



Petite Administrative Powerhouse

By Cathy Tyson



Joanne and Bill Robbins

Photo Cathy Tyson

Although small in stature, Joanne Robbins has a long list of responsibilities as Lafayette's City Clerk/Municipal Information Officer. The Clerk's office is essentially the hub for city records. She publishes ordinances, resolutions and the agenda and minutes for all the City Council meetings. In addition, she coordinates all regular and special elections, program budget, city web pages, even the community events board. Robbins provides support to the Mayor and Council, acting as an important link between the community, numerous city departments and public agencies. All of this and more is handled out of her snug office that used to be a closet.

It all started back in 1994, when she and Carol Files were hired to job-share the front desk position. It worked out very well at the time, since her two young daughters were students at Stanley, she would drop them off and worked the morning shift. When the prior Clerk decided to leave in 2000, Joanne was chosen for the job. At that point the girls had graduated from high school, giving Robbins time for this busy position.

Shortly after starting, the City re-vamped its website. "The citizens demanded access to information in a way that's convenient for them," said Robbins. "There are a lot of people on the staff that are technically savvy, our Administrative Services Director; Tracy Robinson really leads the charge in technology. She's very bright, she guides us and we follow along," she continued.

Reflecting on the best part of the job, "I really like what I do; I don't think there is a bad part. I like who I work with;

everybody is working here because they want to be here. How many people can work and live in the same city?"

A recent City Council meeting did not adjourn until 11:45 p.m., Robbins is required to be there until the bitter end and collect all the papers, pens, speaker slips. Bright and early the next morning it's back to work for a staff meeting to go over all of the items from the agenda that require some sort of action, basically everything.

This job "makes you feel really connected to your community. I feel very much a part of what's happening in town and safe in a way," she said. Her husband Bill also works in Lafayette, so the couple is not particularly anonymous. The family is very close; both daughters are grown, and have successful careers of their own in New York and San Jose respectively. They were just here for Easter and have a family trip planned to Washington, D.C. soon.

Lucky for the residents of Lafayette, Robbins has no plans to retire anytime soon. "Why leave, I've got the best commute going. I'm counting on aging in place – we're not going anywhere," she said.