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Hundreds gather for School Board Candidate Forum



Candidates Katy Foreman, Dave Smith and Rob Sturm Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

By Sharon K. Sobotta

A few hundred people gathered at Stanley Middle School on Oct. 3 hoping to learn the

views of the six Lafayette School District board candidates. Unfortunately three of the six candidates declined to attend.

Martha Goralka, the League of Women Voters Service Co-chair and Forum organizer, said Robb McSorely never responded, Neils Larsen felt he'd been attacked and planned to suspend his campaign and Sarah Lind waived on whether or not she'd come but declined in the end for fear that the event would be partisan and one-sided. "I'm disappointed that they felt that way. I think that if they had come, they would've had a chance to present their views," Goralka said. "We did have their name cards ready just in case any of them decided to come at the last minute. I am disappointed that they didn't."

While Anne Granlund, the president of the local chapter of the League of Women Voters, felt the forum went well, she also expressed regret for

the no-shows. "When we say we're non-partisan, it means that we don't support any candidate and we invite all candidates to participate. I'm sorry some candidates felt otherwise, but we did invite them."

Throughout the evening, the three candidates in attendance, Katy Foreman, Dave Smith and Rob Sturm shared their perspectives on topics ranging from diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and the banning of books to the ways in which DEIB and emotional support in schools helps or hinders student learning to the schools' roles in addressing the issue.

While there may have been slight nuances to the candidates responses, they were definitely aligned. All agree that DEIB and emotional support are cornerstones of

education, that no books need to be taken off of shelves (trusting librarians to make those decisions), and that schools do have a part to play in promoting sustainability. In terms of the schools' pandemic response, the consensus was that although the district did the best it could at the time while following the data, the science and the feedback of families, lessons can always be learned in hindsight and protocols can always be improved upon.

When asked about whether students are distracted by anti-racist and social emotional learning, Smith said this type of instruction provides a set of tools to survive and thrive in the community.

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Local students push council for resolution to reduce auto idling

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Greenhouse gases released when one gallon of gas is burned can reach 20 pounds of toxins that contribute to global warming, according to Project Earth's research. Parents and guardians of students who sit in their cars with engines idling, he said, causes obvious waste. By simply turning off the ignition, beginning to solve a problem that often seems insurmountable – the climate crisis – becomes possible. If everyone on the planet takes this one easy no-idling action, the degree of change increases exponentially.

The average driver, according to data gathered by Project Earth, emits 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide in one year. Particles released are

many but also minuscule, meaning they harm not only a person's lungs, but pass into the bloodstream. Conditions such as asthma, bronchitis and cancer can be exacerbated or introduced as a result of dangerous auto emissions.

With gas prices hitting all-time highs, the team leaders said the expenditure wasted during idling is an obvious reason to stop the practice. Lauren said their idling experiment conducted in 2018 in the Burton Valley parking lot showed some cars idling for 10 to 20 minutes. A subsequent experiment had them holding up handmade, no-idling signs. They observed that 10% of the drivers turned off their car engines. They were inspired by having created even minor change in what is a patterned behavior and set out to expand

their efforts.

A no-idling poster contest begun in 2019 invited students at all schools in the Lafayette School District to create entries. Selecting the best, Brekke said the award-winning posters are displayed at Lafayette school parking lots.

Raini described presenting a proposal for a no-idling ordinance to the Lafayette Environmental Task Force. The task force advised the Project Earth leaders that their priorities were inarguably important, but resources to enact an actual ordinance were not available. After talking to other cities in the region, a simpler solution was agreed upon: a resolution that requires no official or costly enforcement but comes with the energy of a statement by the city that it supports and is committed to

playing whatever role is possible in making change. Education and encouragement not to idle coming from not only students, but from adults and city officials, she said will hopefully help reduce emissions. Lafayette with a resolution would become part of a national movement for cities to support protecting the environment.

In other action, a Project Earth petition was presented at various events and schools and in neighborhoods asking people so say they care about protecting the environment. The team received approximately 250 signatures and, drawing on enthusiasm from local residents, adapted a resolution adopted by the city of Dublin, making alterations to suit Lafayette.

Council Member Susan

Candell asked if cars, trucks, buses and other vehicles are included. Raini said she thought there are laws about school buses but they would investigate the matter. The council members thanked the team for persisting and expanding their goals.

City Manager Niroop Srivatsa brought forth draft Resolution 2022-61 declaring Lafayette an idle-free city for possible approval at the Oct. 11 council meeting, after press time.

The resolution includes exceptions for no idling on days when temperatures are over 85 degrees Fahrenheit or below 35 degrees Fahrenheit. It also commits to not idling municipal vehicles with the exception of cars used by patrol officers while on duty.

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