

Larry Langford returned to the County Commission today in triumph with a warm-and-fuzzy moment with fellow commissioners, who celebrated his decisive win in Tuesday's mayoral election.

As Birmingham's mayor-elect, Langford immediately extended an olive branch across the table to his colleagues, saying he would need their help to carry out initiatives that will move the city and region forward.

"Everybody knows that as Birmingham goes, so goes the region," he said "For Birmingham to move forward, I need the help of this commission. I know we have a history of not agreeing on everything in the past, and we don't have to agree on everything now. But I think there are some things we can agree on and work together."

Commission President Bettye Fine Collins and the other commissioners reciprocated with a resolution pledging to work cooperatively with Langford. They unanimously passed the resolution during Thursday's special session.

"Birmingham is the capital of Jefferson County," Collins said. "If we fall behind Montgomery (in size and ranking), we'll lose so much of our status. So I agree that what's good for Birmingham is good for us all."

Commissioner Shelia Smoot remarked, "This marks the first official meeting that between the Mayor of Birmingham and the Commission as a body. That's one for the record books."

Langford appealed to the commissioners while he was still one of them, saying he wanted their help on the front-end of his administration.

He asked that at least two of them to commit to being on a committee of government leaders that would meet with business leaders on a monthly basis. He said the meetings would be candid and off-the-record meetings so that business officials could freely lay their concerns on the table.

Langford also said that, in the first days of his administration, he would galvanize the city's Public Works Department to clean up the city, cutting every vacant lot and moving junk cars in each of Birmingham's 23 communities and 99 neighborhoods.

"There are a lot of things we can agree on. We know we have to clean up our communities. And we can get rid of these drug houses. Everybody knows where they are, and you can help us by telling us where they are (in the city)," he said.

Both Jim Carns and Bobby Humphreys both congratulated Langford for coming out on top of a 10-way race without a runoff.

As former members of the Alabama Legislature, they both also faced a number of opponents in their re-election bids. "When I beat out four people in a race, I thought I was doing something," Carns joked.

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