

# ‘You know who I am?’: Holyoke city councilor arrested for drunk driving

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HOLYOKE — A city councilor accused of driving drunk onto a sidewalk is set to appear in court next month on an operating under the influence charge.

Israel Rivera, an at-large city councilor, pleaded not guilty during his arraignment Monday in Holyoke District Court. His next court date is a Jan. 26 pretrial hearing.

Rivera could face more than 100 days in jail if convicted on the misdemeanor OUI charge. He also received civil citations for failing to stop or yield and for speeding.

In a Facebook [post](#) Sunday, Rivera said he ran his campaign on transparency, and that commitment “has not changed.”

“I understand the seriousness of the matter and the concern it may cause,” he wrote.

He said he respects the legal process and plans to address the case responsibly while working to rebuild trust.

Rivera did not respond to The Republican’s request for comment.

The incident at midnight was recorded on body camera, police said.

Massachusetts State Trooper Daniel Harpin Jr. was on patrol early Sunday when he saw a brown Buick LeSabre going 40 mph in a 25 mph zone on Appleton Street in Holyoke, according to a criminal complaint.

Then, the officer saw the LeSabre — later found to be operated by Rivera — drive through a red light at Appleton and Maple streets.

Just past Nick Cosmos Way — closed off with barricades, cones and a “bridge closed” sign — the car turned onto a paved sidewalk, the complaint says.

With several apartment complexes nearby, it’s a busy area, the trooper said in the complaint. A woman walking there had to pass close to Rivera’s car to reach her home, the complaint says.

Officers pulled Rivera over and said they smelled alcohol when they approached his window. After speaking with him, they reported his speech was slurred and his eyes glassy.

Rivera told police he had come from Wyckoff Country Club and admitted having two drinks. Rivera told officers that he drove onto the sidewalk because there was “nowhere else to go.” Police said there were several streets to turn onto and plenty of space to turn around without driving onto the sidewalk.

When asked, he confirmed the car was his and said, “Everything is mine. I am a city councilor,” according to the complaint.

Police then gave him a standard field sobriety test, portions of which he failed, including the walk-and-turn and one-leg stand tests.

During the one-leg stand, a test for balance, officers reported Rivera counting “seven one thousand, seven one thousand, eight one thousand, nine one thousand, one hundred,” which police said also indicated impairment. For the heel-toe test, he counted in Spanish, continuing to count and step even after being told the test was over.

At times, Rivera laughed and clapped during the test, saying he couldn’t pass “even if I was sober,” the complaint says.

While being arrested, Rivera asked officers to “work with” him. He then said, “That’s fine. I’ll just cut the budget,” and added, “Everyone else gets a pass, but I don’t.”

Police also reported in the complaint that, when inside the cruiser, Rivera yelled and hit his head against the door. When told to stop, he shouted profanities.

“You know who the (expletive) I am? I’m not a regular (racial slur),” Rivera said, according to the trooper’s complaint.

The yelling continued: “Inebriated, OK, you got that. ... Next year, when I am a cop myself, and I take the test, I swear to God, I’m gonna make you (racial slurs) look bad.”

Rivera was booked and at first refused to sign paperwork but later agreed after speaking with officers, according to the complaint.

He refused an alcohol breath test, which led police to immediately revoke his license.

Later, while making phone calls to secure a ride home, officers heard Rivera laughing about the incident, telling someone, “They did test me. I had no choice, (racial slur), I am drunk as (expletive),” he said. “Even if I was sober, I would not have passed those tests.”

Rivera was released on his own recognizance with a citation.

**Holyoke councilor arrested on OUI charge after traffic stop** Dec. 22, 2025, 11:45 a.m.

Rivera’s arrest comes years after a prior conviction. In 2009, he was sentenced to five years in state prison after a guilty plea to felony firearms and drug charges, and assault on a police officer.

He was released about a decade ago and has been outspoken about his conviction.