



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 4
File #: 18-929

Board Meeting Date: 10/23/2018

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Supervisors Carole Groom and Warren Slocum
Subject: Appointment of Aileen Cassinetta as San Mateo County Poet Laureate

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution appointing Aileen Cassinetta to the honorary post of San Mateo County Poet Laureate for a two-year term from January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2020.

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, Santa Clara and San Mateo.

In April 2013, 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.

On October 8, 2013, the Board of Supervisors approved a resolution naming Caroline Goodwin as our County's first Poet Laureate. She served in this post until January 1, 2017 when Lisa Rosenberg was named the second County Poet Laureate. Nominee Aileen Cassinetta will be San Mateo County's third Poet Laureate.

DISCUSSION:

The Poet Laureate will represent San Mateo County and the art of poetry through outreach activities related to poetry; will propose and lead a community project throughout their term; will present

appropriate works at a minimum of four selected County-sponsored events during the year, including events involving schools and youth; and will open the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors meetings with a poem every quarter.

An ad hoc Poet Laureate Advisory Committee, co-chaired by Supervisors Carole Groom and Warren Slocum, which includes members from the San Mateo County Arts Commission, a college professor, poets, a librarian, publishers and poetry enthusiasts, conferred by email to set the parameters for this selection. At the close of the ten-week application period [TRUE?], eight outstanding San Mateo County poets applied for the post. Individuals considered for the Poet Laureate were those who have resided in San Mateo County for at least five years, who have been published or recognized for poetry and literary contributions and 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 four finalists to interview in person.

The interviews and selection process were completed on September 28, 2018, and Aileen Cassinetta has been unanimously recommended as the Advisory Committee's nominee for honorary post of San Mateo County Poet Laureate. A copy of Aileen Cassinetta's biography is attached as Attachment A. The position of Poet Laureate is for two years, with appointment by resolution by the Board of Supervisors.

Poet Laureate Nominee Aileen Cassinetta was born in Manila, Philippines and grew up at a time when the country was under martial law. After earning a degree at the University of the Philippines in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, Aileen found her true passion, literature and poetry. She emigrated to the United States in 2000, and her poetry is informed by the culture in which she was raised.

Aileen is the author of *The Pink House of Purple Yam Preserves and Other Poems*, *Traje de Boda*, *The Art of Salamat*, *B & O Blues*, and *Tweet*. Widely anthologized, her work is on permanent display at the San Francisco Public Library as part of the Hay(na)ku Poetry Exhibit. She is the publisher of Paloma Press, an independent literary press established in 2016, which has released 12 books to date.

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