

Holic, Gates, Daniels sworn in

By GREG GILES NEWS EDITOR VENICE GONDOLIER

A new mayor and two new city council members were sworn into office Wednesday at Venice City Hall.

Ed Martin handed over the gavel to incoming Mayor John Holic, and outgoing Council Member Ernie Zavodnyik gave up his chair on the dais to Bob Daniels. Martin and Zavodnyik then sat in the audience as Holic thanked them for their three years of service. Jeanette Gates assumed the vacated chair formerly held by Sue Lang, who did not attend the ceremony.

The three new members, who campaigned on fiscal responsibility and transitioning the economy out the recession by being more business friendly, now have a distinct majority. They join Emilio Carlesimo, a staunch business advocate, forming a new majority bloc on the seven member board. Holic drew a few long breaths as he settled into the mayor's chair. "Talk about a humbling, and a bit awesome, experience," he said. "This will be a brief meeting — as will they all." Holic pledged to "leave our egos at the door and bring with us open minds. The main objective is to keep citizens first, and do what's best."

Gates thanked her supporters and especially local business owners who turned out for the swearing-in ceremony. "The citizens have sent a message," Daniels said. "This group will bring a new era of good thinking."

They received a standing ovation in a packed chambers that included former mayors Dean Calamaras and Fred Hammett, former council members Earl Midlam and Bill Willson, and Sheriff Tom Knight.

On Friday the new members received training on the Sunshine law, the city's technology and e-mail policy, protocol and other housekeeping measures.

Top on the list of issues facing council will be the hiring of a new police chief and addressing the budget deficit.

On Tuesday, at their final council meeting, the three outgoing member reflected on the past three years.

"All in all, we did a substantial amount of good," Zavodnyik said. "You did a remarkable job during some really rough times. I appreciate the opportunity to work with you all. We have a good staff for the city. I'm indebted to them for their help on so many occasions ."

"I want to thank everyone who supported me this last three years," Lang said. "Especially all the citizens who made constructive suggestions. I could not have done without the help of our knowledgeable residents who provided us with a lot of helpful information and data."

She also criticized the media for its "appalling" and "demeaning" coverage of elected city officials.

"I have been honored to be on this council," Martin said. "I certainly wish the new council members the best. It's been fun, and I'm glad to have had the opportunity."