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## Srivatsa takes the driver's seat at city offices

By Pippa Fisher



Niroop Srivatsa (third from left) becomes Lafayette city manager at the Aug. 12 city council meeting. Photo Jeff Heyman, city of Lafayette

challenges (referring to an unforeseen change of mayor, responses to legislative issues and the hiring of a lobbyist) she remained solid.

"She has clearly demonstrated over her long tenure with the city a firm commitment and ability to maintain the values of our very special community," said Anderson in an earlier statement. "As we head into a tumultuous cycle of state legislation determined to limit our local control over planning and development, and begin the update of our general plan, Ms. Srivatsa's knowledge and experience will be essential to our success."

Srivatsa thanked her family and many members of the community and pledged to serve with honesty and integrity, and to always "love Lafayette."

"Forty years ago to this month I arrived in this country with one suitcase and a truckload of dreams," said Srivatsa, who is known affectionately to city staff as a "steel lotus" - a reference to the national flower of India that signifies peace, purity and harmony from its ability to root in mud and yet push through the murky waters to bloom. "Steel" is recognition of her resolute and "steely" interior, which enables her to handle tough jobs, notwithstanding her outwardly relaxed and pleasant nature.

Prior to this year Srivatsa served for 18 years as Lafayette's director of planning and building services. Throughout her more than 30 years of local government experience - the majority of which she served in Lafayette - Srivatsa led city staff and advised the city council and planning commission on land use policy, strategic growth initiatives, and housing and economic development matters. During her tenure, the city completed an update to the general plan, adopted its first downtown specific plan and approved over 100 below-market-rate housing units in the downtown.

From 1992 to 1999, Srivatsa worked as Lafayette's planning director and community development director, supervising the planning, engineering and public works divisions, and serving as staff to the newly created redevelopment agency. Under her supervision, the department commenced work on a \$15 million capital improvement program with community oversight and public review added to the process. In addition, she has acted as incident commander during emergency operations drills and held leadership roles during real emergencies, most notably the 1998 flooding in Lafayette.

Prior to her work at the city of Lafayette, Srivatsa served as associate planner and chief city planner, from 1982 to 1989, for the city of Naperville, Illinois. Srivatsa serves on the League of California Cities Revenue and Taxation Committee, which provides policy direction on pending legislation to the League board and advocates for local control. She was recently appointed as an alternate commissioner to the California Statewide Communities Development Authority, where she reviews applications from more than 500 cities, counties and special districts for funding community infrastructure, affordable housing, and environmental projects.

Srivatsa has a bachelor's degree in architecture and town planning from Madras University in Chennai, India. She and her husband, Sanjay, raised two sons, Vikram and Arjun, in Lafayette where they attended the Meher School, Stanley Middle School, and Acalanes High School. For the last 14 years, she has volunteered as a dog socializer at Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation. She lives in unincorporated

The Lafayette City Council voted Aug. 12 to award a three-year city manager contract to Niroop Srivatsa who has been serving as interim city manager since January.

The community hall was packed with members of the public who had stayed through the entire meeting to support the decision, many bringing flowers to present to Srivatsa who was clearly moved by the outpouring of support, underscored by a standing ovation.

Following former City Manager Steven Falk's resignation from the position at the end of 2018, Srivatsa took over the helm as interim city manager while the council searched for a replacement with the help of recruitment consultants, Avery and Associates, who conducted a nationwide search resulting in 35 candidates. The finalists were interviewed by a community and staff panel as well as by the council.

Mayor Mike Anderson likened Srivatsa's interim period to a boot camp experience, saying that through all the

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