

TWO LOCAL CANDIDATES JOIN RACE FOR ASSEMBLY SEAT

Lawler, Rennie file paperwork for realigned district

DREW PENNER, Reporter

Given the news that incumbent Scotts Valley resident Mark Stone won't run for the newly-realigned 28th State Assembly District seat, two candidates on the Silicon Valley side of "the hill" will now be facing off with former Santa Cruz County Clerk Gail Pellerin.

While Monte Sereno Councilmember Liz Lawler, a Republican, filed her declaration of candidacy March 4, it wasn't until Stone chose not to run, by deadline, that Los Gatos Mayor Rob Rennie saw an opening.

He'd been vying to become Santa Clara County's District 1 supervisor, and had done quite well fundraising, he recalled in an interview with the Los Gatan.

However, the recent redistricting process left his residence outside its boundaries.

Meanwhile, Rennie had been upgraded from vice mayor to mayor.

But the same map-redrawing effort meant Los Gatos was now in the 28th State district.

And when Stone declined to run again, it triggered a five-day extension for new candidates to enter the race. He talked it over with his team, March 12, and decided to throw his hat in the ring.

"They give you five days, but two of them are the weekend," Rennie said the following Wednesday, after a few frenetic days of signature collection. "You can't pull papers until day three."

In recent months, Pellerin has been encouraging women to run for elected office through Women in Leadership for Diverse Representation's community workshops. She also joined the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Pellerin has received endorsements from Stone, State Senator John Laird and Assemblymember Robert Rivas.



Contributed

CANDIDATE *Monte Sereno*
Councilmember Liz Lawler pledges to fight partisanship if elected to Sacramento, by reaching across the political aisle.

cited about the chance to put ideas forward about matters controlled by Sacramento.

"I'm a problem solver," he said, pledging he'd approach these issues by asking, "What are the types of problems that we need to solve?"

Top of mind are boosting educational opportunities and preventing wildfire, he added.

Last year, as vice mayor, Rennie participated in the event where \$7 million in State cash was announced for West Silicon Valley cities. He says he wants to make sure CalFire is well-funded.

"You know, we have a lot of hillsides where fire preparedness and protection is really important," he said.

Rennie, who holds a Master's in Engineering from Dartmouth College, has been living in Los Gatos since 1997.

He worked for decades in the semiconductor and solar industries, and comments that this taught him plenty about working with a diverse group of people.

"A lot of the time I was on development teams and we were trying to develop a product," he said, reflecting on what it was like to work with people with a variety of perspectives. "You pull together different types of engineers."

He says his professional expertise could be helpful in improving power infrastructure, particularly in an era of



Drew Penner/Los Gatan file

BACK IN A RACE *Los Gatos Mayor*
Rob Rennie was aiming for a Santa Clara County supervisor seat, but rejiggered his plans once a State Assembly incumbent declined to run again.

"There's a lot of technical change that has to happen on our electrical grid," he said, bringing up recent bills put forward by senators Dave Cortese and Josh Becker. "I'd be interested in partnering with them on the Assembly side."

Rennie was elected to Council in 2014 and is now in his second mayoral term. He's also served on several regional boards and commissions, such as the Silicon Valley Clean Energy Authority, the Valley Transit Authority and the Housing and Community Development Advisory Committee. And he's been a member of the Sierra Club for more than 25 years.

But how will he keep his eye on the ball of serving as mayor while seeking a seat in Sacramento?

"I'm not going to have a lot of free time—let's put it that way," he said, reiterating his commitment to Los Gatos. "I'm just going to have long days and long weekends."

Lawler tells the Los Gatan she's the candidate who can help bridge divides in Sacramento.

"I want to restore common sense and cooperation—and accountability," she said. "I think we're just tired of the partisan politics."

For her, the way to fix the housing crisis is to put control back in the hands of local authorities.

"We know our limitations, our needs

CANDIDATES STATE IDEAS

Candidates, from page 4

and our strengths," she said. "One-size-fits-all doesn't actually work anywhere—even with clothing."

She's also passionate about education, and she believes supporting schools outside of the traditional publicly-funded system is the way to go.

"We are very fortunate," she said, when asked about the literally top-ranked Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union High School District. "Every child deserves a good education regardless."

The way she sees it, "school choice" already exists, but is only available for families who can afford to access the best educational options.

Opponents of California's charter school system worry this approach could divert money from public schools that, in some areas of the state, have a student body that is majority Black and Hispanic. But Lawler says establishing "educational savings accounts" would allow people from impoverished communities to avoid getting caught up in gang life, as they could use that money to attend better schools.

"We also need to restore trades courses," she said. "We need to embrace all types of intelligence."

Lawler adds that, as a former resident of West LA's Pacific Palisades neighborhood, she understands many of the concerns Santa Cruz County residents deal with, as well, due to the Coastal California connection.

She pledges to work well with everyone—no matter their party affiliation—if elected.

"I'm willing to acknowledge a good idea when I hear it," she said. "I want results."

Lawler has already racked up endorsements from former San Jose City Councilmember Johnny Khamis, the California Republican Party, Crime Victims United and former Monte Sereno Mayor Lon Allan.

"I am driven by the needs of our residents, not ideology," she said. "Government needs to deliver the basics—public safety, infrastructure, education. Those are the things that I'm focused on."

Tony Nuñez contributed to this report.