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Tatzin Takes the Helm as Mayor, Again

By Cathy Tyson



Mayor Don Tatzin with furry friends Tioga, Cloud and Tam. - Photo Ellen Reinties

Ever youthful civic statesman Don Tatzin is starting his 29th year serving the citizens of Lafayette, and marking his sixth term as mayor at the still spectacular compensation of zero dollars.

Residents will have to think hard to recall a time when Tatzin was not on the City Council - hint: it was when Ronald Reagan was in his first term as president.

At Lafayette's annual reorganization event held at the last City Council meeting in December, Tatzin graciously thanked his wife Ellen for her "endless and complete support," members of the public, city staff and his fellow council members, including now former mayor Mike Anderson who served in 2013.

Reflecting on the role of being mayor, Tatzin discussed the virtuous circle philosophy, a chain of events that reinforces itself through a feedback loop with positive results and how it is applicable to residents.

"Often we are the first level of contact people have with government," he said, explaining that the City Council is one of a number of components of the virtuous circle, that can create an environment of trust and respect, which strengthens the fabric of the community. Residents also

contribute via a wide range of avenues, for example supporting their kids' education, or sports, which further benefits Lafayette and adds to its appeal, attracting new people. His role as mayor, he believes, is to support this circle, by being accessible, to listen, respond to citizens, and explain the decision-making process.

He shared a series of initiatives he'd like to address in the new year, that include a variety of civic concerns, for example working with the committee that is going to decide the future of two city-owned parcels, the old library building and a former medical office on Moraga Road.

Also on his agenda is encouraging residents to "think big," to find a real solution to Moraga Road congestion and downtown traffic. The incremental changes over the years haven't impacted the fundamental problem, in his opinion. Tatzin would like to "take this opportunity to step back and gather input to come up with a shared vision" for a plan that could address endless back-ups.

Tatzin anticipates the proposed Terraces project should be resolved in 2014, and he'll continue to work with fire agencies to seek a solution to provide better fire and emergency response in Lafayette even though it's not a city responsibility. The new mayor has a unique perspective as a volunteer on the Contra Costa Local Area Formation Commission, also known as LAFCO. The organization oversees boundaries of towns, cities, and special districts, like water, sanitation, and especially relevant for Lafayette - fire protection.

As mayor five years ago for the official grand opening of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, he plans on a birthday celebration this fall along with a fundraising effort.

On a lighter note, as a dog owner, Tatzin would like to spearhead an event that focuses on pets. Planning is currently in the very preliminary stages for a furry friends party that could be called Dog-stravaganza or Bark in the Park. Possible features include a dog/owner look-a-like contest, perhaps a demonstration of canine search and rescue techniques, along with an education component.

In his free time, Tatzin logs endless laps in the Oakwood swimming pool. Results aren't yet in for 2013, but in 2012, Lafayette's mayor came in first in his age group with a staggering 1,524 miles for the U.S. Masters Swimming annual "Go the distance" fitness event.

That kind of dedication has served the citizens of Lafayette for almost 30 years. When asked if he was going to hang up his gavel when his term expires at the end of this year, he replied, "That's up to voters to decide." Tatzin plans to run again for City Council this November.

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