

County gets poet laureate: Caroline Goodwin to be named to new post

October 04, 2013, 05:00 AM By Michelle Durand Daily Journal Staff

An award-winning Montara writer and professor with a long involvement in the literary arts is poised to be the county's inaugural poet laureate.

Caroline Goodwin was picked from a pool of 15 candidates based on her impressive resume, a poetry reading before the advisory committee and her ideas about how to promote the arts in San Mateo County, said Supervisor Warren Slocum who along with Supervisor Carole Groom first suggested the idea of the honorary position.



"Her answers I thought were pretty awesome about how she wants to spread the word of poetry," Slocum said. *Caroline Goodwin*

On Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors is expected to formally appoint Goodwin who will then read a piece.

Slocum said all 15 contenders were highly qualified but, after several committee meetings, the consensus was for Goodwin.

Goodwin has a master's of fine arts degree from the University of British Columbia and her lengthy list of honors includes three years as a Wallace Stegner Fellow in poetry at Stanford University. She currently teaches creative nonfiction at the California College of the Arts in Oakland, poetry and creative writing to adults through UC Berkeley Extension and precollege summer programs to teenagers.

Her public reading resume is even longer, including appearances most recently at the Napa Valley Writers Conference in August.

The Alaska-born Goodwin has a range of published poems and "Trampoline," a collection of poems.

Goodwin said she looks forward to meeting the county's residents and exploring the role of poetry in their lives.

"Poetry is rhythm, poetry is music, poetry has many histories and roots and can act as a healer in our turbulent times," she said in a prepared statement.

Goodwin's approach is what helped her rise to the top of applicants, Slocum said.

"She had ideas and was poised in public and obviously could represent the county well," Slocum said.

Groom said the county is very lucky to have Goodwin.

"She is a lovely, lovely person and a very talented poet," Groom said.

The poet laureate is a two-year position beginning in January. The post's duties include representing San Mateo County through poetry-related activities, presenting works during at least four county-sponsored events yearly, writing a commemorative poem about the county and opening the Board of Supervisors meetings with a poem every quarter.

Slocum said the advisory committee that chose Goodwin has also decided to continue in supporting Goodwin launch her ideas, such as having a lot of different residents create a county poem by each contributing a line.

The committee includes California Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera; Jackie Berger, director of the master of arts in English program at Notre Dame de Namur University; Kalamu Chaché, East Palo Alto poet laureate; Maryann Moise Derwin, chair of the San Mateo County Library JPA governing board and Portola Valley councilwoman; Anne-Marie Despain, director of library services for San Mateo County Library; Julie Fellers, president, Peninsula Arts Council; Mary Gutierrez, dean of language arts at Skyline College; Clark Kepler, local business advocate; Bardi Rosman Koodrin, literary director of the San Mateo County Fair; Donald Mulliken, San Mateo County arts commissioner; Christopher Wachlin, president of the California Writers Club, San Francisco-

Peninsula Branch; and Bonny Zanardi, arts columnist for the San Jose Mercury News.

The state of California and a number of its counties and cities have poet laureate positions. The Bay Area alone has poet laureates in the counties of San Francisco, Marin, Napa, Sonoma, Alameda and Santa Clara.

michelle@smdailyjournal.com

(650) 344-5200 ext. 102