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New Municipal Council Holds First Meeting in Rawabi



Ramallah, June 30, 2013

Rawabi's newly-formed Municipal Council met for the first time today since the Palestinian Cabinet passed the historic resolution that established Rawabi as the first new municipality in Palestine.

The Cabinet assigned Majed Abd Al Fatah to head the interim municipal council, pending election of permanent council members. The Rawabi Municipal Council will consist of 11 members drawn from the Palestinian private sector, civil society and academia as well as representatives from various public sector bodies and governmental groups. General elections for permanent council seats will be held when Rawabi's population reaches the legal threshold for municipal elections as established by the Local Council Elections Law. The creation of the new Rawabi municipality establishes an important precedent in the history of Palestinian self-governance. It is anticipated that up to 6 additional new municipalities are needed to effectively manage population growth as new urban centers are created and the Palestinian economy expands.

Newly appointed Council head Majed Abd Al Fatah said, "The council's main focus is to support existing efforts to build the city and to create an administrative and local governance infrastructure that ensures sustainability. We are well aware that we are responsible not only to Rawabi but to the surrounding communities. The council will expend every effort to serve all residents and all business owners equally and to promote our shared best interests."

Saher Al Kouni, Minister of Local Government added, "The importance of the establishment of a completely new municipality in Palestine cannot be understated. It represents an important step forward in the effectiveness of our internal governance. The new Rawabi Municipal Council will help manage growth as subsequent phases of development progress within the boundaries of the new city."

Interim Council Functions

Rawabi's municipal council will undertake the same administrative and development obligations of established municipal councils. It will also work in close coordination with the Rawabi Homeowner Associations (HOAs) representing the city residents. Rawabi's HOAs will be an essential component of life in the new city, whereby residents will work together to effectively coordinate local community affairs.

The interim council will be headquartered in a temporary facility on the grounds of the new city until the permanent municipal administration building is constructed in the city center.

Interim Council Members

Rawabi's new municipal council head Majed Abd Al Fatah currently serves as strategic planning and international relations advisor for the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. Mr. Abd Al Fatah will be joined by the following interim council members: Amal Moghrabi, P.E., founder and lead architect at Al Moghrabi Engineering and current chair of the Palestine Business Woman Forum; Rasem Kamal, Esq. founder of Kamal Law Firm, board member of the Palestine Affordable Housing Association and a local specialist in homeowner association and residential contract law; Tami Rafidi, principal at the Women's Center for Legal Aid and a local youth activist and organizer and Dr. Omar Zumo, dean of civil engineering at Birzeit University and head of its cooperative education program. Also serving on the interim Rawabi Municipal Council are Issa Kassis, head of the Palestine Mortgage Housing Corporation (PMHC), Manal Zraiq, general director of Massar Associates and deputy chair of the Palestine Business Woman Forum.

The council also includes representatives of the Palestinian public sector: Bassem Rimawi from the Palestinian Ministry of Health, Ayoub Alian representing the Ministry of Education, Islam Abd Al Jaber from the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, and Sonia Zubaidi representing the Ministry of Local Government.

Rawabi Timeline

Massar International Chairman Bashar Masri first announced his plan to build the city in late 2007. In April 2008, the Palestinian Authority entered into a public-private partnership with the developer and in May, a joint venture agreement was signed with Qatari Diar to lead construction of the city. At the end of 2008, the city received provisional approval of its proposed boundaries from the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government, followed by approval from the Higher Planning Council for the city's masterplan one year later. Groundbreaking took place in January 2010 and the planning for the infrastructure design was in place by April 2011. Construction of the residential buildings and commercial center began that same year.

In 2012, construction of the new access road shortened the travel time between Ramallah and Rawabi by more than half. In that same year, Palestinian construction teams connected the new city to the main water network, and construction work commenced on 3 new public schools. Hundreds of Palestinian families are expected to reside in Rawabi homes by the first quarter of 2014.

Rawabi is situated midway between Jerusalem and Nablus, three kilometers due north of Birzeit. Most of the land is classified as Area A by the Oslo Agreements. The city is surrounded by Atara, Jiljilleah, Abwein, Aura, Ajoul and Um Staffa. The panoramic view from Rawabi's green mountaintops extends 40 kilometers to the Mediterranean Sea.

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