

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

San Mateo County Supervisors Appoint John Nibbelin as County Counsel

Redwood City — With two decades of experience at the County of San Mateo, John Nibbelin says he's ready to help make his community a "fairer, safer and healthier place" in his new role as the County's chief legal officer.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously selected [Nibbelin](#) as County Counsel, the top legal post. The longtime Pacifica resident has served on the County's legal team since 2001 and as chief deputy county counsel since 2011.

"San Mateo County has been on the leading edge of so many issues – financial privacy rights, health care for all, affordable housing," he said. "I look forward to helping to make San Mateo County a better, fairer safer and healthier place. That motivates me pretty much every day."

Nibbelin's dedication to public service goes beyond his legal training. He served as a commissioned Army officer for nearly 28 years, including service in the military police and as a Judge Advocate General officer.

"All of the final candidates interviewed by the Board of Supervisors were outstanding," said [Don Horsley](#), president of the five-member Board.

"It was a tough decision but, ultimately, we chose John for his extensive work with the Board on multiple complex legal challenges," Horsley said. "Most recently, he supported the County's legal needs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and has advised the chief equity officer on initiatives to further diversity, equity and inclusion."

Nibbelin will ascend to the role of County Counsel on April 1, following the planned retirement of [John Beiers](#) after 27 years on the County's legal team.

“John is a rare legal talent, a top-notch person, with natural leadership skills,” Beiers said. “The Board made a wonderful decision, and the people of San Mateo County are fortunate to have him in charge of the County Counsel’s office.”

As [County Counsel](#), Nibbelin will oversee a budget of approximately \$23 million and a staff of 49 employees, which includes thirty-two attorneys, as well as administrative and support staff.

The County Counsel’s Office provides leadership on legal issues for the Board of Supervisors as well as each of the County’s 20 [departments](#), including County Health, the Human Services Agency, Sheriff’s Office, Parks, Public Works and others.

The County Counsel’s Office also provides legal representation for all 24 local public school districts in the County.

Nibbelin has lived in Pacifica since 2003 and serves on the city’s Planning Commission. He is also active in a number of community groups and organizations, including Kairos Prison Ministries at San Quentin State Prison and the Pacifica Resource Center.

A father of two boys and a girl, Nibbelin also enjoys running, volunteering in the community, and spending time with his family. He is proficient in written and spoken Spanish.

He comes from a family with a long history of public service. His father was an Army chaplain, and “I grew up on military bases and it seemed natural for me to go into the service,” he said.

Between his junior and senior years of high school he enlisted in the Army Reserves and attended basic training and he was commissioned as an officer and served on active duty after graduating from college. While working as a military police platoon leader, he became intrigued with going into the legal field, after interacting with Judge Advocate officers.

Nibbelin received a bachelor’s degree in Latin American Studies from UC Berkeley, where he also participated in the Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps and worked as a Community Services Officer with the University of California Police Department. He later earned a law degree from the U.C. Berkeley School of Law.

The County conducted an extensive, nationwide and open recruitment to fill the position. Key priorities listed in the recruitment included economic recovery; advancing equity; responding to changes in state and federal policy; and addressing affordable housing, climate change and major community needs.

As he retires after nearly three decades of service with the County, Beiers said, “I am most proud of the legal team we have built, and the extraordinary work that comes out of the

County Counsel's office. Our office has a statewide reputation for the quality of work it performs.

"To have had this job, at this County, with this Board of Supervisors, I count myself as one of the truly lucky lawyers," he said.

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