

New LafSD Superintendent excited to meet district students & families

By Sharon K. Sobotta

Just as students are getting acclimated to their new routines with the arrival of the new school year, the new superintendent Dr. Brent Stephens is settling into the Lafayette School District.

After a three year tenure as the superintendent for Berkeley Unified School district, Stephens began his tenure in Lafayette in July. "I had gotten to the point after contending with the pandemic both at home and in the school district, that a change felt important and necessary," Stephens says. "One of my goals was to find a district where I would have more of an opportunity to work directly with principals and teachers and would still give me a reasonable amount of time to be with my daughter who is a senior in high school," Stephens says. "I learned about the (the Lafayette school district



Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

Dr. Brent Stephens

and the) way the community rallies around the public schools and its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (and) it was very appealing to me."

Stephens didn't bring a particular agenda to the district. Instead, he says he's committed to meeting students, family, staff and the Lafayette community where they are at and co-crafting and supporting the vision.

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Housing Element Environmental Impact Report

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The studies conducted include items such as evaluating and providing metrics for a project's impact on air quality, aesthetics, evacuation routes, direct wildfire significance, and other aspects. Questions focused on evacuation routes in very high fire hazard severity zones and concerns about "significant or insignificant" impacts during emergencies.

The following three scenarios were chosen for analysis in the EIR based on the likelihood of occurrence, location in high fire risk areas, availability of evacuation routes, and the judgment of the emergency responder representatives: Wildfire originating in the north (Briones Regional Park) and moving southeast - afternoon, August/September with schools in session; Wildfire originating in the eastern portion of the Lafayette Reservoir area and moving east - afternoon, August/September with schools in session; and Wildfire originating in southeast Lafayette (Hunsaker Canyon Road) and moving north - nighttime, August/September.

According to the report, the assumptions used as part of the analysis were conservative, and included, among other things, that an entire region of the city would be required to evacuate at the same time (e.g., under Scenario 1, all areas north of SR-24 would be required to evacuate simultaneously), which is unlikely given that evacuations are more typically implemented by notifying specific subareas or zones as an emergency event unfolds (sometimes called a "rolling" evacuation).

Council members Susan Candell, Wei-Tai Kwok and Gina Dawson brought up aspects about evacuations and language used to reference them in the draft EIR. Information in the report specifically states the evacuation routes used in the AB 747 analysis were those identified in the City's Emergency Operations Plan/Wildland Fire Evacuation Plan and are listed in Table 4.17-2 of the Draft EIR.

According to the draft EIR, "... if the HEU is adopted and if subsequent residential development occurs, conditions in the city would change, and the city's evacuation plans would need to be updated to reflect those changed conditions. This is not just good policy, it is also

a requirement of State law, specifically AB 747."

The analysis showed that full development under either the HEU with Distributed Sites or the Downtown-Only Alternative would increase evacuation times for certain areas of the city. Some areas would experience no increase at all, but other areas would experience some level of increase, ranging from just a few minutes to nearly an hour. The city concluded that the estimated increase in evacuation times under various conservative assumptions may warrant changes to the plan, which is already updated on an as-needed basis, but would not substantially impair emergency response or evacuation enough to warrant special action or the elimination of a site from consideration.

Importantly, Robles and the consultants reiterated a primary difficulty in assessing and determining the importance of impacts: There are no established numerical standards or thresholds for when the amount of time needed to evacuate an area is excessive.

Evans said identifying what is significant, and what is not, is difficult to evaluate and subject to differing opinions without metrics to guide them. CEQA thresholds depend on actual (complete) impairment, such as would make an evacuation impossible. Using checklist questions provided by CEQA, he said it remains impossible to determine what would actually prevent an evacuation, although it is possible to determine the delay metrics.

At the end of the discussion, the council asked the staff and consultants to look into whether changes in language that might include applying "significant and unavoidable" to impacts or other changes resulting from re-examination of Zonehaven designations could be added without causing the report to be rejected by HCD. Candell also questioned whether anyone had direct conversations with County Connection regarding buses performing evacuation services during an emergency, and asked the consultants to return with that information for further discussion at the Sept. 12 council meeting.

The complete draft and final EIR can be found at www.lovelafayette.org/CEQA.



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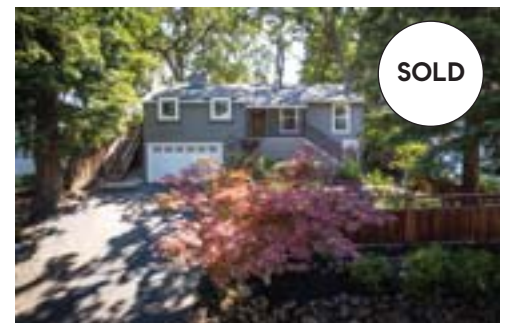
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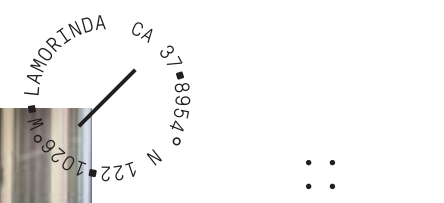
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REAL ESTATE TEAM



Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Monday, Sept. 12, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's YouTube Channel:
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Planning Commission Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 6, 7 p.m.
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Design Review

Wednesday, Aug. 24, 7 p.m. Zoom
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

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