

## Roanoke City Council names Powers to fill vacant seat

*Evelyn Powers, the former longtime city treasurer, will serve the remaining two years on the term of Joe Cobb, who was elected mayor in November.*

by [Samantha Verrelli](#) February 14, 2025

The Roanoke City Council selected former city treasurer Evelyn Powers to fill the vacant seat at the end of its dais during a special meeting called after announcing earlier this week that it would leave the decision to the courts.

The council voted 4-2, with Peter Volosin and Vivian Sanchez-Jones casting the no votes.

Evelyn Powers. Courtesy of Powers. Credit: Evelyn Powers

Powers will serve the remaining two years on Joe Cobb's term; Cobb was elected mayor in November.

"I'm certainly honored and happy to see that they came together and I respect all of them," Powers said of the council members after the decision was made. "I'm just here to go in there, do a good job, be respectful, be a team leader and help solve the issues."

Powers, who unsuccessfully sought a council seat as an independent in the November election, retired last year as the city's treasurer. She had been elected to that position five times, always as a Democrat, and held the office for 20 years. She came in fourth place in the three-seat council race in November.

She has worked in the Roanoke government for more than 40 years so far.

### The appointment process

Eleven people submitted statements of intent to seek the council seat. The council narrowed the pool to three candidates: Powers, former council member Trish White-Boyd and Rabbi Kathy Cohen, who heads the Gun Violence Prevention Commission.

After a closed session on Feb. 10, one of many in which the council discussed the vacancy, [Cobb announced that the council could not decide](#) within the 45-day period allowed by state law, and that it would ask the circuit court to name the appointee.

But just a few days later, Cobb called a special meeting for Friday morning to discuss the appointment one last time.

"Truly transformational leadership means moving through the chaos and challenges," Cobb said after Friday's meeting. "I need a full council to move forward."

Cobb said that the courts "don't want to be seen as political" and that the reflection back to him from the court was that it was "council's responsibility."

He said that Powers "understands some aspects" of the council's work through her prior experience in the treasurer's office, and added that the budget is the city's number one priority at this time.

"I'm committed to addressing key issues such as the city's infrastructure, economic growth, housing issues, public safety, education and budgeting," Powers said while speaking to reporters after the

announcement. "I'm not seeking this seat for personal ambition. ... I want to continue building the progress that we've made."

She said her greatest skill is listening, and she spoke about her experiences getting to know the community as treasurer. "I've never been too busy to not be available," she said in her interview with the council on Feb. 3.

"I build relationships across departments, businesses and neighborhoods, and I know how to collaborate," Powers said.

### **Public support for Powers**

During the council's Monday afternoon session, 23 residents signed up to speak about the vacancy; 17 of them endorsed Powers, many wearing bright green stickers on their shirts that said "Evelyn."

Adam Mastrangelo, president of the Greater Deyerle Neighborhood Association, said he supported Powers because of her nonparty affiliation and "years of experience."

Others spoke on behalf of the almost 14,000 votes Powers received in the November election.

"To bypass her and the 13,000 residents of Roanoke that voted for her and appoint someone who hasn't had the motivation to run for the office is not a very equitable thing to do to the voters of Roanoke," one resident said.

At the council's Feb. 21 meeting, six residents spoke in favor of choosing Powers, many of whom made that same argument.

"You have a moral obligation to have her sit up there with you all," Duane Howard said of Powers. "You all ran for council. Put yourself in the same position."