

Marin Economic Forum appoints first CEO

By Will Jason and Jessica Bernstein-Wax Marin Independent Journal

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The Marin Economic Forum board has appointed Neil Stone, a longtime city employee in San Jose, as its first chief executive officer.

Sonoma State University professor Robert Eyler had been serving as both interim CEO and chief economist and will continue as the organization's chief economist, a contract position.

"We were fortunate to have dozens of applicants for the position, and a group of truly stellar finalists from which to make our final selection," Harry Thomas, the forum's board president, said in a statement. "With this hire, we are expanding the CEO position to a full-time role, and will continue to gain momentum as we advance our efforts to bolster economic vitality as the key to a beautiful, thriving Marin."

Those efforts include attracting and retaining businesses with a focus on industries including agri-tourism, technology, green building, commercial real estate, health care and finance, Stone said in an interview.

"Part of the way we intend to do that is providing objective economic analysis and being a resource for the public and businesses for data and information," he said.

The forum is a public-private partnership

created last year to provide economic analysis and foster growth. It is funded with grants from the county, the Marin Community Foundation and local businesses, in addition to fees charged to other entities for contract work.

The forum has a budget of approximately \$500,000 for 2011-12,

Thomas said.

Stone, who will earn \$110,000 a year, is the forum's only full-time staff member.

Stone, who has lectured at the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of Southern California, most recently worked as a division manager in real estate services and asset management for the city of San Jose.

He previously served as president and CEO of the Napa Valley Economic Development Corp. and as the Southern California Rapid Transit District development agency's development manager.



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A San Jose resident, he plans to re-locate to Marin in the next few months.

"Marin is a wonderful place for businesses to attract employees to live, work and play, and MEF is playing an important role in focusing on industries that will thrive here," he said in a statement.

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