Cabrillo Foundation president seeks seat

Appointed incumbent looks to keep Area VII post

By KIMBERLY WHITE
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APTOPS — Ed Banks may be the newest arrival on Cabrillo College’s Board of Trustees, but his history with the community college dates to 2005, when he joined the Board of Directors for the Cabrillo College Foundation.

In July, he took over the helm as the foundation’s president, and he’s now looking to make permanent his recent appointment to the Area VII seat on Cabrillo’s Board of Trustees. He’s the only candidate seeking to fill the seat, which represents parts of Watsonville, unincorporated areas of the city, and a southern portion of San Benito County.

“I had never given much thought to getting involved in any kind of elected position,” he said, but his “fondness for Cabrillo” prompted him to toss his hat in the ring several months ago, when former Trustee Katy Stonebloom resigned.

Banks, a 63-year-old insurance broker with Watsonville-based KBK Insurance, was born in San Francisco and moved to La Selva Beach when he was a toddler. After graduating from Watsonville High School, he attended Cabrillo for two years, then moved on to Sonoma State University, where he graduated with a degree in kinesiology in 1970. He intended to obtain a teaching credential, but those plans were sidelined for two years while he served in a naval reserve unit. When he was discharged in 1975, he began working for an insurance firm in San Jose, a field he’s stuck with ever since.

Asked whether he believes voters will approve Gov. Jerry Brown’s tax proposals in the fall, he hesitated before saying he does not, but remains “cautiously optimistic.” And he credited the college for taking steps to prepare for a scenario in which midyear budget cuts go into effect.

Banks said he’s sympathetic to the plight of many students who not only find themselves struggling financially, but also often unprepared for college-level work. Then there’s the issue of being able to enroll in the classes they need to move on to a four-year university, a harder and harder feat in the face of multiyear budget cuts that have slashed staffing and class offerings.

Banks said he wanted to “see if I would be in a position to be able to help guide the district through these really challenging times” when he joined the Board in June. Everyone from managers to students have had to sacrifice, but Cabrillo has “done a remarkable job and I hope in some way to contribute” to a brighter future.

He also praised the recent “Samper Experience” which brought hundreds of fourth-grade students from around the county for a half-day of classes at Cabrillo, giving them a peek into the college experience that’s waiting for them down the road.

As a member of the Rotary Club of Watsonville, Banks helps youth improve their reading skills through a partnership with E.A. Hall Middle School. He and a student spend about half an hour reading to each other each week, he said, with the goal of increasing the student’s reading level by at least one grade by the end of the year. He’s also a former reserve firefighter and a member of the Watsonville Firefighters Association.

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