
Putting Santa Clarans First - City Clerk Rod Diridon, Jr., Departs of Assembly Race

By Robert Haugh

After a survey showed him being the front running candidate for the California Assembly District 22 seat being term-limited out by fellow Santa Claran Sally Lieber in 2008, current City Clerk/Auditor Rod Diridon, Jr., dropped from the running last week.

Knowing that he was a top contender vying for the Assembly seat, Diridon states that the recently-developed California Ethics Project, and his duties as the City Clerk as reasons for exiting the coveted race.

According to a letter sent to his supporters, Diridon states that 'there are two compelling reasons that I have decided to make this very difficult decision.'

The first reason cites 'an Opportunity for Better Government.' Diridon recently met with several leaders from the state and international City Clerk associations, participating in discussions regarding the creation of the California Ethics Project.

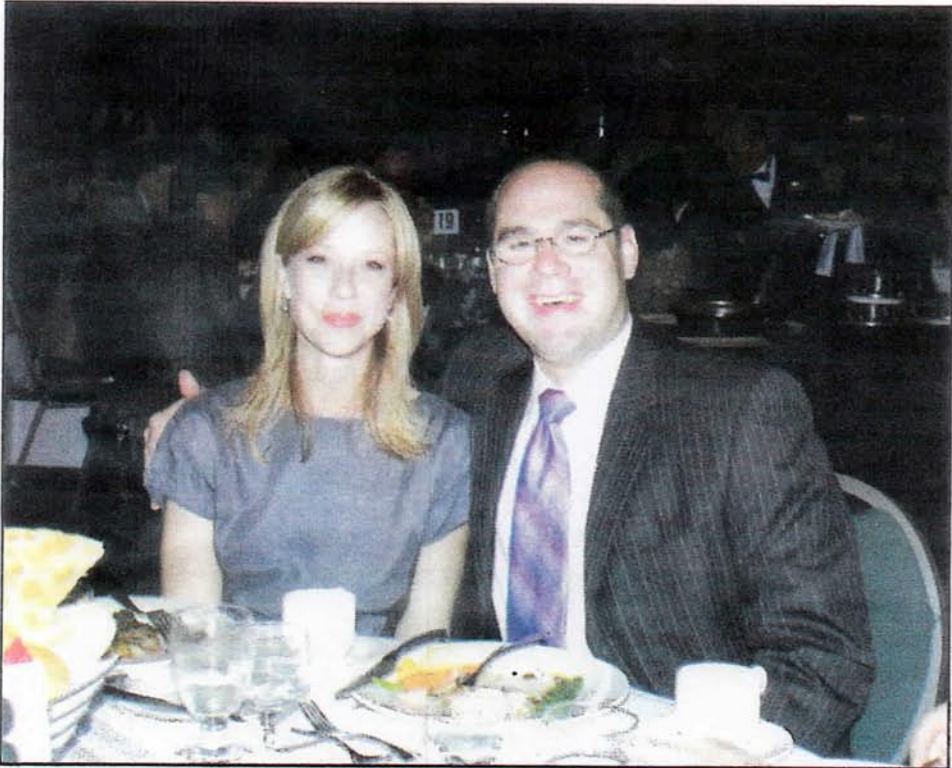
The California Ethics Project will utilize practices learned from Santa Clara's award-winning ethics programs and those of other cities in creating a flexible model for City Clerks to implement across California. Diridon was asked to

create a statewide coalition and serve as the Chair of the effort.

"I have given significant thought as to whether I will do more good pioneering in this program, and raising the caliber of politics across California, or serving as a member of the State Assembly, and dealing with a much broader policy set. I have come to realize that, while any number of people can serve in the Assembly, I am uniquely suited to engage City Clerks, for the first time, in an effort like this," stated Diridon in the letter.

Secondly, Diridon cites a dedication to public service as a reason for leaving the Assembly race. As City Clerk, Diridon serves as the Election Officer for all municipal elections. With the February 2008 Presidential primary election, including a ballot item regarding an item placed on the ballot through a referendum process by concerned Santa Clarans, the possibility of the 49ers stadium issue being placed on a June 2008 ballot — as well as the general City Council elections in November 2008, there's the potential of three municipal elections being held in 2008.

"That would mean the daunting task of holding three election cycles, in 2008, instead of one. Implementing an election is one of the greatest



Santa Clara City Clerk/Auditor Rod Diridon, Jr., with his fiancée Sabra Foley at the Mission City Community Fund dinner earlier this month.

technical challenges in the City Clerk profession,” added Diridon in the letter.

“I have often said that fair and impartial elections are the foundation of democracy, and their sound implementation is one of the promises I made to voters when elected as City Clerk. I also realize that respecting the trust placed in me as a candidate is important, and that there is a distinct possibility that I will not have the time to both meet my obligations as a Clerk, and give the focused effort necessary to properly run for the State Assembly,” stated Diridon.

Diridon states that he will return every campaign contribution made to him during the 2008 election cycle. “It is my hope that you will find another, equally valuable, use for your community service dollars,” states Diridon in the letter.

The Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates survey showed Diridon holding an edge over Assembly candidates Paul Fong and Santa Clara Council member Dominic Caserta. The survey, questioning 400 likely Democratic Party voters was completed October 4-7, 2007. The margin for error for the full sample is +/- 4.9 percent.

The survey concluded, “In summary, while many voters in the district remain undecided, Diridon begins the race with a notable initial advantage over his opponents, one which a well-funded and disciplined campaign should help him to maintain.

With Diridon dropping out of the 22nd Assembly race, the race is redefining itself, with several candidates possibly entering the race soon that had been supporting Diridon’s bid.