

# Holyoke councilor receives year of probation in OUI case

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HOLYOKE — City Councilor Israel Rivera will be on probation until Jan. 22, 2027, after he admitted to sufficient facts from an operating-under-the-influence charge from Christmas Eve.

Rivera's case will be continued without a finding, in a ruling issued Friday by Holyoke District Court Judge Danielle L. Williams. A continuation without a finding means the defendant admits that there are enough facts for a guilty finding, but the court does not rule it as such. Instead, the case is continued to a future date while the person is placed on probation.

A Holyoke court clerk said the case will be dismissed next January if he follows the terms of probation, which were not available by press time.

Rivera was originally supposed to appear in court on Monday, but the hearing was moved to this past Friday, because of an impending snowstorm, the clerk said.

In a statement to The Republican, Rivera said he welcomes the court's decision. To take responsibility and meet a higher standard as an elected official, he also will step down as vice president of the City Council and also as chair of the development and government relations subcommittee, Rivera said.

"I did not make this decision lightly," Rivera said. "I was honored and excited to bring the same vigor and dedication to these roles that I bring to everything I do. However, I believe this is the right decision in the interest of moving forward and focusing on the responsibilities as a City Council, united in our commitment to better our great city."

Rivera was elected vice president of the City Council earlier this year.

The disposition of the case follows Rivera's December arrest, when state police accused him of running a red light and then recorded him on body-camera video criticizing city police officers, threatening their budget, invoking his position on the council and using racially charged language.

The footage triggered sharp criticism from two Holyoke police unions, which have since called for his resignation and filed an [ethics](#) complaint. The court's

decision resolves the criminal charge for now, but the political repercussions remain unsettled.

City Council President Tessa Murphy-Romboletti took Rivera off the council's public safety committee after his arrest. She said the council must balance holding members accountable with giving them due process.

Under state law, a misdemeanor conviction does not automatically remove an elected official from office. Only a felony conviction forces someone to give up a public position. Any other removal would have to follow a separate legal process or rules in the city charter.

The Holyoke city charter says a councilor's seat becomes vacant if they are convicted of a crime that could result in jail time, or if they no longer live in the city.

In 2009, Rivera was sentenced to five years in state prison after a guilty plea to felony firearms and drug charges, and assault on a police officer.

Since his release, Rivera has been outspoken about "over-policing" in Black and brown communities.