



CITY OF SAN MATEO  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

March 11, 2021

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Dear Anthony Mejia and City Clerks Association of California,

I am pleased to nominate one of the most dedicated civil servants I know, Patrice Olds, for Municipal Clerk of the Year.

It's hard to summarize the amount of passion, creativity and integrity she's brought to this profession during one of the most challenging years in our history. So often Patrice puts the needs and interests of others before herself, and I hope this year we can finally recognize her contributions with this distinction.

In 2020, Patrice not only navigated the ever-changing challenges the pandemic created for civic engagement within our city, she helped ensure other clerks prevailed as well. She was an innovative advocate for democracy through a contentious and closely-watched election, and leveraged technology to promote engagement. She also served as President of the City Clerks Association of California in 2020 helping to provide guidance to many of her peers across the state. This was all on top of her normal day-to-day work that is integral to our entire organization.

Entering 2020 Patrice was so excited to organize and lead CCAC's annual conference. She'd made all the arrangements and was in the midst of creating a wonderfully themed signature event to host an in-person conference before COVID-19 forced its cancellation. While she was incredibly disappointed, she wasn't going to let a global pandemic get in the way of this important event. She thought creatively and quickly about how to adapt and host a virtual conference. She also felt strongly about the importance of finding a way to honor her colleagues who give to this profession. When it came time to give this award out last year, she drove north to surprise and personally deliver the award to the clerk of the year while livestreaming the event for others to enjoy.

She is an advocate for this profession and always willing to lend a hand to mentor others or share her knowledge, and is eager to serve as an accomplished trainer when the opportunity arises. It's true that most city clerks across California found themselves in the challenging position of needing to rapidly transition in-person public meetings into virtual formats. Patrice worked doggedly, testing out three different public input methods and several virtual platforms while focusing on making it as easy as possible for citizens to participate in local governance. Thanks to her thoughtful adaptation, we didn't experience any decrease in participation and we were fortunate to avoid any incidents like Zoom bombing.

But what she's really deserving of recognition for, is that she offered herself as a resource and mentor to countless other clerks across the state helping to address their technology and security challenges. In one case where a neighboring city was Zoom bombed, Patrice worked with them and even offered our IT staff to assist and ensure their public meetings could proceed uninterrupted.



It has become clear that the way our city will engage the public during council meetings has forever changed and Patrice is already working on getting the proper infrastructure in place to continue a hybrid meeting format, both in person and virtual, for post pandemic meetings. She is always working on being prepared for the next version of improved civic engagement and turned this adversity into opportunity.

Patrice represents the best in civic engagement and during the 2020 Presidential Election went above and beyond to help constituents participate in democracy. Last year presented serious challenges and safety concerns due to the pandemic. Patrice applied an equity lens and worked closely with our county election officials to ensure we had drop-off ballot boxes in typically underrepresented and disenfranchised areas of the city. She went above and beyond to help create and distribute materials to educate voters of the variety of options for them to exercise their democratic right. She led the creation of a brand new interactive online map that educated voters about their various opportunities to vote in the City of San Mateo for in-person voting and ballot box drop offs. Thousands of voters used this online tool to find out where they could vote in the format in which they felt most comfortable. She also volunteered to work at the drive-thru ballot box at City Hall throughout the week leading up to the election and even on election night. You can imagine the enthusiastic greeting she gave each and every voter as they drove their car up to the box and she handed them their "I Voted" sticker! In addition to the closely watched Presidential Election, she managed several contentious local elections including three ballot measures and two council seats. Her efforts helped us achieve one of the highest voter turnouts we've ever seen.

Patrice has been a steadfast, welcoming presence at City Hall throughout the pandemic. She continues to lead our City Hall reopening safety committee, thinking strategically about how to increase safety precautions for staff while allowing the public access to essential services. She's also provided critical services to seniors who were most at-risk of COVID-19 but required her in-person assistance to receive their foreign pensions. She's thought carefully about how to adapt our facility in a way that remained welcoming but also secure. Patrice is the heart of City Hall!

In addition to her work managing the impacts of the pandemic, she oversaw all responses to a sharp increase in public records act requests over the last year. She's a thought leader in the profession and leverages technology to improve our agency's responsiveness and management of information systems and is always seeking better ways to get the job done more efficiently and with transparency to better serve our citizens.

Patrice is highly regarded in our community, and we know she prides herself on being a city clerk. She continues to encourage the next generation of city clerks, providing mentorship both within our organization as well as to other cities' up-and-coming clerks. While San Mateo is her home, she considers all clerks as members of her family.

For these reasons and many more, I hope we can recognize Patrice Olds as California's Municipal Clerk of the Year.

Sincerely,



Eric Rodriguez

Mayor, City of San Mateo

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