



# County of San Mateo

## Inter-Departmental Correspondence

**Department:** BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
**DISTRICT 4**  
**File #:** 22-960

Board Meeting Date: 12/13/2022

**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** Majority

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

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a resolution appointing Jorge Argueta to the honorary post of San Mateo County Poet Laureate for a two-year term from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024.

### **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 "Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry" in 1937. In 1985, an Act of Congress changed the name of the position to "Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress".

California was the first state to name a Poet Laureate informally and the position was codified by the State 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.

In April 2013, the Board of Supervisors approved a resolution establishing the honorary post of San Mateo County Poet Laureate for the purpose of promoting awareness and heightening appreciation of poetry and the spoken word throughout San Mateo County. To qualify as the Poet Laureate, an individual should be a San Mateo County resident of five years or more, demonstrate a commitment to reading and writing poetry, embrace the opportunity to engage in civic discourse, and commit to serve a two-year term in the post.

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

To date, there have been three San Mateo County Poet Laureates-Aileen Cassinetto, Lisa Rosenberg, and Caroline Goodwin.

### **DISCUSSION:**

An *ad hoc* Poet Laureate Advisory Committee, co-chaired by Supervisors Carole Groom and Warren Slocum, and which includes members from the San Mateo County Arts Commission, a college professor, poets, librarians, publishers, and poetry enthusiasts (“Advisory Committee”), was established to recommend selection of the next San Mateo County Poet Laureate.

At the close of a one month application period, seven outstanding San Mateo County poets applied for the post, and the Advisory Committee selected three finalists for interviews. In-person and hybrid interviews were then conducted by Supervisor Slocum and Poet Laureate Emeriti Lisa Rosenberg and Aileen Cassinetto.

Having concluded the selection process, the Advisory Committee unanimously recommends appointment of Jorge Argueta as San Mateo County Poet Laureate. A copy of Mr. Argueta’s resume is attached to this memorandum as **Attachment A**.

If appointed, Mr. Argueta would be the first San Mateo County Poet Laureate of Hispanic descent. A resident of Daly City, he has long been involved in the arts community as a poet, author of children’s books, and promoter of literacy. He is particularly interested in working with both local seniors and youth to engage them in his enthusiasm for the spoken word, and he has long highlighted the importance of poetry in creating bridges to diverse communities. For example, Mr. Argueta founded the Library of Dreams, a children’s library in El Salvador, to elevate reading and writing skills among indigenous children.

The County Attorney’s Office has reviewed and approved the accompanying resolution as to form.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with appointment of Jorge Argueta as San Mateo County Poet Laureate.