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Democracy in Action at Lafayette Community Center

By Cathy Tyson



From left: Mike Anderson, Traci Reilly, Yolanda Vega, Mark Mitchell and Robert Lobron after Candidates Night last week. Photo Cathy Tyson

The presidential contenders weren't the only ones debating last week. Once again the Lafayette Homeowners Council hosted its annual Candidates Night featuring aspirants for School Board as well as the City Council.

Unfortunately only three of the four contenders for School Board were able to attend; there are two open seats. Dr. Don Wolff was delayed returning from a medical conference on the east coast- that left Jean Follmer, Quinlan Tom and Nancy Wallace to introduce themselves and take questions from the audience.

All 3 share lengthy resumes that highlight a myriad of volunteer positions in the school community, and all 3 have children in the Lafayette School District. Although in response to a question Wallace explained that she has a severely autistic son and her 2 daughters attend private school; she said "it's a personal issue." Wallace's background in coaching and teaching high school speech and debate was apparent from the start, with persuasive arguments and confident delivery.

The trio was concerned about school funding, looking for alternative resources, and the potential fallout of Proposition 30 not passing, which would trigger \$1.5 million in cuts to the Lafayette School District. Follmer mentioned

her successful background in grant writing, which has resulted in a new track at Springhill Elementary and was open to "sharing best practices and cost sharing for things like school maintenance with Moraga and Orinda."

When asked about the potential influx of new students coming from proposed developments in Lafayette, Tom responded, "We have an obligation to current students." The relaxed Tom attended public schools from elementary to college, attending UC Davis and UC Hastings College of the Law. Both Follmer and Tom have been endorsed by all sitting School Board members.

After a brief intermission, the focus moved to the five City Council Candidates vying for 3 open seats. Vice Mayor Mike Anderson is the only incumbent to throw his hat in the ring. He's been on the City Council for eight "economically challenging years," and noted that both at work for the East Bay Regional Park District and with the City, the organizations have been able to keep their heads above water. He also pointed out that in both his day job and night volunteer position with the City Council, it's important to consider on-going maintenance costs with any project.

Robert Lobron has volunteered on the Parks and Recreation committee for seven years and expressed his desire to preserve the Lafayette "that we love." He is in favor of exploring opportunities to get competitive pricing for road maintenance.

Traci Reilly is a 20-year resident with 3 school-aged kids and said she "understands residents' concerns since I see them every day." In response to a question about keeping the east end of town more service-oriented, Reilly sees the area as a potential location for mixed-use development with the first floor of new buildings for commercial uses and housing on upper floors.

A friendly, relaxed Yolanda Vega introduced herself with background information; she lived all around the world before settling in Lafayette 30 years ago. Having spent time in Tokyo, Germany, Buenos Aires and London, she commented, "I received a great education - I really know what it's like to live with traffic."

There was a question about the controversial "Terraces" project across from Acalanes High School. Mark Mitchell currently serves on the Planning Commission and is barred from commenting on a pending application, but he did mention there were 17 significant and unavoidable impacts found in the Environmental Impact Report. "That's a lot of impacts," he said. Talking about the traffic issues the project may cause, Vega replied, "Pleasant Hill Road - are you kidding me? I don't like it."

All 5 were in agreement that they were not in favor of a proposed roundabout on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. Overall the event was very neighborly and civil with polite, engaged candidates and audience members.

For more information on the City Council candidates, visit their websites (or email):

Mark Mitchell: mitchell4citycouncil2012.com

Traci Reilly: tracireilly.com

Yolanda Vega: yvegamentalvo@gmail.com

Robert Lobron: Committee to Elect Robert Lobron on Facebook

Mike Anderson: CourtneyandMike@comcast.net

For School Board:

Nancy Wallace: www.nancywallace2012.com

Jean Follmer: jeanfollmer.weebly.com

Quinlan Tom: www.quinlantom2012.com

Don Wolff: www.drdonwolff.com

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