

March 15, 2017

Report & Recommendation of the 2017-18 Poet Laureate Review Sub-Committee

- The Poet Laureate program was established in 2005. This nomination is for the 7th City of Santa Barbara Poet Laureate.
- The review committee consisted of Elizabeth Owen and MaryLove Thralls (members of Arts Advisory), Sojourner Kincaid Rolle (our current Poet Laureate), Jace Turner (Community Relations Librarian from the SBPL), and Sarah York Rubin, ED of the SB County Office of Arts & Culture. Sarah facilitated the nomination and review process, but was not a voting member of the committee.
- This is a nomination for a two-year term and comes with a \$1000 stipend. The Poet Laureate is expected to participate in a minimum of four annual public functions a year, including for example, Summer Solstice, Old Spanish Days, and other significant festivals and events. Additionally, the PL shall aim to be actively involved with the local schools and shall endeavor to create or facilitate workshops and readings with students. To the extent possible, the PL should also endeavor to promote community awareness of the literary arts.

As we learned last month, this year the Office of Arts & Culture begins a partnership with the SB Public Library to further expand the literary outreach of the PL. The library is providing a space to serve as the official office of the PL.

- We received 5 nominations. A poet may not nominate him or herself – the nomination must come from the community, and the nominee must submit a statement verifying that s/he has reviewed the expectations of the position and agrees to the nomination.
- All 5 nominees were very interesting and had something unique to offer. Their resumes, sample poems and the letters we received from the individuals who nominated them gave us very good insight into each one's personality in addition to their literary craft.
- It was an interesting, eclectic group, as you might imagine. All are published poets, some more widely than others. Each appears to be well tethered in our community and would no doubt be supportive of their colleagues. Some are quite far along in years. Some have received more national and international acclaim than others.
- **One nominee in particular stood out to us. Enid Osborn writes wonderfully vivid, emotional poems that evoke a unique sense of place. Her poems are accessible and inclusive, appealing to a wide audience.**
Enid is well known in the local poetry community for hosting and organizing poetry events. By all accounts she has a particularly graceful presence, is a gifted public speaker and interpreter of poems. Her readings are inspiring and she is adept at networking, organizing events and bringing people together.

A native of New Mexico, Enid has lived in SB since 1982 and has been an active member of the poetry community since the early 1990's. She is fluent in Spanish and her educational background includes an emphasis on Latin American Literature. Her poetry, rooted in the natural world and attuned to Native American history and legend, is an excellent fit for a Santa Barbara Poet Laureate.

- It is worth noting that we received very enthusiastic letters of nomination for Enid from 15 members of the community, including past PL's, and numerous members of the academic and literary community. The educators that nominated her made a particular point of referencing her popularity with their students.
- Here are a few of quotes from some of these letters of support:

"Enid has an uncanny way of quietly charming any audience she is asked to stand in front of."

"Her subject matter matters. You listen hard, not wanting to miss a word. She is not afraid to go places other poets might not venture, and she does so with utter taste and compassion."

"Her vision includes a strong commitment to bringing poetry to everyone, drawing people in who are new to poetry as well as folks who are already part of the poetry community"

"Enid will be the people's poet. She has a gift for elevating everyday experience to the sublime. "

- The breadth of nominations for Enid did give our committee some pause. While it is clear that a large part of the poetry community stands behind her nomination, we wanted to look beyond this in our evaluation and not simply rubber stamp someone simply because they appear to have much wider support than the others. We had what I feel was a very thoughtful discussion about this, and spent time assessing each nominee's qualifications and literary style in our endeavor to find the right fit.
- **A Poet Laureate is in a unique position to express what it is like to be in a community, to really capture the essence of a place, and what binds us together in that place.**

Each of our past PL's has found ways to move the program forward and engage the people of SB. Our committee came to the conclusion that Enid Osborn has the vision and creativity to continue this tradition of deepening public access and appreciation of the literary arts in SB.

We wholeheartedly recommend Enid Osborn to be the City of SB's 7th PL for 2017-19.

- If you accept our committee's recommendation, the nomination will go to the city council for approval, with an installation ceremony to take place on April 11, coinciding with National Poetry Month.

Submitted by Elizabeth Owen, Member, Arts Advisory Committee, 3/16/17

Unanimously approved for Recommendation by the City Arts Advisory Committee on 3/16/17