

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Susan Kirks a Candidate for Petaluma Mayor November 2022

Petaluma, CA – A recognized environmental leader has joined the November 8th election bid for Petaluma Mayor. Susan Kirks, 5-time President of Madrone Audubon Society and co-founder and leader of Paula Lane Action Network (PLAN), today announced her candidacy. “Our Natural Environment is the most important topic now and into the future,” said Kirks. “Making our Natural Environment a #1 priority will help conserve open and green spaces, protect habitat for wildlife, and help maintain the rural and community character Petaluma has been losing.” Kirks further explains, “Knowing how to craft environmental policy and get things done takes experience and relationships. We must create open space policy, identify areas to preserve, and seek funding to achieve well-identified goals.” Kirks says land use decisions, a safe and welcoming community, and housing and transportation planning all must be viewed through the lens of our Natural Environment.

The Natural Environment is the #1 priority in the General Plan Update process as requested by members of the General Plan Advisory Committee. “We all say we want open and green spaces, a good quality of life, lower expenses and affordable housing, with improved affordable transportation and transit,” says Kirks, “and to achieve best outcomes for Petaluma residents and businesses, we must be forward thinking with solid leadership and a willingness to stay the course and speed up the inordinately slow time-frame of what we get done here in Petaluma.”

Kirks views climate change and action as a #1 priority, but edifies that climate-related decisions and actions are all encompassed by the Natural Environment, including decisions about protecting habitat, supporting local plant and fruit production without destroying habitat, and supporting exceptional wildlife who rely upon our lands and waters for survival. She says, “If we do not have strong leadership in this area, all will be lost in Petaluma, and that’s not an exaggeration.” Kirks is currently completing a wildlife corridors and crossings mapping series for Sonoma and Marin Counties, developed over 20 years and featured by Together Bay Area (www.togetherbayarea.org) as one of 110 projects exemplifying how to realize the Governor’s 30x30 initiative to save 30% of California’s lands and waters by 2030.

“I’m about creating structure to support realizing a vision and, as a Mayor, I would be the spark for our City Council to transcend division and make decisions to serve our community, to make life better for all of us,” Susan states.

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2

Kirks brings a wealth of impressive experience to the Mayoral race, ranging from leading the effort 2014-2018 that secured the honor of Ramsar Wetland of International Importance for the Petaluma Wetlands to securing an over \$1,000,000 open space grant in 2012 to conserve the Paula Lane open space land in West Petaluma, home to over 100 bird species and the famous Paula Lane badgers. She was a key participant in the Cardoza Ranch open space acquisition, setting the way for that land to become Tolay Lake Regional Park. A conservation consultant, Kirks has provided guidance for a PBS documentary on the Rocky Mountain wildlife corridor and more recently to FarmLore Films LLC, producing a National Geographic TV series on biodiversity, following up the acclaimed documentary, *The Biggest Little Farm*.

Kirks is also one of the incorporators of a new land trust, *Conservation Trust of the North Bay*, to serve Sonoma and Marin Counties. She revealed, “This land trust will provide a mechanism of autonomy to support acquiring and conserving open and green spaces for habitat protection, wildlife corridors and also to support plant-based agriculture and establishment of wildlife and farmed animal sanctuaries.” An application for 501c3 federal tax exemption for the trust is currently in process.

Kirks has a background in organizational communication and is highly skilled in meeting management. “I’d like to encourage City Council members to speak up for their Districts and the issues they believe are important for our community, and collaborate to make best decisions. Members of the public who participate in Council meetings will also be listened to and treated with respect.”

Kirks expresses gratitude for Petaluma’s geographic location in Sonoma County. “We need to ensure our city and community are ready and able as a primary evacuation center in emergencies for Petaluma and Sonoma County residents and animals. The Fairgrounds definitely needs to continue to fulfill this critical need.”

A Petaluma resident for 22 years, Susan has a broad background in community service, including serving 2006-2010 on the Board of Directors of Rebuilding Together Petaluma and appointed to serve our 2nd District 2008-2010 on the Open Space District Citizens Advisory Committee.

Susan Kirks holds an M.S. degree in Traditional Oriental Medicine from Emperor's College in Santa Monica and enjoyed a 15-year career as a licensed acupuncturist in the late 1990s and early 2000s. She holds an M.S. degree in Communication from Syracuse University with emphases in media/public affairs and organizational development, and a B.A. degree in

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3

Communication with Honors from NC State University. Kirks completed the Inaugural Leadership Academy of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley in 2010. Her academy project was the design and plan for the Paula Lane Nature Preserve in West Petaluma. That project design today is included in the City's Climate Action Framework as an exemplary High Use-Low Impact (HULI) design to protect sensitive habitat while providing public access and enjoyment of Nature. "This is the design of the future for all parks and open spaces in Petaluma," shared Kirks, "to make ourselves smaller than the areas where we passively recreate, to respect and care for our open spaces, parks and gardens."

"I look forward to meeting with Petaluma residents and voters and discussing community interests and concerns. I'm excited about the new Districts to be represented on the City Council for the first time ever. Together we can serve all of Petaluma, and that service needs to be with honesty and integrity."

Learn more about Susan's priorities for Petaluma at www.susankirkspetaluma.com. Contact the campaign at susan.petaluma@gmail.com, 707-779-9788.

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