

Council opts for applications, interviews to fill vacant seat

By Pippa Fisher



All four members of the city council, from left: Council Member Susan Candell, Vice Mayor Mike Anderson, Mayor Cam Burks, and Council Member Teresa Gerringer listen to public comment at the Dec. 19 meeting.

Photo Pippa Fisher

A special meeting, held Dec. 19 to decide how best to fill the vacant fifth seat on the city council, resulted in a unanimous decision to accept applications and hold interviews in early January.

The seat became vacant on the eve of the Nov. 6 election with the untimely passing of Council Member Mark Mitchell. The timing has prompted many in the community to call for simply appointing the third placed candidate, former city council member Ivor Samson. But many others are calling for the city to honor the way in which councils have traditionally acted in such situations, by taking applications and going through an interview process.

Because there are fewer than two years of the term remaining, the council must appoint a new member rather than hold a special election. But that's where the legal guidelines end. With a community divided following a bitterly campaigned election fuelled by negative and sometimes false comments

on social media, the new city council that includes two brand new members faced a tough decision.

Should the timing be taken into account, given that voters had just spoken and that Samson had garnered 4,641 votes, only 590 votes behind the second place candidate? Would he have been elected had voters been asked to elect for three spots? Is it more transparent to hold open interviews with further public input even if the end result is the same? Should the city use the method of interviews that has worked in the past? These considerations were on the minds of the council members as they took public comment.

The council, which had previously heard comments from 30 members of the public at the regular Dec. 10 meeting, once again took comments from close to as many people in addition to the many emails, letters and online comments they had received on the subject. ... continued on Page A10

Terry Ring named Lafayette Business Person of the Year

By Pippa Fisher



From left: Terry Ring and Dana Green

Photo Andy Scheck

This year's Business Person of the Year is Terry Ring of Lafayette's Ring Construction. A dinner and formal presentation will take place at the Lafayette Park Hotel and Spa on Feb. 1.

Last year's winner, Dana Green, made the announcement on behalf of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Dec. 20. The selection was made by current Chamber President Kathy Merchant, incoming President Christina Alba and by Green, from seven nominations.

"Not only did Terry run a successful construction business here in Lamorinda, he is one of those

residents in Lafayette that always gravitates to a place where he can roll up his sleeves and help," says Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson.

Lifson explains, "From the Rotary Stage at the Reservoir, and the Veterans Memorial to being a founding member of the Iron Man Team volunteering at the Art and Wine Festival, he is always the first one there and the last to leave."

Details on the Business Person of the Year dinner and registration will soon be available on the Chamber website: <https://lafayette-chamber.org/>.

City explores options on banning flavored tobacco products

By Pippa Fisher

One of the first agenda items before the new council at the Dec. 10 meeting concerned a proposed ordinance banning the sale of flavored tobacco products in the city. The council voted unanimously, with Vice Mayor Mike Anderson absent, to direct city staff to explore options for instituting a ban on FTPs and imposing a tobacco retailers' license. Staff will bring options back to the council in February.

In the Nov. 26 meeting, then-

Vice Mayor Cam Burks initiated discussion regarding the banning of FTPs.

"I believe we are facing a serious public health crisis in our community. Our school kids, specifically at the Lafayette middle school and high school ages, are using flavored tobacco products at an alarming rate; products that based on clear evidence, cause profound medical harm to our children. The stakes are enormous and our kids depend on us. ... continued on Page A10

'Twas the night before Christmas and all of us here, wish you tidings of joy and a happy New Year

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