

Lamorinda Community

Calendar, Notes, News

Lafayette

Calendar

City Council 7pm
Community Center, Manzanita Room
500 St Mary's Road
Monday, August 11

Planning Comm. 7pm
Community Center, Manzanita Room
500 St Mary's Road
Thursday, August 21

Design Review 7pm
Community Center, Manzanita Room
500 St Mary's Road
Tuesday, August 12

Park, Trails, Rec. 7pm
Community Center
500 St Mary's Road
Wednesday, August 13

Senior Services 3:30pm
Community Center, Alder Room
500 St Mary's Road
Thursday, August 28

check online:
Town of Lafayette:
<http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us>
• all meeting notes
• calendar updates

Chamber of Commerce:
<http://www.lafayettechamber.org>
• local businesses
• upcoming events



Open container 7/26/08 At just before 2:00 a.m. on El Curtola at Green Place a driver was pulled over for having a tail light out. The operator of the vehicle happened to be driving on a suspended license and there was a half-full, ever the optimist, bottle of Jack Daniels under the seat of her pal riding shotgun. The 20-year-old white male passenger admitted the bottle was his. At least he was honest.

Car burglary, 7/22/08 A Ruth Court resident woke up and found someone had broken into her locked car during the night. An iPod and a camera that were left on the seat were taken. No suspects or leads.

Home burglary, 7/18/08 An unknown suspect entered a Sibert Court home through an unlocked front door and stole electronic items, jewelry and prescription during the day.

Garage burglary, 7/16/08 A dirt bike, tools, and miscellaneous equipment were taken from a Windsor Drive garage. A pair of bolt cutters and cable cutters were left behind. Does bad news come in threes? If so, perhaps this reporter can take the next edition off.

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Tracy Robinson – Using Your Tax Dollars Wisely

By Cathy Tyson



Tracy Robinson

Photo provided

It all started with a resume, then came a series of questions via e-mail, an interview in front of five department heads and a meeting with the City Manager. Then some testing, a detailed financial analysis of a theoretical scenario and presentation of her work to a panel of City Managers from Lafayette, Orinda and Danville, then another meeting with future boss, Lafayette City Manager Steven Falk. Who knew Tracy Robinson, Molecular Biology graduate of UC Berkeley would use that as a springboard to municipal finance. Perhaps it was her MBA from UC Davis with an emphasis in finance and accounting that sealed the deal on being hired as Lafayette's Administrative Services Director.

Working as a Budget Analyst for World Savings, now Wachovia, for a dozen years in their Oakland headquarters might have helped too. Robinson rose to Assistant Vice President and joined the Information Technology Department. With the City of

Lafayette since May of 2000, she thought the requirements of management and budget experience coupled with technology expertise would be a good match for her skill set. "I am a nerd who loves spreadsheets, what can I say?"

Managing a \$50 million budget is no easy task. "Personally, I think that the budget is the most important document the City has. The budget is a tool that allows the City Council to function effectively and to set priorities. When I got this job, Steven told me that it was expected that I would 'strap on a keyboard' and input the budget myself. And I was thrilled. It's really the favorite part of my job. Stretching the dollars is always a challenge. I'm staffing the Lafayette Finance Review Committee whose mission is to independently review the City's finances to see if there are efficiencies we can take advantage of to squeeze every last drop out of the precious revenue we do get."

Like many positions within

city government, she wears many hats during her work day. "My job duties include Human Resources, Finance & Budgeting, Risk Management and Information Technology. In addition, I edit the city's quarterly newsletter, Vistas. So basically, I view my job as making sure that there are sufficient resources to implement the City Council's policies. That means that I ensure we hire and train the right people and give the staff the tools and resources they need to do their jobs efficiently. That can include everything from designing and maintaining the City's website, making sure the phone and computer systems function properly, analyzing budget proposals, issuing bonds for capital projects, conducting salary and benefit surveys, tracking expenses and revenues, recruiting for open positions, even making sure that we get all our office supplies at the best possible prices." In addition, when Falk is out of the office, Robinson fills in as Acting City Manager.

What's the one thing you want the public to grasp about city finances? "They are a lot more complex than people think," said Robinson. "We have regulations, mandates and statutory limitations on how we can spend the money we get. Probably the biggest thing that people don't realize is that out of every \$1,000 they pay in property tax, the City gets only \$65. That surprises most people."

Robinson lives in the Oakland hills with her husband, two daughters and cat. During her lunch break you might find her at Oakwood on a treadmill watching the Food Network or reading a trashy novel. At home Robinson manages the family budget. She confides that her talented, creative husband, who has an honors degree in Economics, still comes from the, "if we still have checks, we must have money" school of thought.

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No Increase in Sales Tax

By Cathy Tyson

The final decision to not place an additional sales tax measure on the November ballot was made at last week's City Council meeting. After cake, complimentary t-shirts, bumper stickers and the "happy birthday" song to celebrate Lafayette's fortieth year since incorporation, a substantial amount of public comment was heard.

Not surprisingly much of the comment was negative. Council members wondered aloud how a sales tax would pass without community support. Council Member Carol Federighi was concerned that yet another tax measure loss would leave the city in a bad position for future measures.

City Manager Steven Falk said, "59% of those polled said they want to tax themselves to pay for better roads, extra police patrols, and more open space in Lafayette, and so it's disappointing that the community couldn't find a way to come together and support this idea. However, with nobody stepping forth to run the campaign and with the

Chamber of Commerce opposed to the proposal, I completely understand and defend the City Council's action."

Voytek Konopk, owner of Novina Fine Jewelry said, "Why should merchants be punished to pay for the tax?" He feels an additional sales tax would encourage potential customers to buy over the internet, thus robbing the city of any sales tax at all.

Also mentioned at the meeting was unhappiness over the paving of a section of Mt. Diablo Boulevard. Residents didn't understand that the city leveraged a small investment, \$85,000., from gas tax revenue received from the State, and paid only a fraction of the total price tag, wisely garnering federal and regional grants for the balance. Although the street had gotten a slurry seal some years back, it hadn't been paved in fifteen years. Considering the project cost \$865,000, the City paid less than 10% of the total amount; that's a bargain any way you slice it.

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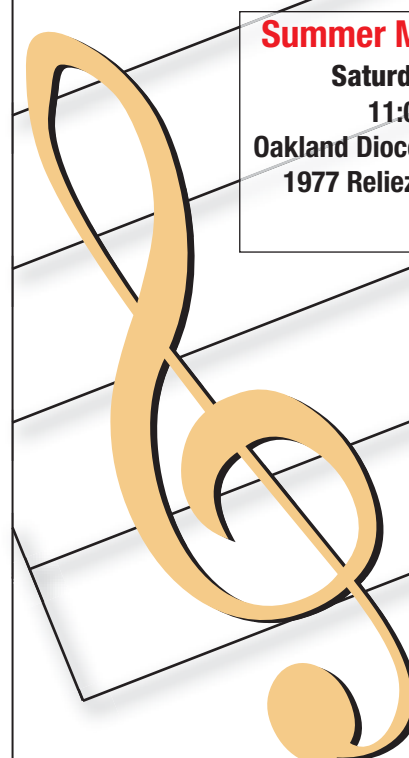
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