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## Lafayette is keen to listen

By Pippa Fisher

Lafayette is listening but residents aren't talking much, at least online.

At the Jan. 8 city council meeting Lafayette City Manager Steve Falk presented a quarterly update on the city's online forum, launched in October. The city council had agreed at its October meeting that for the public to take it seriously, forum input should be summarized and presented each quarter.

Before he reported on the responses to the nine questions that are currently up on the site, Falk made the point that since around only 120 people have visited the site, the numbers are not significantly representative, except among the sector of residents who have sought out the communication tool.

Reflecting that it is still in its early days, Falk said it is nonetheless frustrating that the forum has had fewer visitors to the site than he had hoped, despite having advertised it in the Vistas newsletter and the Daily Roundup as well as the "banner box" at Safeway. He said he would have liked to have seen the number in the thousands. Still he recognized it might need time to gain traction.

While some of the responses seemed to show a big mix of views, such as the question of how the city should handle housing and the question of how residents like or don't like the Reliez Valley Road safety measures, other questions showed more consensus of opinion.

Of the 12 responses to the police department citizen satisfaction survey, 11 people reported being "very satisfied" on every metric.

On the question "How is the new roundabout working for you?" Falk said the responses have gradually changed over the months perhaps as people have become more used to driving through it. Initial responses were negative, but more recent responses reflect residents' satisfaction.

Having heard the presentation, Mayor Don Tatzin agreed that there are still too few respondents and suggested contacting the vendor to see if this is typical and to find out if other areas that use the site successfully are doing something that the city is not.

Council Member Ivor Samson suggested brainstorming ways to incentivize the program's use, possibly offering prizes. All council members agreed that the program is potentially useful and might just need a little time to gather more users.

Falk explained after the meeting that after not winning the community improvement sales tax measure, the city council had concluded that Lafayette needed to do a better job of listening to its residents. "That's the impetus behind this effort: to give people who might not be able to attend council meetings an online forum to voice their opinions regarding the city."

Residents can make their voices heard, and can even add suggestions of topics to be discussed, by going online and typing Lafayette Listens into their browser at <http://www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/lafayette-listens> or by following the link on the city website homepage.

Reach the reporter at: [pippa@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:pippa@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

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