

Marigonda joins judicial ranks

Courts

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Judge Paul Marigonda was sworn in Monday, becoming the latest new face on a local bench that has seen huge turnover in the last year.

Marigonda, a former Scotts Valley city councilman and assistant district attorney, was tapped by Gov.

SANTA CRUZ Arnold Schwarzenegger to serve on the Santa Cruz County Superior Court.

He fills the vacancy created by retiring Judge Thomas E. Kelly and joins two other Schwarzenegger appointees in the local court: judges Paul Burdick, a Democrat described as "apolitical" by the Governor's Office, and Denine Guy, a Republican.

Another new judge — the fourth appointment to the local bench by the governor since February 2006 — is expected soon. Judge Robert B. Yonts announced his retirement late last year. He plans to step down by the end of the month.

Staff at Schwarzenegger's office would not speculate on when another judge would be selected.

"This position's open until the governor finds the most qualified person for the job," Governor's Office spokeswoman Sabrina Lockhart said Monday.

Although Kelly has technically retired, he will stay on until a replacement for Yonts is named, court officials have said.

Judges are typically appointed and run for re-election after six years, if challenged.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Paul Marigonda is congratulated by Judge Heather Morse after taking the oath to become Santa Cruz County's newest Superior Court Judge on Monday.

Marigonda starts today in misdemeanor court and may begin a jury trial on his first day, presiding Judge Heather Morse noted during his "official but informal swearing-in" Monday afternoon that was attended by Marigonda's wife and two sons, fellow judges, court staff, prosecutors from the District Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Office deputies.

"I believe I can bring some good things and some great ideas and some common sense," said Marigonda, 46, after Morse

helped him don a black judge's robe.

Marigonda will earn \$158,000 a year as a judge. An official, by-invitation investigation is planned for Jan. 26.

Marigonda has been a prosecutor since 1989. He specialized in felony cases and has appeared in more than 100 jury trials. Even Monday morning — hours before taking his judge's oath — Marigonda was in court representing the people's position.

"It's been a wonderful career," Marigonda said after he was sworn in.

Judge turnover

The Santa Cruz County Superior Court has seen many changes recently.

2005

■ November: Judge Katherine Akao dies.

■ December: Judge Thomas Kelly announces his retirement. He remains on the bench.

2006

■ January: Judge Arthur Danner III dies.

■ February: Aptos attorney Paul Burdick appointed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to replace Danner.

■ Spring/Summer: A series of visiting judges staff vacancies on the bench.

■ June: Monterey County prosecutor Denine Guy appointed by Schwarzenegger to replace Akao.

■ December: Judge Robert B. Yonts announces his retirement, effective at the end of January; Santa Cruz County prosecutor Paul Marigonda appointed by Schwarzenegger to replace Kelly.

Source: S.C. County Superior Court

He resigned from the Scotts Valley City Council last month, after winning another term this fall when his seat was uncontested. He served six years on the council, including a stint as mayor in 2005. A replacement council member has not been selected.

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