



## Road Rage at Budget Meeting

By Cathy Tyson



After the usual formalities at the recent Budget Workshop and Municipal Goal Setting meeting Steve Falk, City Manager and Tracy Robinson, Administrative Services Director gave very thorough presentations on Lafayette's current financial situation.

It was a surprise to no one that road conditions would dominate the meeting. Clearly none of the concerned residents that spoke up were happy with the state of asphalt in town.

Lafayette's revenue sources are limited, due to a lack of larger retail establishments contributing sales tax dollars to the general fund. Even though the City is run very efficiently, it provides the lowest per-capita police staffing in the County and has

an unfunded \$23 million road repair backlog. Yet, according to Falk, "Lafayette has been aggressive about seeking new sources of revenue to fund critical shortfalls. Notably the City has recently: doubled the parking meter rate, doubled the number of parking meters, hired a consultant to audit the City's impact fee structure and recommend ways to find new revenues and finally made fee-based recreation programs self-sufficient."

In addition there has been some discussion about instituting a business license tax on a sliding scale depending on the size of a business. For example, Safeway would pay more than Nitro Dog.

The city has made a concerted effort to educate the public about municipal finance, but

not everyone is on the same page. Mayor Anderson wanted to respond to what he described as the frustration level of citizen speakers at the meeting, "The City Council continuously is responding to the roads issue. I hope we can earn your confidence." For the record Anderson stated, "we are fully funded and at full capacity for 2008 road repair given the current staffing level."

Council Member Anduri said that the anticipated \$1.8 million dollar surplus this year will all go to road repair.

"I've been here for all four failed measures. We need to do a Finance Committee II," added Council Member Don Tatzin.

"Our top funding priority is to spend any extra money on the roads," said Council Member Carol Federighi. Responding to comments, she continued, "Camino Colorados is at the top of the list for repair."

Creating a budget for basically an \$11 million dollar per year business is no easy task. Goals are generally discussed in the early months of the year, then with input from the City Council, staff prepares a draft budget, which the Council reviews in the spring, and usually approves in June.