The makeup of a portion of Aurora City Council's leadership changed Dec. 4 when the mayor and four council members were sworn in for four-year terms following the November 2023 election.

Mayoral incumbent Mike Coffman retained his seat, prevailing against Juan Marcano, who vacated his Ward IV seat to run for mayor. New Council Member Stephanie Hancock won the Ward IV election to fill Marcano's seat.

Alison Coombs vacated her Ward V seat to run for one of two At-large seats and won alongside incumbent Curtis Gardner. Angela Lawson vacated her At-large seat to run for the Ward V seat and won.

Incumbent Françoise Bergan retained her seat for Ward VI and will continue to serve on the council alongside the newly elected members and Ward I Council Member Crystal Murillo, Ward II Council Member Steve Sundberg, Ward III Council Member Ruben Medina, At-large Council Member Danielle Jurinsky and At-large Council Member Dustin Zvonek.

To view the final results, visit AuroraGov.org/2023Elections. For county voter resources, visit ArapahoeVotes.com, AdamsVotes.com or DouglasVotes.com, depending on the county in which you live.
The city of Aurora is governed by a council/manager form of government, with council members serving as the policymakers and the city manager overseeing the day-to-day operations of the city. The Aurora City Council is made up of the mayor, six ward council members and four at-large council members.

Both council study sessions and regular council meetings are televised live on AuroraTV Comcast cable channel 8 and 880 in Aurora, on AuroraTV.org and via the AuroraTV app.

To look up your council ward, read the latest council agenda packet or find out more about your council members, visit AuroraGov.org/Elected.

The city of Aurora is gearing up to open a youth center focusing on at-risk and high-risk youth—the first of its kind in the city. The youth center will focus on violence prevention and intervention programs with the help of key community partners that serve youth.

The center’s location and opening date is yet to be determined. But youth, caregivers such as parents, and youth-serving professionals are invited to provide input on the type of services and programs that should be offered at the center via a short survey starting Jan. 9 at EngageAurora.org/YouthCenter.

“We envision the Aurora Youth Empowerment Center as a safe place where youth will learn and feel supported and empowered for the future,” said Joseph DeHerrera, Aurora’s Youth Violence Prevention Manager. “We really want to make sure the youth voice is heard through this engagement process to help identify meaningful programs and services that will meet the needs and desires of Aurora youth.”

The city has allocated $2.25 million for this project—$500,000 of which was awarded to the city from the sale of the Denver Broncos and the remaining $1.75 million from the Aurora Youth Violence Prevention Program.

Staff from the city’s Community Engagement Division and Youth Violence Prevention Program will partner with community collaborators, present at public meetings, engage with residents at events, and much more as part of an extensive outreach effort. Digital and social media communication will also play a key role in engaging with youth.

City officials will consider the input collected as the planning of the youth center progresses. As details are finalized, the city will share information through city communication channels.

Complete the short survey at EngageAurora.org/YouthCenter; the deadline to complete the survey is Friday, March 29.

Questions? Email engagecec@auroragov.org.
Life-saving actions earn accolades

Aurora residents and the city’s public safety agencies were recognized recently for their contributions to three life-saving incidents in the community in 2023.

Representatives from the city’s Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department, Aurora Fire Rescue and Falck Rocky Mountain earned Phoenix Awards for a life-saving incident Sept. 28. A Phoenix Award commendation is given to Aurora employees and the city’s emergency medical services partners who successfully resuscitate a patient who leaves the hospital neurologically intact.

Dwayne Williams was cycling in the Aurora Reservoir area when he fell off his bike after suffering from cardiac arrest. Edward Doyle, a watercraft inspector for Parks, Recreation and Open Space, noticed that Williams had fallen and needed medical attention. He contacted park rangers Chelsea Wilson and Cassidy Brown, who quickly assisted with CPR and remote-access AED defibrillation to save the bicyclist’s life. Aurora Fire Rescue and Falck Rocky Mountain responded to the reservoir and transported the bicyclist to a local hospital.

Representatives from Aurora 911, Aurora Fire Rescue and Falck Rocky Mountain also earned Phoenix Awards from a life-saving incident Sept. 4.

Aurora resident Noella Gulick was working as a bartender at a local establishment when Ralph Jones went into cardiac arrest. Gulick called 911 immediately and followed instructions to perform chest compressions until responders arrived. Gulick earned an Aurora911 Guardian Angel Award, which recognizes life-saving actions prior to the intervention of field responders.

Finally, representatives from Aurora911, Aurora Police Department, Aurora Fire Rescue and Falck Rocky Mountain earned Phoenix Awards for their life-saving assistance in the response to an incident from Aug. 22.

On that day, Aurora resident Tiara McElroy noticed that her boyfriend’s cousin, Arthur Douglas, had fallen to the floor in the family’s kitchen and was unresponsive. McElroy quickly called 911 for help. With guidance from Aurora911 staff, McElroy provided instruction to another family member on giving chest compressions to Douglas until public safety personnel arrived to take over care and transport Douglas to the hospital. McElroy earned an Aurora911 Guardian Angel Award.

Aurora is a national leader in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rates. With a national average of 7 to 8%, Aurora is achieving nearly 20% because of the strong partnership between Aurora first responders, the medical community and members of the community who quickly take action to intervene.

Aurora Fire Rescue launches priority dispatch approach

Partnering with Aurora911 and Falck Rocky Mountain, Aurora Fire Rescue recently began a tiered response approach to how resources are dispatched for emergency medical calls. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, medical calls into Aurora911 are now dispatched according to the acuity of the incident.

