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Lafayette City Council approves three-year extension for city manager

By John T. Miller



Steve Falk at this year's Reservoir Run Photo Gint Federas

After fielding many objections, particularly from the Save Lafayette contingent, the Lafayette City Council voted 4-1 to approve a three-year contract extension for longtime City Manager Steven Falk. Council Member Ivor Samson cast the lone opposing vote.

The overall salary was \$246,294 per year, representing a 3 percent raise. The severance package was reduced to 12 months - down from 18. This was due to the city attorney bringing the contract in line with state law.

Michael Griffiths, president of Save Lafayette, opposed such a high compensation package and presented a list of grievances, which blamed the city manager for his handling of the Planning Commission and Design Review Board investigations (see accompanying article), citizen lawsuits against the city, cost overruns on the parking lot on the old East Bay Municipal Utility District pumping plant site and many other items.

Several of the council members who approved the package indicated that many of the grievances should be directed at the council, since Falk's role is to carry out its plans, not to make policy.

In regard to the salary, Council Member Mark Mitchell pointed out that Lafayette is one of only 10 cities out of 649 in California that is not in a CalPers retirement plan. "The costs (for retirement) are real, and this should not be compared to a salary that includes a retirement package."

Mayor Mike Anderson pointed out that Falk has been doing a good job for 21 years, and how rare it is for a city to have that kind of continuity.

Council Member Samson commented that he had no problem with the financial portions of the contract, but his "no" vote centered around some objections to the nonfinancial components.

Asked about the three-year extension, Falk answered, "I'm gratified the council is interested in me serving three more years. I've enjoyed every single day of my 27 years working for the city of Lafayette (21 as city manager). I have the finest staff on the planet and one of the best city councils in California to work with."

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