



NEWS RELEASE

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Beer, Sutton lauded as Beaufort City Council welcomes newcomers Murray and Cromer

As newly-elected Beaufort City Councilmen Phil Cromer and Stephen Murray formally started their jobs Tuesday, Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling praised outgoing council members Donnie Beer and Mike Sutton.

Beer served on City Council for 24 years and lost her bid for re-election in November; Sutton stepped down due to his self-imposed two term limit.

“The City of Beaufort could not have been served any better than by Donnie Beer and Mike Sutton,” Keyserling said. “We are a city of diversity, and they both touched the many people who live across the city, not just in their neighborhoods.”

Cromer is a former town administrator in Port Royal and Ridgeland while Murray is a Beaufort-born businessman and entrepreneur. They join Keyserling, Mike McFee and George O’Kelley on the five-member Beaufort City Council. Likely areas of focus in coming months will be hiring a new City Manager, addressing decades-old concerns about downtown parking, and launching the start of construction on the \$30 million Boundary Street redevelopment.

While acknowledging the excitement and opportunity ahead, Keyserling also wanted to take a moment to look back at what Beer and Sutton helped the city accomplish.

“Donnie has a passion for civic engagement. She brought to City Council her many experiences and contacts our many non-profit organizations; she religiously attended the monthly neighborhood improvement council meetings; and she was particularly attentive to our local men and women in uniform and the base commanders.

“Donnie single-handedly launched Beaufort’s annual September 11 remembrance ceremony and I hope she will continue to do this, and to be a liaison with the various groups around town who do so much good for the community,” Keyserling said.

As for Sutton, who served eight years on Council, the mayor pointed to Sutton’s attention to detail.

“Mike proved to be one of the most methodical members I have ever seen on City Council. Not only did he examine, inside and out, every document, budget, resolution and study put before Council, but he assembled a thorough list of questions to be asked and he usually had practical suggestions for how to address difficult and complicated issues,” Keyserling said.

“Mike’s career in the Coast Guard, his service as a Deputy Sheriff, and his experience as a downtown business owner and as a building contractor gave him unique insights into the need for collaboration, and for rules and regulations that were fair and easy to understand.

“The city will miss them. I challenge them to stay engaged,” Keyserling said.

For her part, Beer deflected attention to her service on City Council and said the accomplishments were achieved by a strong City Council working closely with staff and the community.

“It takes so many people to make something come together and be successful. As for Council’s achievements I would say it would be the redevelopment of Pigeon Point Park, improvements to the Waterfront Park, the combined neighborhood meetings, the Rails to Trails conversion of the old railroad line and building the City Hall and Police Department complex.

“After serving for 24 years it is hard to remember all that has transpired over the years,” Beer said. “What I can say is that it has been an honor and privilege to have been allowed to serve the City that I love for so long.

“The quality and dedication of our city employees is truly exceptional and I cannot say enough about our fire and police departments. Working with them over the years gave me ability to get to know and respect them immensely.”

Beer volunteers with the American Red Cross and frequently helped coordinate services to local families displaced by disasters such as house fires. In 2013 she was named Volunteer of the Year for the Lowcountry chapter of the American Red Cross.

Sutton said he’ll miss the back-and-forth with City Council members but expects to stay involved in helping shape Beaufort’s future.

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