supervisors "will not always agree, but will serve in the best interests of those who we serve."

And, Pacheco made one more promise after nearly eight minutes of thanking family, friends advisers, referring to the supervisor next to him.

"I promise this will probably be the longest I ever talk more than Supervisor Borgeas in my next four years," he said.

### Mendes on board

Mendes won election to the District 4 post over Fowler City Council Member Daniel Parra in November. Mendes, too, was among a field of five in June.

Mendes said he had sat in the same supervisor's seat previously as a member of the county's redistricting commission in 2011.

"It was unreal to sit at this seat and it's very unreal this morning," he said.



He also thanked fellow supervisors Borgeas and Poochigian for their early endorsements - he was also endorsed by Larson and Case McNairy - and promised to work with

Supervisor Henry R. Perea, who supported his opponent.

"I am going to be able to work with Mr. Perea," Mendes said, "no matter what they say he is actually a good guy."

Poochigian takes charge

Poochigian replaced former chairman Andreas Borgeas, a lawyer, who thanked her for a gavel and plaque for his charimanship by telling fellow attorneys, and judges attending the ceremony that "I've always wanted a gavel."

Poochigian served as chairwoman in 2012. Her quick return was necessary because a first-year new supervisor can't serve as chair. Perea was chariman in 2013.

At that time, county officials were talking about hundreds of layoffs and closing floors in the jail.

"The last time I was here this county was in survival mode," she said. "It was not pretty... this time I feel we are in a rebuilding mode."

She said the board made difficult financial decisions and she hopes the board will continue being mindful of those harder times.

"As we slowly rebuild, my hope for this board this year is that we continue on our course of prudent fiscal decisions, sound decisions that keep us on the right track," Poochigian said.

Mims sworn in

Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mims was sworn in for a third term Monday, saying that she was ready for both existing and new challenges that face law enforcement in the 21st century.

"At every challenge, we continue to step up and meet our mission," the sheriff said at a deliberately no-frills swearing-in ceremony at 9 a.m. at the Sheriff's Office headquarters in downtown Fresno. Mims said getting the ceremony over at the start of the work day would left deputies "get down to business."

The sheriff was joined by her mother, Shirley White, and her husband, Gary Mims, at the brief event. She carried the badge of her late father, Adrian White, a former constable in Caruthers and later a sheriff's sergeant, in her pocket during the ceremony, and was sworn in with a bible once belonging to her grandmother, Pearl Graves White Hallam.

Giving the oath was her long-time friend James Quaschnick, a former Fresno County Superior Court judge.

"Are you sure you want to do this again?" Quaschnick jokingly asked Mims.

In citing key issues facing her staff, Mims cited prison realignment, which keeps more prisoners in county jails; Proposition 47, which means more defendants will be convicted of misdemeanors instead of felons; and continuing efforts to control violence around marijuana-growing operations. In addition, the Sheriff's Office will take over autopsy duties formerly handled by the Fresno County coroner, as that office was absorbed into her's in a budget-cutting move by the Board of Supervisors.

Budget issues remain a constant, however.

"When I got into this business 35 years ago, guess what the number-one issue was for law enforcement?" she asked rhetorically. "It was budget issues. That's not going to go away."

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