



Los Altos criminal attorney Rosen appointed as new county judge

Sarah Feng - Town Crier Editorial Intern Apr 10, 2018 0

Los Altos resident Amber Rosen has spent nearly half her life as a federal prosecutor. Now, instead of awaiting the judge's verdict, she's handing it out.

Gov. Jerry Brown recently appointed Rosen to a Superior Court judge seat presiding over Santa Clara County. She was sworn in Feb. 1 and began hearing cases 12 days later.



Rosen

Although Rosen's experience is in criminal cases, she now is resolving matters concerning youth and their families. She hears cases in Juvenile Dependency Court to avoid a conflict of interest – her husband is Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen.

The newly appointed judge has already heard more than 30 cases, with issues ranging from adoption to termination of parental rights.

“As a prosecutor, you’re really trying to do justice, to do the right thing,” she said. “I think my experience has allowed me to see how important it is to give the advocates on both sides a chance to be heard.”

She added that there’s an “overlap” between dependency and criminal law. Her experience as a trial court and appellate court prosecutor has given her familiarity with such matters, including substance abuse and physical and sexual abuse.

“I think the stories could be quite shocking if you didn’t have any background in either (type of) law. ... We do see those kinds of issues, even from a different perspective,” she said.

Considering her current status in the legal world, it may be hard to believe that Rosen only decided to become an attorney just before she applied to law school. Initially, she wanted to work in public policy or the legislature but changed course after taking trial efficacy classes and interning in a prosecution office.

“As opposed to maybe working for a particular party ... I liked working with and for victims, so that’s really what turned me around,” she said.

After earning a bachelor’s degree from Harvard University, Rosen earned her Juris Doctor degree from UC Berkeley.

Meeting the challenge

Her 26 years as an attorney include serving as deputy chief of the San Jose office of the U.S. Attorney’s Office and as an attorney at the U.S. Department of Justice’s Tax Division.

Rosen said she expects to remain in Juvenile Dependency Court for at least three years. In that time, she aims to learn more about dependency and to be “useful to the court and to the families that appear before (her),” she said.

Some of her cases have been joyful occasions, such as an adoption. Others are quite the opposite, such as when families cannot be reunited.

So far, Rosen hasn’t doubted the decisions she’s made but added, “I’m sure that will happen.”

How does the judge judge herself so far?

“You know, I try to make the best decision I can with the information I have before me,” she said.

Rosen does not foresee returning to her work as a prosecutor after her six-year term as a judge expires.

“I’ve just gotten here and so for the moment, I’m enjoying this challenge and we’ll see where it leads in the future,” she said.