



HFSC Gets New Board Chairwoman, Exoneree Anthony Graves Appointed

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The Houston City Council confirmed on Wednesday Nicole Casarez as the new chairwoman of the Houston Forensic Science Center Board of Directors effective July 1, 2015, after Scott Hochberg completes his three-year term as the board's first chairman. The Council has also appointed to the board Anthony Graves, who spent 18 years in prison for murders he didn't commit. Mr. Graves, who was exonerated in 2010, spent 12 years on death row and had two execution dates. Ms. Casarez and her students spent years investigating Mr. Graves' case as part of an innocence investigations class. In 2006, Ms. Casarez joined his legal team.

Ms. Casarez and Mr. Graves serve on the nine-member board, which is charged with overseeing HFSC, the independent forensic operation that took over on April 3, 2014 what were formerly the Houston Police Department's Crime Scene Unit, Crime Lab and parts of its Identification Division.

“I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work side-by-side with Anthony on the HFSC board, where our goal is to serve justice by providing top quality forensic science,” Ms. Casarez said.

Ms. Casarez has served on the board since the City Council created HFSC in 2012. She brings rich legal experience to the table, including serving as the attorney who helped Mr. Graves prove his innocence in the 1992 murder of six Burleson County residents. Ms. Casarez is a professor at the University of St. Thomas, where she teaches mass communications law, innocence investigations, news writing and reporting and other related topics.

Mr. Graves has spent the years since he was freed from prison in 2010 speaking before various entities and bodies about his experience. Mr. Graves’ experience is crucial to the board and HFSC as they seek to forge a new national model for forensics: one that is independent of law enforcement and prosecutors and is faithful only to the science.

Council also confirmed Janet Blancett, a senior health, safety, security and environmental consultant with Shell, to the Board of Directors.

Sandra Guerra Thompson, a law professor at the University of Houston, has been reappointed to a second three-year term. Ms. Thompson recently published a book called Cops in Lab Coats that in part talks about the establishment of HFSC.

HFSC currently operates in eight forensic disciplines.

Further information regarding HFSC is available at www.houstonforensicscience.org.

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