



Published April 18th, 2018

City council to serve as planning commission during new commissioner search

By Pippa Fisher

While Lafayette prepares to get new planning commissioners in place as soon as possible, the council has adopted an urgency ordinance to allow the city council to serve as the city's planning commission until a quorum of the PC is appointed. The ordinance also reduces the number of planning commissioners from seven to five, at least in the short term.

Following the adoption March 26 of Council Member Ivor Samson's and Vice Mayor Cam Burks' suggested new tougher conflict of interest policies designed to rebuild integrity and trust in government, five planning commissioners resigned, leaving the city effectively without a PC.

As a result of the vote, the council called a special meeting April 2 to decide how to proceed.

The evening got off to an unexpected start with vehement comments made by former mayor Brandt Andersson as he challenged Samson to confirm his promise that he would not run again for office when his term was up. He made his remarks during time allocated for public comments unrelated to agenda items and to which the council does not have to respond.

Andersson called into question Samson's integrity, accusing him of hypocrisy. He reminded the council that Samson had given his word at his appointment to the council that he would not seek re-election at the end of his term. Now, claimed Andersson, far from being "the self-appointed protector of integrity in government" he had heard that the council member had been "quietly sounding out city leaders to see how they would react if he went back on his word and ran for the council seat."

Andersson then asked Samson to prove that he was a man of his word and confirm that he will not run for another term with a yes or no answer.

Samson responded that such a personal attack was beneath Andersson. "I was appointed to a two-year term. I intend to act as a council member in all respects for that two-year term and do what I think is right. Beyond that I will not debate myself by responding to your questions."

"So I had my answer," Andersson said later.

The former mayor declined to name his sources.

Mayor Don Tatzin commented later, "While what the council does is a result of who runs and who gets elected, I prefer that the election process not be part of a council meeting."

A testament to strong feelings around the subject of integrity in the commissions, four former mayors were present at the special meeting, which Burks noted was powerful to see.

And Andersson spoke again, this time addressing the issue at hand of the new policy. He questioned how forcing commissioners with whom no one had a problem to resign would improve the integrity of government.

Public sentiment about the more restrictive rules that now force a commissioner with a conflict of interest to resign continued to run high a week later, with several speakers during the regular April 9 city council meeting still voicing concerns over the new policy.

The city council however is moving forward.

Subcommittee members Tatzin and Council Member Mike Anderson met before the city council meeting April 9 to come up with questions for the interview process, that applicants would have about a week to prepare. Tatzin hopes to be able to start interviewing soon. He said they currently have about 10 interested applicants.

Applications are due by April 30 but interviews are likely to begin sooner due to the number of vacancies.

However all applicants who get their applications in by the end of the month will be interviewed before all the positions are filled. Initial appointments might be made as soon as April 23, said Tatzin.

Those interested in applying should go to www.lovelafayette.org/pc to obtain an application and to view the current commission work plan.

Reach the reporter at: pippa@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA