



SAN MATEO POLICE OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION



Executive Board

President-Rory McMilton Vice-President-Josh Brown Secretary-Shanna Hughes Treasurer-Jeff Brinton
Welfare Officer-Alison Gilmore

Directors-At-Large

Jason Chice Freddy Sandoval Dorrin Adams Chris Lewis

August 1, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE TO THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC:

SAN MATEO POA ENDORSES AMOURENCE LEE FOR CITY COUNCIL

San Mateo Police Officers' Association: "We Need More Amo!"

I am pleased to announce that the San Mateo Police Officers' Association has officially endorsed Councilwoman Amourence "Amo" Lee for one of two available San Mateo City Council seats in the 2020 General Election. SMPOA's nine board members unanimously endorsed Councilwoman Lee. Appointed to fill a vacancy on the City Council late last year, Amourence Lee quickly established her reputation as a fierce advocate for affordable housing, public safety and civil rights.

Since I assumed the roll of POA president in January 2020, I have had the opportunity to observe and be directly involved in several initiatives Councilwoman Lee has spearheaded. I can say with absolute certainty that Amo is an authentic leader who has shown she has the experience, knowledge, skills and wisdom to lead San Mateo through the next four years which hold an unprecedented amount of uncertainty. I emphatically trust her leadership will see us to the other side and San Mateo will be better off in the long run because of it.

Councilwoman Lee earned my respect early on by participating in a ride-along with me as I patrolled the city one evening. I quickly learned that while she was new to the Council, she was intimately familiar with City operations and specifically the operations of the police department. I discovered that soon after moving to San Mateo over eleven years ago, Amo attended SMPD's highly successful and informative citizen's academy, was involved in the neighborhood watch program, the PTA and eventually became the President of the influential and esteemed North Central Neighborhood Association.

Amo told me that securing affordable housing for San Mateo's first responders was a cause dearly important to her. She was well aware that a majority of SMPD's officers and other essential employees battle excruciating commutes every day due to the lack of affordable housing options. She expressed grave concern about the safety of San Mateans in the event the SF Bay Area's bridges and freeways became unpassable in the aftermath of a major earthquake or other emergency making it extremely difficult for police officers to respond to San Mateo from off duty in timely manner. Amo also expressed the dismay she felt upon hearing that one of our officers nearly died and had his leg amputated after falling asleep behind the wheel and crashing while making his drive 1.5-hour home after a 12 hour shift.

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I can also speak to Councilwoman Lee's ability to lead during a crisis. In the wake of the civil unrest brought upon by the heinous display of police brutality in Minneapolis, Amo engaged, listened to and advocated for San Mateans of all races. She assisted the teenage organizers of and spoke at the largest demonstration San Mateo had seen in decades. The protest was a huge success as there were no reports of property damage, no use of force by police, no arrests and the demonstrators aired their grievances loudly and clearly.

In the aftermath however, many of the demonstrators felt that SMPD's response was heavy handed. Amo did not buckle under outside pressure to quickly condemn SMPD and its response to the peaceful yet highly charged and emotional demonstration. After gathering the facts and coming to a conclusion, she penned an emotional and honest blog which took all perspectives into account. The aftermath of the demonstration proved that many of our community members felt, rightfully so, that San Mateo needed to do more to ensure everyone felt equally safe and protected. Councilwoman Lee is leading the charge along with the POA to advocate for meaningful reform without compromising public safety.

Recently, Councilwoman Lee approached me with a resolution for City Council to declare that Black Lives Matter. A similar resolution was previously adopted by the county board of supervisors. She asked if the POA would be willing to co-sign the resolution. After reading it, I found that although I agreed with the overall sentiment of the resolution, it contained some language I knew the collective membership of the POA would find difficult to endorse due to language we worried would further the rift between law enforcement and the community. Our issues with the resolution's language was largely technical in nature and by no measure did we feel the document's intent was to cause further divide. I asked Amo if there was a possibility adjustments could be made to the resolution that would not compromise its intent but instead include language that would not necessarily incite further distrust. Amo quickly got to work on making that happen.

Once again, Amo displayed true wisdom and leadership under stressful circumstances when she invited the POA to sit down (via Zoom) with respected leaders in San Mateo's Black community. She expertly moderated the emotional meeting. Councilwoman Lee understood both sides needed to hear some difficult truths and made sure that was done in a manner where everyone learned from each other and a compromise was reached which satisfied all parties. It is the hope of the POA that the meeting was just a first step in doing our small part of what the American government will do as a whole, at every level, in a long journey of meaningful atonement for the injustices our country has put upon Blacks and all People of Color since its inception.

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We thank Councilwoman Lee for having the foresight to see how having the POA, SMPD and leaders from our Black community jointly craft a Black Lives Matter resolution would go a long way to rebuilding trust between us and the community we serve and for having the courage and aptitude to make it happen. The POA is committed to working with Councilwoman Lee, the rest of City Council and all San Mateans for enacting smart reforms to policy in a deliberate manner to ensure everyone feels and is equally protected and served by their police department.

It is no secret that most police officers would not describe themselves as hailing from the Progressive wing of American politics. It may seem odd to some observers that the SMPOA would be compelled to so staunchly advocate for a politician who may fit into that category. With her leadership and actions on the Council, she won us over. I have found that like most people, my membership responds to leaders who are authentic, stand by their principals, values and also compromises when necessary for the betterment of everyone. In Amourence Lee, we have found that leader. We have found her values and principals closely align with ours and our goals of a safe and prosperous San Mateo for all residents are the same.

With my 20 years of experience in public service (which includes 10 years in the military with three tours of duty in Iraq and three different police departments) I have worked for countless leaders of all stripes. In my opinion, Amourence Lee is a strong ethical and proven leader who comes through in challenging situations. San Mateo cannot afford to be without her during these tumultuous times. It is my honor and the honor of the 100 police officers, public safety dispatchers and community service officers of my association to ask all eligible voters in San Mateo to elect Amourence Lee to the City Council this November.

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