

Split Roanoke City Council appoints Powers as seventh member

- [Luke Weir](#), February 14, 2025

The empty seat on Roanoke City Council will be filled by former Treasurer Evelyn Powers.

After a second closed-door meeting this week, the council voted 4-2 on Friday to appoint Powers to the vacant seat that expires at end of 2026. But as the split vote suggests, it was not quite a complete change of heart on Valentine's Day.

Earlier this week, following a two-hour closed session on Monday, the council voted 5-1 to ask for court assistance in appointing its seventh member. Council members said it was an unprecedented move to invoke court assistance.

Then, Mayor Joe Cobb scheduled another special meeting for Friday morning.

"We needed to act and not delay," Cobb said. "That's why I called the special meeting today, for us to make a decision."

Powers will be sworn in Monday. Reached by phone Friday, Powers said she looks forward to quickly getting up to speed and working with the city council on issues including budgeting and housing.

"I'm going to need to have two ears and one mouth," Powers said. "I'll be a good listener."

The council last week interviewed as finalists three out of 11 applicants for the vacancy.

Powers – who placed fourth in the most recent election for three council seats – was one finalist, along with former Councilwoman Trish White-Boyd, and Gun Violence Prevention Commission Member Kathy Cohen.

Council members Peter Volosin and Vivian Sanchez-Jones voted against appointing Powers on Friday. Sanchez-Jones stood and left the council chambers before Mayor Joe Cobb adjourned the meeting.

After the meeting, a short-of-breath Volosin said he supported White-Boyd.

"Now we have four new council members that we have to indoctrinate into being council members, and get caught up on what we're working on as a city," Volosin said. "That's unfortunate. We had somebody who has been here, who knows what's going on, and that's why I voted for Trish."

On Monday, Volosin was the lone vote against deferring to a court-appointed council member.

Last September, Volosin posted a message on social media telling people to vote for Powers. Volosin's post said "she has great knowledge and experience and will be an asset on Council."

Powers said she respects the stance that Sanchez-Jones and Volosin took, and looks forward to working with them regardless.

But what changed that caused Cobb to call for another closed meeting, after the city council had already agreed to let the courts decide on an appointment?

“My sense from the courts is there was ambiguity about timeline, as well as what if any action they might take, because there's no precedent for this,” Cobb said. “I need a full council to be able to move forward.”

With the addition of Powers, a council majority is new. Cobb is now the most senior city council member, with seven years of experience.

“Prior to that, when I came on council, we had decades of experience,” Cobb said. “We're building new leadership in the city, and part of my role is to develop us as a team. That's going to take time.”

Cobb said it takes about a year for new members to get acclimated. Relationship-building is a key goal for Cobb moving forward with this makeup of city council, he said.

“I have to lead us in making difficult decisions,” Cobb said. “I don't know that I anticipated having such a difficult decision right out of the gate, but it is what it is.”