# Continued action to combat climate change discussed at council meeting

**By Lou Fancher**

City Council Member Wei-Tai Kwok brought to the April 11 meeting good news – and a call for continued action as the city of Lafayette enacts measures to counteract the growing environmental and public health threats attributable to climate change. Joining cities across the nation, he said the Lafayette community plays an important role in slowing the climate crisis with simple strategic initiatives such as "Electrify Everything" and specifically in Lafayette, municipal solutions involving the residential, business and transportation sectors.

Leveraging the successful adoption of MCE as a primary energy provider to many Lafayette households, Kwok said building upon such progress is critical at this time. The city joined MCE in 2016; use by Lafayette residents was 68% that year. By 2020 and today, Kwok said the majority of Lafayette residents enjoy the 98-100% carbon-free electricity provided by MCE. Clean energy use at this rate he said is "an amazing achievement which comes 23 years earlier than Gov. Jerry Brown's SB100 California law that requires all cities to use 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045."

In 2015, a study revealed that three-quarters of the city's greenhouse gas emissions came from transportation emissions, primarily from Highway 24. The remaining one-quarter percent came from homes and buildings. "The consequence of global warming in California, among others, is drought," said Kwok, noting that the San Francisco Chronicle has called the state's condition a "mega-drought" and reports that already in April, 94% of the state is experiencing extreme or severe drought.

What can Lafayette do to stop burning fossil fuels? Kwok noted that in 2014, electric, solar and wind energy were cheaper than energy from coal and gas plants in approximately 1% of the world. Five years later, it was cheaper in two-thirds of the world. Kwok's stated that by 2024 it is expected solar and wind will be economical enough to provide the whole world with energy. Kwok said modifications in the transportation sector offer the largest gains.

Elements with the greatest impact on the burning of fossil fuels already underway in the city include Vision Zero (in part, by making city streets safer to bike and walk); the Housing Element (by making sure multifamily homes have an EV charger and other means); and by improvements related to the Downtown/Mt Diablo Corridor Specific Plan.

In residential and building sectors, Kwok said replacing gas furnaces, water heaters, cooktops and fireplaces with heat pump mini splits, heat pump water heating/HVAC units, and electric appliances and fireplaces can be an economical way to reduce your carbon footprint. He has converted his home using these solutions, a process he said took only 45 days to complete, and ended on a celebratory note with his calling PG&E to come to his home to take away the gas meter.

Concluding his presentation, Kwok highlighted a 2019 achievement, when 47 Northern California cities adopted electrification building ordinances. Lafayette, he said, can go all-electric and with proposals and ordinances under review by the planning commission, public comment on ordinances and programs is invaluable. "In some regards, Lafayette has a lot of options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. With the (solutions proposed), Lafayette can work to make reducing the climate crisis a reality." The city, he suggested, "is moving on all fronts" and already making a difference.

Lynda Deschambault, former mayor of Moraga and an environmental scientist who works with Contra Costa County Climate Leaders said, "Cities can do so many things to address the issue and make a bright future for next generations. Lafayette comes in ninth in the county in terms of what they're doing." She suggested council members "look at those eight other cities to get ideas of things that can be done." Among the ideas: adopt a Climate Emergency Resolution that creates a standalone measure and an official city statement on environmental justice from which other policies can be determined.

Nancy Hu, a volunteer on the city's Environmental Task Force, strongly supported the conversion to solar energy. The group's Earth Day webinar event on April 22 welcomed public input on the choices the city is considering to move away from fossil fuels to all-electric energy in the city's buildings and businesses. She hopes measures currently under review by commissions and the council will receive support from residents and be approved by council in the near future.

## Lafayette Public Meetings

**City Council**
Regular Meeting
Monday, May 9, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's You Tube Channel:
http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube

**Planning Commission Meeting**
Monday, May 2, 7 p.m.
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube

**Design Review**
Wednesday, April 27, 7 p.m. Zoom
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube

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