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Gerringer gears up to take new position as Lafayette mayor

By Lou Fancher



New Lafayette Mayor Teresa Gerringer Photo provided

In the weeks prior to commencing her term in 2022 as the city's new mayor, Teresa Gerringer could be resting up. But that is hardly what this longtime community leader and Lafayette City Council member since 2018 ever seems to do.

Gerringer has served on the Lafayette Community Foundation Board, including a term as president; was a Charter member of the Lafayette Library & Learning Center Foundation Board; and has represented the council on regional boards including the Contra Costa Transportation Authority; California Cities East Bay Division Executive Board; CalCities Communications, Transportation and Public Works Policy Committee; and the Contra Costa County Solid Waste Authority/Recycle SMART, among others. Her volunteer and professional education advocacy and policy work includes local, regional and state leadership roles. Gerringer currently serves as Communications Director, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, District 3, having previously served as District Director, California State Senate

Seventh District. Gerringer and her husband and their two daughters have lived in Lafayette since 1995.

Gerringer says she has been a public servant for most of her adult life and her over 18 years serving on the Lafayette School District governing board - four times as board president - guides her processes. "Listening to and working with others to identify and solve problems is the common thread in my professional and volunteer service." She has served with the community to raise capital campaign funds to build the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, advocated for increased funding for education at the state and federal level while helping to pass local revenue measures to fund improvements to school facilities and bridge gaps in program funding, and coordinated collaborative partnering with Contra Costa Transit Authority and local schools to bring the Street Smarts traffic safety program to Lafayette.

Gerringer says foundational to all city council efforts will be "strong collaboration, coalition building and partnerships; and identification and use of available resources that include but are not limited to funding, city staffing, and community volunteers." Of utmost importance, she says achieving the council's stated goals and priorities (available for all to view on the city's website) will require "continued robust, authentic community engagement."

Lamorinda Weekly asked Gerringer to speak specifically to five areas of interest: transportation safety, implementing the Vision Zero policy, enhancing wildfire and emergency preparedness, the ongoing response to Covid-19, and updating elements of the General Plan.

Gerringer noted that the council and residents have made transportation safety a priority over the last several years, and it will continue to be a top priority in the 2022. "Thanks to the Lafayette Transportation and Circulation Commission, school leaders and parents, city staff and consultants, site visits at our schools and review of previous plans and studies is underway to identify near-term and long-term solutions to improve safety for all modes of transportation around our schools," Gerringer said. "Some improvements have already begun to be implemented, with more to come in early 2022."

She noted that at its November meeting, the council adopted a Vision Zero policy affirming the commitment to make safety a priority throughout Lafayette. "Staff is in the process of putting out a Request for Proposals for a consultant to work with a Vision Zero Task Force made up of committed stakeholders including residents, staff, public agency partners, law enforcement, experts, and others to develop a Vision Zero Plan," Gerringer said. "Vision Zero emphasizes making systemic change based on data to create an environment where human mistakes on our roads do not cause death or severe injury and works to protect our most vulnerable road users. We will use the city's many communications channels to ensure that the community has every opportunity to learn more about Vision Zero and to be part of the implementation process."

As for emergency preparedness, Gerringer said, "Working with our partners and our residents, we made great progress around our goal to enhance wildfire and emergency preparedness and fuel mitigation. I want to thank all residents for taking personal responsibility for vegetation cleanup and creating defensible spaces around their properties, and to forming Firewise neighborhoods. I look forward to us taking a proactive

approach to review our tree protection ordinances to ensure that we are not creating barriers to enhanced fuel mitigation measures."

The council will continue to work with the Chamber, Lafayette businesses, schools, nonprofits and faith communities to address ongoing concerns related to COVID. "The distribution of ARPA funds is on track thanks to our subcommittee and staff," Gerringer explained. "We will continue to look for other grant opportunities with the help of Townsend Associates. When it's safe to gather, I look forward to working with the Chamber and the Lafayette Community Foundation to introduce a Lafayette Together Community Volunteer Day that brings us all together to connect while doing good in the community." More details including the date will follow.

Gerringer also commented on the General Plan Advisory Council (GPAC), which is made up of volunteers from throughout the community who have committed to updating the Lafayette General Plan over a 5-year period. "They are one year in and have begun to update the Housing Element, reviewed and drafted an updated mission and vision statement, and worked on the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) requirements." The GPAC will present an update on the Housing Element timeline and the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) law at a joint meeting of the City Council and Planning Commission at 6 p.m. Jan. 10, Gerringer said.

In summarizing her particular focus, Gerringer says, "My legislative priorities will be to work with my colleagues on the council and across the state to advocate to increase the supply and funding for affordable housing, and to strengthen city-school partnerships. Ongoing efforts include safety around our schools, and matters relating to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging."

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[back](#)

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