

Belmonte: QC an open city to presidential bets

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With the campaign period for national candidates officially starting on Feb. 8, Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte has assured presidential bets from all political parties and affiliations that they are welcome to hold rallies in the city.

“It is part of my duty and mandate as their mayor to allow QCitizens to make an informed and impartial choice of their leaders,” Belmonte said.

“We know that Quezon City is a preferred venue for national candidates to hold rallies, as we have many ideal locations to hold these events. In this regard, we are an open city so that our constituents can learn as much as they can about the candidates who visit us,” she added.

Belmonte is not affiliated with any national political party. She is seeking reelection under the local Serbisyo sa Bayan Party or SBP.

The mayor has not publicly endorsed any presidential candidate. She welcomed nearly all of them during courtesy calls.

“Each of the presidential aspirants brings something unique and admirable to the position they are seeking. As a locally elected official, I am always privileged to welcome them to the city and give them an equal chance to encourage our approximately 1.4 million voters,” Belmonte pointed out.

Thousands of supporters of presidential candidate Vice President Leni Robredo held a “Pink Sunday” rally at the Quezon Memorial Circle, which caused crowds to spill over to other areas.

Last Dec. 8, supporters of former senator Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. and his running mate Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio conducted a motorcade, which began along Commonwealth Avenue and ended at Welcome Rotonda.

Presidential candidates Manila Mayor Isko Moreno as well as Senators Manny Pacquiao and Panfilo Lacson have likewise held campaign rallies in Quezon City. They all paid courtesy calls on Belmonte.

“Being an open city, we would like to remind rally organizers to coordinate in advance with the city government unit so that we may provide them with assistance and manpower,” Belmonte said. “Although NCR is under the less stricter Alert Level 2, our country is still in a pandemic. The safety of everyone should be the top priority.”

Spillover crowd

The Quezon City government yesterday said the “Pink Sunday” event organized by the supporters of Robredo and her running mate Sen. Francis Pangilinan violated city-imposed restrictions in political gatherings during the pandemic.

The local government said the “spillover” crowd breached restrictions that the organizers agreed upon with the city government.

“While crowd control is a highly complicated aspect of large gatherings, it is a test of discipline for the organizers and attendees to show that their chosen candidates observe the laws,” it added.

Robredo’s camp apologized and took responsibility for the spillover crowd during the motorcade.

The city government said candidates and organizers should attend pre-coordination meetings to ensure that regulations would be enforced properly.