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## Big Turnout, Concerns at Homeowners' Annual Meeting

By Cathy Tyson



Mayor Brandt Andersson and Assemblywoman Catharine Baker taking questions at the annual Lafayette Homeowners Council meeting. Photo C. Tyson

mayor five years ago, in 2010, as well as for 2015. He reminisced about changes that occurred over the years, calling the opening of the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center, "an enormous success, rewriting the role of the local library." He also mentioned other pressing concerns from a handful of years ago: police costs, the fire station, failed roads and problematic state finances.

Looking ahead, he said he feels the budget is in much better shape, and the city will soon completely address the road repair backlog. He explained that now instead of putting every extra dollar toward road repair, the city can potentially spend money on other projects. That's the reasoning behind the Community Conversations - getting input about citizens' priorities.

Although there was one more Community Conversation scheduled at the time of the meeting, Andersson didn't want to keep the audience in suspense. The most popular suggestions from residents are to preserve open space, add more resources for police and make improvements to the Park Theater, either civic or private, as well as the revitalization of that area.

It's unclear if any of the night's discussion swayed LHC members. Although Andersson pointed out that there are over 10,000 parking spaces in the downtown area, the problem is many are in segregated small lots out of sight. He said the city is in negotiations with a parking management company to address the situation with technology.

The city's new transportation planner, Austin Lee, presented the final scope of work for a comprehensive downtown congestion study at last week's city council meeting that, if approved, will study congestion and ultimately come up with a preferred solution.

Baker was sworn in on Dec. 1, 2014 and reported that she is serving on a number of committees including Transportation, Higher Education, Privacy and Consumer Protection, and more. She received a hearty round of applause about her first actions in office - refusing to take the per diem payment, which could total up to \$60,000 per year for expenses travelling back and forth to Sacramento from her home. Her issue was that legislators get paid whether they are working in Sacramento or at home in their districts. She's also not taking a "company car" - happy to drive the family minivan and forgoing a state-paid phone.

Many members of the Lafayette Homeowners Council aren't thrilled with the direction the city is going. "In recent years, a lot has changed in our little town, and not all the changes have been positive," wrote LHC President Jenny Kallio in a letter to encourage attendance at its April 23 meeting. At the meeting, she acknowledged that while some things are clearly better, she concluded that "with improvements come more of everything" - parking troubles, traffic, and development. The LHC is a nonprofit organization founded in 1984, made up of representatives of neighborhood associations as well as concerned individuals, to be an advocate for homeowners' interests.

After his introduction at a crowded Community Hall, Mayor Brandt Andersson gave the State of the City address and responded to the LHC's concerns. Recently elected Assemblywoman Catharine Baker, who represents District 16, which includes Lafayette, also reviewed the work she's been doing.

The mayor looked both forward and back in time. He has the unique perspective of having been

She has introduced legislation to reduce BART strikes, which will be up for a hearing on May 6. Her position is that there is a no-strike provision in BART workers' contracts. During the negotiation phase of a new contract, while their current contract has expired, employees still receive same pay and health care benefits; her bill requires "they have to honor the terms of the old contract," including the no-strike provision. Attendees at the meeting thought this was a great idea.

A civil question and answer period wrapped up the meeting. Questions included a fellow asking if Sacramento is squeezing local government. Others expressed concern about private parking meters, which Andersson responded to, explaining that the La Fiesta parking area is a private lot, and the city is not involved in the revenue generated or enforcement. He noted that the owner understands the meters are not popular. Other questions included money spent on security technology and affordable housing.

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