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Public Forum 2

Setting the Record Straight

Lafayette has much to be positive about - stable home values, a balanced city budget and a AAA bond rating, a new and well used library, a key open space acquisition. As City Council incumbents, Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin have run positive campaigns, focusing on their accomplishments, the high citizen satisfaction with Lafayette and its government, and their vision for the future.

When a campaign claim was made that "families with children (K-11)" aren't represented on the City Council, Mayor Andersson made a lighthearted refutation of one challenger's refusal to acknowledge that 12th grade is part of the public school system. That candidate seemed to dismiss Mayor Andersson's 12th grader and the fact that he has raised his children for the past 17 years in Lafayette schools. Certainly he has/does represent a "family with children" on the City Council.

When campaign statements and literature claimed the downtown plan cost the Redevelopment Agency more than twice the actual, documented cost, Andersson and Tatzin let it slide, because a campaign ought to be about issues and policies. When campaign materials claimed that the Lafayette Homeowners Council opposed the downtown plan (and the LHC had taken no such position), Andersson and Tatzin let the Homeowners Council respond.

However, in a letter to the editor and a campaign advertisement, both published in the previous issue of the Lamorinda Weekly, one candidate has abandoned all pretense of a positive campaign. I am compelled to respond.

The letter from a key supporter of the challenger claims that Andersson "voted for multifamily housing" on the Christmas tree lot across from Acalanes High School. FALSE. In fact, the Council's first vote was to send the staff recommendation of multifamily housing back for investigation of single family options. A second vote resulted from a discussion of whether to support 5-acre or 2.5-acre low density single family zoning. Two councilmembers supported 2.5-acre zoning, and three supported 5-acre zoning. All of them supported low density residential zoning. It's in the minutes of those meetings. One could look it up. Andersson's comments at the time, rejecting the multifamily option, refuted the claim that it was a commercial/residential "transition" zone, noting that it was farther from BART than many single family homes in Lafayette.

The letter then claims that Andersson favors a "semi-urban" downtown, repeating a claim made on the campaign's website and the campaign ad. FALSE. This claim apparently stems from a single comment at the Lafayette Homeowners Council candidate forum in 2006 in a discussion of definitions, not policy. The detailed notes taken by the secretary of the Homeowners Council describe that discussion of definitions. One could look it up. He has never suggested that "semi-urban" development is desirable. As a member of the Downtown Advisory Committee, I have noted that Andersson would consider all options and judge them on their balance of retail, housing, and open space. His greatest concern was/is trying to find a way to maintain and encourage the great diversity of buildings and blocks and views of the surrounding hills that are the hallmark of downtown Lafayette.

The campaign ad states the completely unsubstantiated cost of the downtown plan. In August, the campaign used the correct cost; then it suddenly more than doubled it and has repeated that inflated number, \$2,000,000, for nearly two months. FALSE. City staff has provided the actual documented costs to the Lafayette Redevelopment Agency for consultants, staff time, and expenses -- \$872,000, less than half of the total claimed. Another \$200,000 was received in grants dedicated for use in the EIR and climate change study. One could have asked.

The ad further claims that Lafayette's Redevelopment Agency bonded for development funds under low bond ratings. FALSE. A candidate who understands the range of bond ratings available to redevelopment agencies in cities the size of Lafayette would realize that the bond ratings for both the city and the redevelopment agency are quite high. One could have asked.

Any candidate is entitled to question the policies and positions of other candidates. But no candidate is entitled to make up his/her own facts. It is sad to see a campaign devote most of its effort to tearing down the current City Council that by any objective standard has served its citizens with integrity, dedication, and success.

I sincerely hope that future campaigns can be conducted with a respectful discourse on the important issues facing Lafayette, as has been the practice in the past. In this election I support the re-election of Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin who have done extraordinary work for our Lafayette.

Sincerely,
 Erling Horn
 Lafayette
 (Erling Horn is a former Mayor of Lafayette)

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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