

# City Clerk Rod Diridon, Jr.

By Robert Haugh

Essentially serving as the "nerve center" of the Santa Clara's municipal operations, City Clerk and Auditor Rod Diridon, Jr., and his staff meticulously facilitate the day-to-day operations of Santa Clara.

The City Clerk's office is the informational hub around which municipal government functions. There, meeting agendas are processed, records of all City Council proceedings are maintained and information made available to the public. Practically the custodian of the City seal, Diridon administers oaths of office pertaining to City business and certifies official records. The office is also responsible for implementing municipal elections, complying with campaign and disclosure laws, as well as campaign finance ordinances and ethics programs.

## Entering Municipal Government

Rod's involvement in Santa Clara municipalities began in the early 1990s, through the San Tomas Aquino/Saratoga Creek

trail Commission when current Council member Kevin Moore, the founding chair asked him to be the Vice-Chair.

"We had a great time working together getting the creek trail started. About that time, I was also asked by Lisa Gillmor to be involved with the Friends of the Santa Clara Soccer Park. Both Kevin and Lisa remain good friends of mine. It was great to work with Lisa as a Council member, and now to see Kevin doing such exceptional work," says Diridon.

"Growing up with pop as a County Supervisor, public service permeated our family. He was a great example. He's always had great vision and worked hard and smart to see it accomplished," says Rod.

Rod states John Vasconcellos gave him "the original impulse when he proved to me that you can expect people are inherently good, and still be successful in politics."

Rod states Santa Clara Council member Pat Kolstad and former Council member Jamie Matthews were the first to steer him toward the City Clerk's Office.

"Pat has always been a kind of big brother to me, a very thoughtful guy and principled politician. Jamie has a huge intellect; he and I had a good rhythm on the Council together... I'm fortunate and honored to be surrounded by a lot of good friends."



### Projects, Projects, Projects

Diridon says the most visible project that he worked on was the 2006 Vote Ethics Program. "This was an important next step to get the best value for the public out of the City's award-winning ethics programs ... On a personal level, that was a rare opportunity to set policy and expectations as Council member and then help implement them as the City Clerk."

"People in Santa Clara have direct access to their public servants. We elect our City Council, Mayor, City Clerk and Chief of Police"... It's in our psyche that we like to vote and we have high expectations of our officials."

### From Citizen to Council Member to Clerk

"I'm a public school kid," says Diridon, who attended Westwood elementary, Buchser Middle School and Santa Clara High.

While serving two full terms on City Council from 1996 to 2004, Rod took part in several major developments for the City.

"I was fortunate to serve with some great council members. We had a good balance of having enough of a sense of team to move things forward; with enough disagreement to make sure the decisions were properly vetted to make the right ones. We had some great projects in those eight years."

The Sun and Rivermark projects were approved during his Council tenure, as well as the first phase of the Downtown Revitalization being completed, the Police Station and Central Library were completed and policies were set to convert the City's non-emergency fleet to 50 percent plus hybrid and ultra-low emission vehicles.

"Pioneering campaign finance reform and the City's Code of Values and Ethics, in hindsight, were both great policy and preparation for my current position as City Clerk."

Balancing intense training, education and employment in the private sector, as well as time as a Council member and City Clerk, Diridon was granted Certified Municipal Clerk status by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks in the first month after the two-year minimum waiting period required.



*City Clerk and Auditor Rod Diridon, Jr.,*

"Becoming a CMC was a big bite in the first two years. That was a lot of training in a short period of time, kind of like taking a sip of water from a fire hose. The City was very supportive of my education."

"In the Clerk's Office, the content is different, but the practice is the same. We're not focused on land use policy, etc. like the Council, but we are focused on issues of fairness, process and open government. So, the policy set is different, but the need to follow through is similar."

Outside of the Clerk's office, Diridon enjoys hobbies with practical application.

"I enjoy working on houses ... there is always something broken in those old places." Restoring classic automobiles is another of Rod's passions. Rod worked his way through college as a mechanic, so he 'enjoys keeping those skills in practice.'