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Public Law Partner Michael Barrett Interviewed by Law360

On May 3, 2024, Public Law Partner Michael Barrett was interviewed *Law360* about his recent transition to Burke, Williams & Sorensen, LLP. The following is the content of that interview.

Longtime Napa City Atty Joins Burke Williams

By James Mills, Law360 (May 3, 2024, 4:23 PM EDT) —

Burke Williams & Sorensen LLP is expanding its public law team, announcing Friday it is bringing in the former city attorney for the City of Napa, California, as a partner in its San Rafael office in Marin County.

Michael W. Barrett, who retired as the Napa city attorney in April after 18 years in that position, has joined the Burke Williams public law practice. He advises clients about legal issues related to the administration and operations of municipal governments and public utilities.

In a Friday morning interview, Barrett told Law360 he enjoyed his time as a city attorney but is looking forward to expanding his scope beyond a single city. “This is a natural progression for me,” Barrett said. “I’ve been in the public law business providing legal service to cities in-house for a lot of years. I have been looking forward to a time when I might be able to make the move from working for one client to working for many clients throughout the state. I’m excited by that new opportunity to now work for many more clients where I’ve been focused on one client for the past 18 years.”

He’s long admired Burke Williams attorneys, having worked with many of them over the years. “I’ve built relationships with lawyers from Burke Williams and developed deep working relationships with them on many different exciting projects,” Barrett said. “I’m excited to build the connection with the lawyers in the firm even more now.”

Burke Williams’s public law practice group leader Eric S. Vail is delighted to have Barrett on the team, saying he will be an “exceptional and elite addition” to the firm’s bench of 84 municipal law attorneys who advise over 300 state agencies, cities, counties, school districts, and joint powers authorities throughout California.

Barrett earned his law degree in 1991 from National University's JFK School of Law in San Diego. He also has a masters of public administration from National University. He began his career in local government at the city of Oceanside as a law clerk. He briefly worked for a firm in San Diego, representing public and private clients. He then moved in-house, serving in deputy and assistant city attorney positions at the city of Tracy and the city of Fremont. He joined the city of Napa as city attorney in late 2005.

Barrett said he's always been fascinated by public spaces and enjoys playing a part in the shaping of those spaces. "I grew a passion for the public impact on public space and applying my legal skills to making that happen," he said. "That focus has always been a driving force for me in public sector law. Through my career, it expanded into the other areas of local government, what local government does for communities. For me, it's very rewarding to work on projects and see the very public and positive impacts on a community. It gives me a lot of satisfaction."

-Editing by Allissa Miller.



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By Sarah Hill

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