

Application Form

Profile

Walter J. McMath
First Name Middle Initial Last Name

[Redacted] Suite or Apt
Richmond CA 94805
City State Postal Code

[Redacted]
Primary Phone

[Redacted]

District Locator Tool

Resident of Supervisorial District:

☒ District 1

Wilshire Law Firm Law and Motion Attorney
Employer Job Title

Length of Employment

Do you work in Contra Costa County?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, in which District do you work?

1

How long have you lived or worked in Contra Costa County?

2 years

Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Board and Interest

Which Boards would you like to apply for?

African American Holistic Wellness and Resource Hub Transitional Community Advisory Board: Submitted

Seat Name

I seek any open seat and have experience in a number of relevant areas; especially reentry and restorative justice.

Have you ever attended a meeting of the advisory board for which you are applying?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If Yes, how many meetings have you attended?

N/A

Education

Select the option that applies to your high school education *

☒ High School Diploma

College/ University A

Name of College Attended

Princeton University

Degree Type / Course of Study / Major

A.B. (Artis Bachelorum) Religion, Minor in Near Eastern Studies, Minor in Jewish Studies

Degree Awarded?

☒ Yes ☐ No

College/ University B

Name of College Attended

U.C. Berkeley School of Law

Degree Type / Course of Study / Major

J.D.

Degree Awarded?

☒ Yes ☐ No

College/ University C

Name of College Attended

Degree Type / Course of Study / Major

Degree Awarded?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Other Trainings & Occupational Licenses**Other Training A**

Certificate Awarded for Training?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Other Training B

Certificate Awarded for Training?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Occupational Licenses Completed:

CA State Bar Number #266382

Qualifications and Volunteer Experience**Please explain why you would like to serve on this particular board, committee, or commission.**

I feel that I am uniquely qualified to serve on this committee as a Bay Area native, a Richmond resident, a barred California attorney, and a passionate advocate for public service. I am deeply-experienced in the field of California criminal law, having served as both a public defender and a private criminal defense attorney throughout the Bay Area. In these roles, I have gained extensive firsthand professional experience with the arrest, prosecution, and rehabilitation of individuals charged with infractions, misdemeanors, and felonies throughout California, including Contra Costa County. I am truly lucky to have helped some people get out of trouble and turn things around in this capacity. I also care deeply about serving the community outside of the legal milieu and in as many proactive ways as I can. I recently created the volunteer position of Therapeutic Arts Coordinator at Seneca's Catalyst Academy, where I sourced an instrument library and developed a therapeutic high school music and arts curriculum for high schoolers. I did this because I recognize the importance of music and arts classes, and a well-rounded curriculum, to children's, and people's, overall behavioral and physical health. I am very enthusiastic about this new initiative, particularly its holistic approach to community healing. My work at Catalyst Academy, integrating music and drama, is also informed by my belief in a holistic approach; I strongly felt that students needed arts education in addition to traditional academics, which prompted me to create the program from scratch. As a criminal defense attorney, I often found myself acting as a de facto social worker, working not only to resolve a client's case but also to identify services, interventions, or other aid that would address their underlying issues and help them move forward. I believe in the holistic approach to wellness overall, and so I believe that this Committee represents a great opportunity for our community, and I want to help this initiative succeed in any way that I can.

Describe your qualifications for this appointment. (NOTE: you may also include a copy of your resume with this application)

I am a Bay Area native, a Richmond resident, and a veteran member of the California State Bar. I have practiced criminal law for twenty years in the Bay Area and am readily and intimately familiar with the California Penal Code and other California Codes, as well as the workings of the criminal justice system in Contra Costa County as well as other counties throughout California. Through day-in and day-out practice experience, and rapt attention to my surroundings, I have had the opportunity to observe firsthand what works in the justice system, what doesn't, what can use improvement, and what can use overhaul. I am familiar with the rehabilitative measures that already exist within the system, and I have many ideas for new ones. Additionally, the entire reason I became an attorney in the first place was that I hoped to reform the criminal justice system. I studied sociology with Bruce Western in college, and learned that certain economic and racial demographics are likely to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system. I learned about the theories regarding the overall societal factors that influence crime; such as societal strain created when every member of the community doesn't have an equal chance to succeed. I felt great compassion for the experience of people in that circumstance, regardless of the ultimate merits of their cases. My primary motivation for becoming an attorney, and for focusing on criminal defense, was a sincere hope to address the deep economic and racial inequities within the criminal justice system. I believe that the experience I have gained in the past two decades, directly observing the workings of our state and local criminal courts, can contribute meaningfully to this conversation. I also have a wide array of communication skills and am experienced in presenting information and in educating people of all levels and sophistications about the workings of the legal system, in ways that are accessible. I have tried cases in the double digits in the State of California and am eminently comfortable speaking publicly. I have previously been a speaker at South By Southwest (SXSW).

