



Published December 22nd, 2021

## Change of leadership at Lafayette City Council

By Lou Fancher

Prior to handing leadership and the "crown" position on the all-volunteer city council to Vice Mayor Teresa Gerringer, Mayor Susan Candell at the Dec. 13 meeting issued a heartfelt expression of appreciation.

"It has been truly such an honor to serve as your mayor this past year," Candell said. "I've sincerely enjoyed it and hope that all the efforts here from myself and my fellow council members, commissioners, and staff have helped to make Lafayette a better and safer place to live."

The annual reorganization that has Gerringer stepping into a new role and Council Member Carl Anduri becoming the vice mayor will not mean Candell departs the council. She will move "one frame over" on the all-Zoom council meeting videos available for public viewing and archived on the city's YouTube channel, while continuing as a council member to champion the priorities and interests of Lafayette residents and business owners.

In her remarks, Candell said she never expected to be the city's first and hopefully only "virtual" mayor for an entire term as the council hopes to move to a hybrid format allowing people to choose between attending city meetings in person or online. Highlights of her term, she said, were having "spun up" the actions of the General Plan Advisory Committee; institution of an earlier rotation of mayor and vice mayor that leaves experienced past mayors on the council at the end of their term and provides smoother transitions; and the strength of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion task force that held multiple events and training sessions and has become a "true force" community group in Lamorinda and in their role advising the council about actions it can take to support their mission.

Candell showed obvious joy and enthusiasm while announcing that the Park Theater is about to finalize reopening plans and sincerity in comments pertaining to transportation and circulation commissioners who she said were successful in achieving goals set for school safety programs and improvements. Areas where work is ongoing include steps related to the Zero Vision plan, vigilance around fire risk reduction and vegetation mitigation and Candell hopes the council will continue to advocate for local control of affordable housing standards and set goals that meet and even exceed the California State requirements.

Vice Mayor (now mayor) Gerringer said Candell had provided a more-than detailed summary of actions and improvements accomplished by the council. While sharing comments she had received in emails or by word-of-mouth from residents expressing appreciation for Candell's interactions with members of the community, Gerringer said she now has a rapidly-filling calendar that lends shades of trepidation to her efforts to maintain Candell's highly energetic agenda and elevated standards.

Even so, Gerringer proved she is an equal match to her predecessor's ambitious goal-setting. After thanking her fellow council members for being a "cohesive team" that has "moments of fun" while also addressing the difficulties that are ahead for the council, Gerringer said she most looks forward to working with the city's 25,391 residents. As one of five members on the governing body that, with staff, work to prioritize the interests of Lafayette residents, Gerringer said she anticipates the first January meeting will be used to plan goals for her term during the 2022 calendar year.

Areas identified as of preliminary importance, according to Gerringer, are transportation safety, implementing the Vision Zero policy which will be a cultural shift for the population, providing ample opportunities for residents to provide community input, updating elements of the General Plan, strengthening city-school partnerships, continuing to enhance wildfire and emergency preparedness, fuel mitigation and tree protection policies. Ongoing work with the DEI committee, partnering with community partners and groups to implement or host a Lafayette Community Volunteer Day that will bring nonprofit and service organizations together with residents to support activities aimed at improving life in Lafayette, and, of course, the annual budget will be on the agenda for January meetings.

After public comments thanking Candell for her responsive leadership, the unanimous vote approved Gerringer as mayor of Lafayette and Council Member Anduri took his position as vice mayor.

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[back](#)

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