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## Ladew Wins Education Appointment

By Amy Sylvestri  
San Leandro Times

Child advocacy attorney Philip Ladew was appointed as the newest member of the Alameda County Board of Education (BOE) at a meeting last Friday afternoon. However, his path to the seat was quite controversial — as the deadlocked board polled its members over a dozen times before reaching the decision to name Ladew to the board.

The Area 4 spot (representing San Leandro, San Lorenzo, Castro Valley, and surrounding unincorporated areas) became vacant after Felix Elizade passed away in September, following nearly 20 years on the board.

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## Ladew: Acknowledges awkwardness

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Once Ladew was voted in, he was immediately sworn in by County Superintendent Sheila Jordan.

Ladew, 35, said he acknowledged that his appointment was awkward at points and said he was disappointed that things got so “political,” but pledges to do his best for the children of Alameda County.

“I have been looking for a way to serve my community,” said Ladew, who used to teach public school in South Central Los Angeles before going to law school and working in advocacy, often for foster children and homeless youth. “I want to do good for the kids in this area.”

The position was originally sought by 15 people, 11 showed up to a meeting earlier in October for in-depth interviews with the rest of the board. Those candidates were then eventually narrowed down to three: Ladew, Alameda County Fire Department Spokeswoman Aisha Knowles and UCSF administrator Gary Howard.

Having a board with an even amount of members resulted in several ties when the board polled itself.

“We were continually deadlocked,” said BOE Vice President



Philip Ladew

Ken Berrick. “The polling was always incredibly close.”

Ultimately, Ladew won with a 4 to 2 vote after Berrick decided to change his original vote, saying all the candidates were talented and well-qualified.

California Education Code states that the BOE had 60 days to come up with a replacement. The board could either appoint the new member among themselves or put the matter on the next county-wide election — which would be in June 2011, not this week’s election — or they could have a special election, which would cost from \$500,000 to \$700,000, according to Berrick.

“That wasn’t going to happen,” said Berrick. “In this economy, it would be totally uncon-

scionable to spend half a million dollars on a special election.”

So, the BOE decided to make the decision themselves, but it didn’t come easily.

Two members of the board suggested flipping a coin, an idea that was actually formally voted on and discarded. At one point, Trustee Marlon McWilson called the process “asinine” and was chided by another board member for swearing before he pointed out “that is a word, not a curse word.”

When Berrick said he might change his vote, he admitted that the process wasn’t ideal.

“I had hoped that, in our process, we would have reached a compromise, but we have a polarization and we will continue to be polarized,” said Berrick “It is a bad solution for everyone, but a better solution than no solution.”

Berrick says he wants to change the state education code so something like this won’t happen again, and he wants to make elections for replacement board members easier.

Ladew will now serve Area 4 until the next election in June of 2012, at which point he told the board he has no intention of running for reelection, though nothing legally binds him from running again.

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