Upload a Resume

Would you like to be considered for appointment to other advisory bodies for which you may be qualified?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Do you have any obligations that might affect your attendance at scheduled meetings?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If Yes, please explain:

I am a father of young children, an active member of the PTA, and I still practice law; however, I am adept at juggling multiple obligations.

Are you currently or have you ever been appointed to a Contra Costa County advisory board?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If Yes, please list the Contra Costa County advisory board(s) on which you are currently serving:

If Yes, please also list the Contra Costa County advisory board(s) on which you have previously served:

List any volunteer or community experience, including any advisory boards on which you have served.

Please refer to my previously-referenced experience as volunteer music teacher and program coordinator for Catalyst Academy. I have also served on the board of The Assembly, an avant-garde New York theater company.

Conflict of Interest and Certification

Do you have a familial or financial relationship with a member of the Board of Supervisors? (Please refer to the relationships listed under the "Important Information" section below or Resolution No. 2021/234)

☒ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please identify the nature of the relationship:

Do you have any financial relationships with the County such as grants, contracts, or other economic relationships?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If Yes, please identify the nature of the relationship:

Please Agree with the Following Statement

I CERTIFY that the statements made by me in this application are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, and are made in good faith. I acknowledge and undersand that all information in this application is publicly accessible. I understand that misstatements and/or omissions of material fact may cause forfeiture of my rights to serve on a board, committee, or commission in Contra Costa County.

☒ I Agree

Important Information

1. This application and any attachments you provide to it is a public document and is subject to the California Public Records Act (CA Government Code §6250-6270).
2. All members of appointed bodies are required to take the advisory body training provided by Contra Costa County.
3. Members of certain boards, commissions, and committees may be required to: (1) file a Statement of Economic Interest Form also known as a Form 700, and (2) complete the State Ethics Training Course as required by AB 1234.
4. Meetings may be held in various locations and some locations may not be accessible by public transportation.
5. Meeting dates and times are subject to change and may occur up to two (2) days per month.
6. Some boards, committees, or commissions may assign members to subcommittees or work groups which may require an additional commitment of time.
7. As indicated in Board Resolution 2021/234, a person will not be eligible for appointment if he/she is related to a Board of Supervisors' member in any of the following relationships:
 - (1) Mother, father, son, and daughter;
 - (2) Brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, grandson, and granddaughter;
 - (3) Husband, wife, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, stepson, and stepdaughter;
 - (4) Registered domestic partner, pursuant to California Family Code section 297;
 - (5) The relatives, as defined in 1 and 2 above, for a registered domestic partner;
 - (6) Any person with whom a Board Member shares a financial interest as defined in the Political Reform Act (Gov't Code §87103, Financial Interest), such as a business partner or business associate.

WALTER J. McMATH, J.D. ("JOHN")

Richmond CA 94805

CREATIVE, HUMAN COUNSEL

I am a talented attorney with substantial experience in civil and criminal litigation, litigation management and enterprise-level legal oversight and risk abatement. I excel in collaborative legal environments and draw upon my diverse cultural experiences, including my own background as a bilingual Black and Mexican attorney, to inform my practice. I adapt quickly to emerging situations outside my scope and experience, and have a talent for unearthing, absorbing, and applying vital information. My greatest successes arise from my top-notch communication, support, and research/analysis skills. At my best, I deliver results that exceed expectations with grace, poise, and style.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Wilshire Law Firm, Oakland, CA

September 2025 – Present

Law and Motion Attorney

- Guide legal research and analysis for multiple high-volume litigation teams at premiere Plaintiff-side law firm.
- Apply my skills in support of assisting community members to obtain equitable justice and remuneration.
- Write persuasive memoranda and briefs that succinctly synthesize the state of the law as well as the requested action.
- Additional research into newly passed laws and emergent legislation, and other professional development study.
- Produce presentations, MCLEs, and training materials on these topics and others ("Persuasive Gesturing," e.g.).