According to Aurora911, non-urgent and less-severe incidents account for nearly 25 percent of medical dispatch volume in Aurora today. Under the new “Right Response” model, the most appropriate resources will be deployed based on the urgency and severity of the event.

“The historical approach to sending AFR units lights and sirens to incidents that aren’t urgent or critical in nature puts the safety of the community and our members at risk. In many ways, these responses create more risk than they mitigate,” said AFR Fire Chief Alec Oughton. “Referring non-urgent and less-severe calls to nurses or deploying only ambulances better positions AFR crews to respond where they’re needed most – on urgent, critical calls when every minute matters.”

The implementation of the Right Response approach coincides with the one-year anniversary of the Aurora911 Nurse Navigation program. Through that program, dispatcher-triangulated callers with non-emergent injuries or illnesses are routed to a Colorado State Licensed nurse for assessment, then referred to the most appropriate medical care. Since October 2022, more than 1,600 low-acuity medical calls have been referred to the Nurse Navigation program. Nearly 25 percent of those calls resulted in self-care at home, and 11 percent received alternative care, such as telehealth, urgent care, health care home visits and clinic visits.

Following that same concept of alternative dispositions for low-acuity calls, additional protocols have been added for resource deployment based on the nature and acuity of the incident. The protocols range from referrals to the Nurse Navigator program, dispatching Falck Basic Life Support units with Emergency Medical Technicians on board, and all the way up to the current practice of dispatching both Falck Advanced Life Support and AFR paramedic crews to the scene.

Viewed as a best practice in emergency medical systems, this model follows internationally recognized standards for giving universal, consistent care and service to every caller and safely prioritizing calls for appropriate and fast response. The approach has been effectively utilized in communities like Aurora for more than two decades.
History of Aurora Water

Knowing the history of Aurora’s water system can help our residents better understand the challenges faced by many water departments in our state. Like many municipalities, Aurora Water is not located near a major water source, such as a river. Aurora has relied upon three main areas—innovative water solutions, reuse, and conservation—to ensure the community has had the water it needed not only in the past but also well into the future. For the next several months, News Aurora will include information on these three topics.

Located in a semi-arid, water-constrained state, Aurora Water provides drinking water, sewer and storm drain services to over 400,000 customers. Innovation is an integral part of Aurora Water, especially considering the city normally receives about half of the average annual snow and rain for the United States.

In 1949, Aurora created its own water department to operate within the city limits. Water, at that time, was provided by the Denver Water Board. In 1952, the Denver Water Board imposed lawn watering restrictions since the water supply could not keep up with the huge population growth in the metropolitan area. The Denver Water Board went on to impose a “blue line” around what is now Original Aurora, and no longer granted permits for new water taps. Parts of Aurora fell outside of the Denver Water Board service area. As a result of these limits, the Aurora City Council directed the water department to develop a diverse and sustainable water system to meet the city’s future needs.

Water rights in Colorado are based on a “first in time, first in right” doctrine. Since Aurora began developing water rights later than older municipalities, some of Aurora’s water rights are junior to some Front Range cities. Some water rights held by other cities date back to the 1850s, which means they can get their water at times more junior water cannot.

One of the most significant water projects began in 1958 when Aurora entered into an agreement with Colorado Springs to construct the Homestake Project, designed to bring mountain water on the western slope to Aurora. Norma Walker, Aurora’s first, and so far only, female mayor, was a driving force for this project. Upon completion of the reservoir in 1967, Aurora freed itself from its reliance on the Denver Water Board. The Homestake Project now provides 42,900 acre feet of water, of which Aurora receives 21,388 acre feet (an acre foot is 325,851 gallons of water, enough water to serve three households).

During the following two decades, the Aurora water system was expanded to include water rights from the South Platte, Colorado and Arkansas rivers, as well as additional space in more reservoirs.

Next month, News Aurora will include information on innovative water solutions. For more information on Aurora’s water system, history and more, visit AuroraWater.org.

2024 water bill charges

New rates took effect on Jan. 1, 2024, and are prorated on your bill. You will see two sets of charges on your January water bill, one dividing your bill proportionately for 2023 and the other for 2024, depending on when your water meter is read.

Aurora Water continues to experience increasing costs for materials and utilities to treat water to the high standard our customers expect. We’re also seeing greater expenses to maintain and improve our system to ensure reliability as it continues to age.

Make the switch to ACH

Due to increasing costs for credit card processing, in mid-2023, Aurora Water began including a fee for all credit card transactions. ACH, a way to electronically transfer funds from your checking or savings account, continues to be free. Help Aurora Water help you by making the switch to ACH. This will ensure Aurora Water can control costs and lessen the impact on rates, and you can avoid extra charges. To access your online water account and update your payment option, visit AuroraGov.org/PayMyBill.

Resolve to save water with a landscape design

Commit to a new year’s resolution of being water-wise. Start 2024 off on the right foot with a free landscape design from our Water Conservation team. We offer free water-wise landscape designs to all Aurora Water customers. Regardless of the condition of your current landscape or participation in the Grass Replacement Incentive Program, you can receive help creating a pollinator-friendly landscape or designs with lots of colors, all of which will save water. If you are interested in creating biodiversity in your landscape, go to AuroraGov.org/Landscape and fill out the form to register for the Landscape Design Program.