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Latest Lafayette School Board member's longstanding commitment and desire to give back

By Pippa Fisher



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Following his recent appointment to the Lafayette School District board of trustees to fill a vacancy left by Mark Kindhouse's departure from the area, Rob Sturm is eager to get to work.

"The most pressing area needing improvement is the district's fiscal instability," says Sturm. "The district would benefit materially from greater fiscal certainty and the accompanying ability to plan more predictably and with a more long-term perspective and emphasis."

He believes his background and experience will be helpful. "I believe I am well-suited to thought-partner with the other Lafayette school board members, the superintendent and our community, now and into the future, to enhance existing district strengths and identify and prioritize areas of opportunity."

Sturm's background is as an attorney with more than 25 years of legal experience, much of it specializing in labor and employment law, and identifying and implementing solutions to benefit both employees and employers. He joined CSAA Insurance Group, a AAA insurer, in 2008.

As vice president and associate general counsel, he oversees the employment law, corporate litigation and legal operations practice groups, with responsibilities that include short- and long-term operational planning. Sturm has previously served as a board member for Court Appointed Special Advocates, and currently serves on the board for the Lafayette Homeowners Council and the Northern California Employment Round Table.

Additionally Sturm has spent considerable time throughout his professional career teaching, predominantly as a volunteer - locally, overseas and for a wide range of age groups.

Sturm says that he and his wife, Kristina, moved to Lafayette from San Francisco in 2009, drawn by the community's small-town feel, access to nature and, most importantly, preeminent schools. Their oldest son attends Burton Valley Elementary School, and their younger son and daughter will soon be joining him ensuring family enrollment in the Lafayette schools for almost the next two decades.

Sturm campaigned in the fall for election but lost to board member Meredith Meade and Kindhouse at that time. Sturm says of the 2016 election campaign, "I am focused ahead, not behind. I have great confidence in our school board and superintendent, and our ability to work together to best support our community's aspirations and our children's needs."

In fact Sturm makes the point that he applied for appointment to the LAFSD board for the same reasons that prompted and motivated his campaign during the 2016 election. "I have a longstanding commitment and desire to give back to my community and a particular passion for youth and education causes."

Sturm shares the commitment of the current board that students should be intellectually engaged to their fullest so learning is enriching and instruction promotes character development, integrity and ready pursuit of academic interests. He says he has spent much of his professional career advancing equal opportunity causes and believes it is important for schools to actively encourage both girls and boys to pursue their interests in science, technology, teaching or other professions that have historically been underrepresented.

Sturm says that public schools should be particularly thoughtful and interactive in their approach to supporting special needs children and believes his background and experience can be helpful. He says, "The district is making material progress and additional work lies ahead, including becoming less dependent on contract service providers."

Sturm believes leading sustainability practices not only represent the "right thing to do" but also tend to promote cost efficiency, praising as an example the district's commitment to solar energy and the associated long-term cost savings.

He added, "I am thrilled to get started - now the rewarding work truly begins."

Reach the reporter at: pippa@lamorindaweekly.com

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