Catalyst Academy, El Sobrante, CA

July 2024 – Present

Program Coordinator, Therapeutic Performing Arts

- Drawing on my own musical experience and talent, as well as decades of theatrical experience, I designed, built, executed, and refined a performing arts curriculum for special-needs public school students.
- Utilizing my social network, development skills, and personal resourcefulness I built the school's current collection of wind, keyboard, and percussive instruments.
- Through the lens of performing arts, I teach special-needs students valuable life skills including implementing self-soothing and coping strategies, exploring healthy self-expression, practicing speech and presentation techniques, and fostering collaborative cooperation.

Morris Law, PC, Berkeley, CA

August 2024 – August 2025

Senior Counsel

- Oversee general practice managing high-exposure criminal cases in and around the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Conduct all trials, hearings, alternative dispute resolutions, and other legal proceedings.
- Primary responsibility for caseload management; including intake, strategy/negotiation, and disposition of each case.
- Successfully secured diversion on several serious felony cases through intelligent, creative advocacy.
- Successfully secured criminal record expungement or sealing relief under adverse circumstances on numerous occasions.

Law Offices of Walter J. McMath, Oakland, CA

July 2020 – August 2024

Owner/Principal Counsel

- Oversee general practice handling cases in areas including high-exposure criminal practice, civil and administrative matters.
- Conduct all trials, hearings, alternative dispute resolutions, and other legal proceedings.
- Primary responsibility for caseload management; including intake, strategy/negotiation, and disposition of each case.
- Negotiate and review contracts of varying complexity, especially service agreements, license agreements, NDAs, and marketing agreements.
- Furnish fractional general counsel services to businesses in sectors including fiscal management, entertainment, software development, and location-based entertainment.
- Designed, built, scaled, and drove enterprise-wide legal strategies and initiatives to identify and mitigate risk.
- Provided day-to-day legal guidance regarding policy, operations, and legal compliance for a virtual-reality comedy club.

Hartsuyker, Stratman & Williams-Abrego, Oakland, CA**September 2018 – July 2020***Associate Trial Attorney*

- Took charge of a diverse high-volume civil litigation caseload including personal injury, premises liability, food adulteration, MVA, and other practice areas.
- Adapted quickly to service a wide variety of small businesses including malls, grocery stores, nail shops, COAs, restaurants, and property managers.
- Repeated wins at trial through clear and coherent presentation of scientific and technical information, empathy, and personal presence.
- Primary responsibility for conducting depositions, making offers, preparing for mediation, and conducting trial.
- Enjoyed amicable, functional working relationships with a wide variety of claims adjusters, co-workers, co-counsel, judges, opposing counsel, experts, and others. Coordinated defense in multiple-coverage situations as needed.
- Successfully defended a local neighborhood grocery store against a multi-million-dollar specious lawsuit. Provided jury selection expertise that was vital to our ultimate success. Advocated against monumental odds to avoid an unfavorable mistrial despite interruption by COVID.

Gough & Hancock, LLP, San Francisco, CA**May 2017 – September 2018***Counsel*

- Conducted evaluations of wildfire claims filed against Pacific Gas & Electric in catastrophic wildfires.
- Oversaw in-person inspection of claimant properties by experts in areas such as forestry, real property valuation, soil engineering, and movable property valuation.
- Reviewed each expert report in detail. Synthesized the most relevant findings into strategy documents and other mediation materials.
- Gained working knowledge of property appraisal methods, California flora, and soil engineering techniques.

Alameda County Public Defender, Alameda County, CA**December 2015 – May 2017***Deputy Public Defender*

- Joint responsibility for oversight of all legal operations in a government-funded indigent defense firm.
- Primary responsibility for intake, strategy/negotiation, and disposition of felony and misdemeanor cases.
- Joint responsibility for all defense legal operations in Dept. 115, a high-volume criminal court.
- Successfully fended off “three-strikes” eligible charges at trial through mastery of evidence law and legal research.
- Procured reversal of client’s conviction at trial, against monumental odds, through meticulous legal research and dogged advocacy.
- Repeated wins at trial through clear and coherent presentation of scientific and technical information, empathy, and personal presence.

