

# New policing recommendations approved encourage transparency, public engagement



Photo Pippa Fisher

By Pippa Fisher

The city council voted unanimously July 27 to approve five recommendations addressing concerns and questions raised by the community regarding police policies and procedures for immediate implementation by the Lafayette city manager and the police chief.

The recommendations address what the mayor described at the meetings as “A whole lot of tense accusations ... that came rolling in,” prior to two public subcommittee safety meetings, and center on areas of oversight, transparency, mental health, city oversight and training.

City Manager Niroop Srivatsa and Chief of Police Ben Alldritt first presented the recommendations at the July 21 Public Safety Subcommittee meeting. The suggestions are in response to the public’s calls for more transparency and accountability within Lafayette policing, prompted by the nationwide outcry following the death of George Floyd at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis in May. It was the second meeting of a specially formed task force.

City Council Member Cam Burks explained that, although this task force focuses on the police and is separate from the newly formed racial equity task force, it would feed into the latter.

City Council Member Steven Bliss acknowledged the value of having a deep conversation around the subject. “It is a very important dialogue,” he said.

Alldritt answered questions at the July 21 meeting arising from a previous meeting and from the deluge of emails from the public, including explaining current training programs, the procedure for hiring police officers

and their diversity, how complaints are handled, requests for public oversight committees, mental health training and responses, and the budget.

Srivatsa explained the public safety subcommittee would be holding open meetings quarterly to receive updates, increasing opportunities for interaction with the police chief, herself and the subcommittee members.

The chief will also submit a quarterly, rather than annual, summary report to the council and the public, allowing for increased transparency.

In the area of mental health, Srivatsa is working with the County Public Managers Association and the County Health Department to explore alternatives to law-enforcement responses to mental health issues.

With increased accountability the goal, in the event of an internal affairs complaint filed against a police officer, the city manager would meet with the chief when the complaint is filed and at the conclusion of the sheriff’s internal affairs investigation.

The chief will evaluate adding additional training to the department’s current mandatory courses in crisis intervention, de-escalation, implicit bias, and cultural and racial diversity through the sheriff’s office. Alldritt said he hopes to come back with a specific plan in three months.

As with the previous subcommittee meeting, robust attendance included plenty of public comment. Burks and Bliss have both said it’s very clear a large part of this involves listening.

As Burks observed, between the two meetings there had been over five hours of discussion, “And it’s just a start. It’s moving in the right direction.”

# Racism, discrimination discussion; city leaders listening

By Pippa Fisher

In a meeting attended by approximately 160 people on Zoom and on the city’s YouTube channel, Lafayette continued listening to people’s experiences of racism and discrimination within the community in its second special task force meeting.

Circle of Education Co-Founder Tiffany Hoang, hired by the city as a facilitator, acknowledged the uncomfortable nature of the discussion at the meeting July 30, which she explained is why it is important to take the time to address how the community can

be better together.

Hoang started with some definitions of terminology around racism and discrimination, before welcoming close to 20 people who shared instances when they felt discriminated against either intentionally or unintentionally, or in some cases stayed silent while witnessing discrimination.

Some gave suggestions for ways in which the city could take steps, with several pointing to having more affordable housing to encourage more diversity.

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**Lafayette Public Meetings**

**City Council**

Wednesday, Aug. 10, 7 p.m.  
Teleconference via City of Lafayette’s YouTube Channel:  
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

**Planning Commission Meeting**

Wednesday, Aug. 17, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center  
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Don Tatzin Community Hall

**Design Review**

Wednesday, Aug. 10, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center.  
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Arts & Science Discovery Room

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