

NEWS

May 19, 2020

For Immediate Release

New Director of Sustainability: San Mateo County on “Front Lines” of Regional Challenges

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. – The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors today unanimously confirmed Carolyn Bloede as the new director of the [Office of Sustainability](#).

For the past 17 years Bloede has served in a similar role across the bay in Alameda County. She now brings expertise gained in both the private and public sector to San Mateo County, where she has called home for the past two decades.

Starting June 15, 2020, Bloede will lead a department with an approximately \$35 million annual budget that seeks to find solutions to some of the most vexing challenges faced by the Bay Area and beyond. These include climate adaptation, sea level rise, waste reduction, recycling and energy efficiency, among others.

“Carolyn brings a wealth of experience, knowledge and contacts to her role as our new sustainability director,” said Board of Supervisors President Warren Slocum. “If recent events have proven anything it is that we need top-rate individuals who can work regionally and beyond to solve our most pressing problems. Carolyn brings that vision with her.”

Bloede earned a master’s degree in engineering from San Jose State University and a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering from the University of Colorado. She gained experience in the private sector as a project manager and environmental consultant before she joined Alameda County to help create their sustainability program.

Bloede succeeds Jim Eggemeyer, who retired after serving as the first director of the Office of Sustainability since its creation in 2014.

We asked Bloede about her career, personal life and what sustainability means to her.

Why is the mission of the office – and that of the County – important to you?

I love county government because we're on the front lines serving communities. This is where the action is and we can have measurable impact today and in the future.

What is it about the County of San Mateo that made you want to work here?

San Mateo County, besides being my home county for 20 years, has a reputation for bold sustainability action and leadership.

There is strong leadership from the Board of Supervisors, county manager and department heads to taking on and developing bold and effective solutions. Everyone is committed to building a sustainable community that fulfills the needs of the present and future. Also, the Sustainability Office staff have a regional reputation for excellence.

In 10 words or less, explain what "sustainability" means to you (we gave her a pass on conjunctions and prepositions):

"Healthy communities. Vibrant economy. Clean air and water. Equitable access to nature."

You began your career in the private sector. Why did you switch to the public sector?

I learned a lot in the private sector about how businesses run and appreciate what a healthy and equitable economy can bring to a region but also know that that comes with responsibility to communities, to the environment.

I came to the public sector because at its core the work is mission driven with the opportunity for incredible positive impact on people's lives and the planet.

We tackle really tough challenges that require collaboration and broad input and I want to look back on my life knowing that I made a meaningful and lasting contribution.

What can one small department in one geographically small county contribute to reducing the threat of climate change and making our communities more livable?

The scale of the climate crisis and now the economic crisis demands regional action and coordination.

I love the Margaret Mead quote. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

I see a big part of the role of sustainability offices as conveners and facilitators. To pull that wisdom from the group, to come to consensus, and to move the work forward through the collaboration..

What does a great day at work look like to you?

Connecting with my team and hearing about what is happening in their lives, celebrating their successes, working through a problem together to develop a path forward.



Working with a committed group of people to come to consensus, deciding how we're going to move forward, and then making it happen.

Outside of work, what are your special interests?

I am a dedicated masters swimmer and downhill skier.

I love to cook and to entertain with my husband.

I enjoy hiking in the beautiful parks of San Mateo County. On a hot day I love Wunderlich where I can walk under the redwood canopy surrounded by the cool air and fresh smell of the redwood forest.

###