Alameda County Public Defender, Alameda County, CA**September 2009 – December 2015***Associate Deputy Public Defender*

- Primary responsibility for intake, strategy/negotiation, disposition and trial of felony and misdemeanor cases.
- Procured client’s acquittal and release from custody following breakdown of key witness under cross-examination.
- Procured client’s acquittal through recognition of opportunity coupled with execution of a carefully orchestrated plan.
- Procured client’s acquittal through superior understanding of scientific evidence and natural story-telling ability.

Axinn Veltrop & Harkider, LLP, New York, NY**2004 – 2006****Paralegal**

- Supported a team of seven attorneys practicing high-level antitrust law in a boutique firm environment.
- Assisted with assembly and filing of Hart-Scott Rodino requests.
- Managed teams of temporary attorneys executing document review in support of completing Government “second requests.”
- Assisted in various acquisitions, including Cingular-BellSouth, GameStop/Electronics Boutique, OmniCare, and others.
- Gained working knowledge of merger and acquisition procedure, especially Gov’t oversight and approval process.
- Successfully obtained *sub rosa* evidence in support of a complex movie theater litigation.

EDUCATION & LICENSES

Member in Good Standing, State Bar of California #266382

December 04, 2009 – Present

University of California, Berkeley School of Law, Berkeley, CA

August 2006 – May 2009

Juris Doctorate (J.D.), May 2009. Authored “The Bradbury Principle,” proposing a functional rubric for creating policy to govern innovative technologies.

Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

September 1999 – June 2003

A.B. in Religion; Minors in Near Eastern Studies and Jewish Studies. Authored “Defining the Difference,” a study of religious polemic based upon Maimonides’ Epistle to Yemen.

SKILLS

- **Legal:** Direct representation. Top-notch legal research. Courtroom practice expert. Jury selection wizard. Artful witness preparation and presentation, including scientific evidence. Effective cross-examination and impeachment.
- **Communication:** Fluent Spanish. Write/edit articles, blogs, and other content. Persuade and influence others. Create effective presentations. Mastery of presentation techniques. Natural public speaker. Born listener. Effective negotiator.
- **Leadership:** Oversee groups comfortably. Delegate appropriate work. Evaluate team members and provide professional development and mentorship. Stewardship and management of projects from beginning to end. Identification and prioritization of goals and tasks. Promotion of esprit de corps and general motivation.
- **Support:** Quick study. Natural teacher. Empathic Counselor. Reliable conflict resolution. Fierce advocacy. Facilitate group discussions and sessions.
- **Music Theory and Performing Arts:** Self-taught woodwind player (presently flute, clarinet, soprano saxophone, and recorder). Proficient keyboard player (piano, organ, accordion, melodica). Scholar of theatrical techniques applicable to stage performance, classroom presentation, public speaking, and jury trial litigation.
- **Creative:** Write and edit fiction and non-fiction. AV Production and editing. Brainstorm ideas and strategies.
- **Organization/Management:** Navigate complex bureaucratic environments. Understand, internalize, and enforce policies and procedures. Utilize organizational tools to improve mental efficiency. Work effectively under deadline.
- **Research/Analysis:** Top-notch legal research skills. Substantive legislation/legislative history experience. Understand, evaluate, and synthesize data quickly, including medical records, scientific information, and mathematical data. Locate and assimilate necessary information quickly.
- **Technical:** Mastery of PC software and hardware systems. Assemble and replace computer components. Word, PowerPoint, Excel expert. Frequently adopt bleeding-edge technology to increase personal efficiency.

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

- Featured Speaker, **GatherVerse News**, “Pioneer Profile: Navigating Virtual Law’s New Terrain. Safety & Privacy, Legal and Governance of Web3.”
- Panelist, **GatherVerse Legal & Governance Summit**, “The Metaverse: Data, Commerce, Harassment, Safety, and Privacy. What do We Need to Know?”
- Panelist, **South by Southwest 2022**, “Is VR the Future of Fitness?”
- Panelist, **VR/AR Chicago**, “The Next Evolution: Immersive Technology & Law.”
- Speaker, **Berkeley Law**, Leadership Seminar
- Speaker, **Berkeley Law**, “Negotiating Trauma, Emotions, and the Practice of Law.”

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERING

- Board of Directors, **The Assembly** (theater company), New York, NY
- Volunteer, **Ocean View Elementary**, Albany, CA