



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Board of Supervisors



Date: September 26, 2013

Board Meeting Date: October 8, 2013

Special Notice / Hearing: None

Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisors Warren Slocum and Carole Groom

Subject: Appointment of Caroline Goodwin as San Mateo County Poet Laureate

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution appointing Caroline Goodwin to the honorary post of San Mateo County Poet Laureate for a two-year term from January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2015.

BACKGROUND:

The tradition of naming a Poet Laureate began in 17th century England when John Dryden was first named to the post. The United States Library of Congress appointed an official Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in 1937. In 1985, an Act of Congress changed the name of the position to Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress.

California was the first state to name a Poet Laureate informally and the position was established by the Legislature in 2001. A number of California counties and cities have followed suit and established the position of Poet Laureate, including the Bay Area counties of San Francisco, Marin, Napa, Sonoma, Alameda and Santa Clara.

DISCUSSION:

At its April 23, 2013 meeting, the Board of Supervisors approved a resolution establishing the honorary post of San Mateo County Poet Laureate for the purpose of elevating poetry into the consciousness of San Mateo County residents and highlighting and celebrating the literary arts within our County. The Poet Laureate shall represent San Mateo County through outreach related to poetry; facilitate presentation of appropriate works at selected County sponsored events, dedications or memorials; facilitate Poetry Month and Arts and Humanities Month activities; act as a resource for poetry and literary activities to the San Mateo County Library; and make poetry more available and accessible to the residents of San Mateo County in their everyday lives.

An ad hoc Poet Laureate Advisory Committee, co-chaired by Supervisors Carole Groom and Warren Slocum was created in April 2013 with members from the local arts councils, a college professor, poets, librarians, publishers and poetry enthusiasts. Members of the Inaugural Poet Laureate Advisory Committee are listed on Attachment A. The Poet Laureate Advisory Committee met many times to determine the process for accepting nominations of poets for the honorary two-year post and developing the criteria for selection of the San Mateo County Poet Laureate. At the close of the six-week nomination period, fifteen outstanding San Mateo County poets were nominated for the post. Individuals considered for the Poet Laureate were those who have resided in San Mateo County for at least five years, and who have demonstrated a commitment to reading and writing poetry and embraced the opportunity to engage in civic discourse. The Committee culled through the nomination packets for each poet and then selected five finalists to interview in person.

The interviews and selection process were completed on September 23, 2013 and Caroline Goodwin has been recommended as the Advisory Committee's nominee for honorary post of San Mateo County Poet Laureate. A copy of Caroline Goodwin's biography is attached as Attachment B. The position of Poet Laureate is for two years, with appointment by resolution by the Board of Supervisors.

Poet Laureate Nominee Caroline Goodwin was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska. She moved to the Bay Area in 1999 after being awarded the Wallace Stegner fellowship in Poetry at Stanford University. Ms. Goodwin received her MFA in Poetry from the University of British Columbia in 1994. Long involved in the literary arts, and specifically poetry, Ms. Goodwin currently teaches in the MFA Writing and the undergraduate Writing and Literature programs at California College of the Arts in Oakland, CA. She resides with her family in Montara.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the Resolution as to form.

Approval of this Resolution contributes to the 2025 Shared Vision of a Collaborative Community by promoting the literary arts throughout the County, bringing poetry inside the classroom, to our libraries, and communities.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.