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Council continues equity discussion; refers housing recommendations to general plan update

By Pippa Fisher

The city council is moving the work of a recently formed task force that was created to address racism and diversity in Lafayette forward, albeit under a new, shorter name. It unanimously approved the task force's recommended initiatives on leadership commitments including training, and agreed to refer housing recommendations to the general plan and housing element update process.

The task force, led by Vice Mayor Susan Candell, has listened at several meetings over the past months to the concerns of residents about racism and instances of lack of inclusion as well as to many ideas put forth by residents on how to address diversity in the city. Candell said that it is the goal of the task force to land the work done into various community groups for others to take forward. At such a time the task force will then disband.

It was specifically suggestions regarding changes to housing designed to address the issue of racism and inequality that had a number of residents concerned. The council received several letters voicing comments against a recommendation to "... do away with single family zoning, create zoning allowing 4-plus units all over town ."

City Manager Niroop Srivatsa at the Sept. 14 council meeting clarified that no major decisions were being taken at this time and that any recommendations on housing changes were to be forwarded for consideration during the forthcoming general plan and housing element update.

The council heard public comments from Michael Cass who said he strongly believed housing relates to inequity and he urged the city to take some action on housing sooner rather than waiting several years for the general plan update to be finished.

Lafayette resident Jeremy Levine, who said he was speaking as an individual and not representing Inclusive Lafayette, underscored the sentiment. He expressed that he wanted to see all ideas kept on the table and to have all suggestions discussed with an open mind.

And although the task force is merely getting the ball rolling and will ultimately be disbanded, a new name had to be decided upon.

The group will now be known as Lafayette Equity and Inclusion Task Force.

Reach the reporter at: pippa@lamorindaweekly.com

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