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New Kids in Town at the Planning and Building Department

By Cathy Tyson



Lafayette city planning technicians Julia Koppman Norton and Chris Joram Photo C. Tyson

young lady has been involved in the world of dance - jazz, ballet and choreography in her younger years.

"They are both fantastic," says senior planner Michael Cass, who has been showing them the ropes: he appreciates the "youthful energy" they bring. The two will be working the counter two days per week, helping residents who come to the city seeking discretionary development applications. Planners on duty work at the city offices' front counter from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Certain projects are exempt from the permitting process, for example fences not over six feet high, retaining walls that are not over three feet high, installing a swing set, or oddly, according to the California Building Code, oil derricks.

The new employees will also be working on zoning applications dealing with smaller additions and tree removal permits. As they become more experienced, they will be working with other planners on tasks spelled out in the work plan, like the Housing Element.

Joram and Koppman Norton are replacing veteran planners Lindy Chan and Anthony Arrivas. Chan had been with the city since 2001, working on hundreds of building applications. Arrivas started as a planning intern, then moved on to a planning technician position.

They may look young, but brand new city planning technicians Chris Joram and Julia Koppman Norton, both recent college graduates, are smart and eager to work for the city of Lafayette.

Nothing says welcome aboard like donuts and cake on your first day, says Joram, who has been at the job for just over a month. He felt very welcomed and is impressed with the collegial atmosphere in the city offices. A graduate of Campolindo High School and Sonoma State University, with a degree in environmental planning, Joram currently lives in Moraga. "I already have a great feel for the community," said the newbie who played basketball for Campolindo and is familiar with local neighborhoods.

Gluten-free cupcakes greeted Julia Koppman Norton. She's from Oakland and recently graduated with a degree in urban studies from UC Berkeley. "I'm really excited to be here," she said on day three of her employment. The bright and cheerful

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

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