

Published December 21st, 2022

Lafayette welcomes new mayor and vice mayor

By Lou Fancher



Lafayette City Clerk Joanne Robbins at the Dec. 12 city council meeting administered the oath of office to the three re-elected council members - Susan Candell (four-year term), Teresa Geringer (four-year term), and Wei-Tai Kwok (two-year term) - while acknowledging their prior service. The council went on to nominate the new mayor (Carl Anduri) and vice mayor (Gina Dawson) for their one-year terms.

Prior to the nomination, Geringer provided remarks about her term in office, thanking the residents of Lafayette for the privilege of serving as mayor during 2022. Geringer spoke with special respect and humility about specific activities undertaken by the council such as working with the Dias family to dedicate a plaque to commemorate the life of Ashley Dias who in early September 2022 was struck and killed by a driver while working as a crossing guard at Stanley Middle School.

Other notable milestones included opening Brook Street Park, implementing traffic safety improvements around local schools - with more planned for 2023 - and construction of the Rain Garden Project on First Street and Golden Gate Way that will open in early 2023. She said that declaring Lafayette an "idle free city" and continued work with the Chamber and local businesses to bolster the local economy forecast good things for the city. Geringer received a plaque with a gavel mounted above a statement of appreciation.

The council's work on the Housing Element and the General Plan will continue and the purchase by the city of two key plots of land in the downtown core collectively offer opportunities for future involvement by residents. She gave a verbal salute to city staff, fellow council members, committee and commission volunteers and others who have worked hard to support the community. As she continues for another four-year term, she thanked her family for their generosity.

Council member and new mayor Carl Anduri expressed appreciation for Geringer's leadership style, which he said had been inclusive. Her focus on building a sense of community was helpful and inspiring, Anduri said. Vincent Salimi (former mayor of the City of Pinole) thanked Geringer, Anduri and Dawson for their service. A second speaker, Pat Horn, noted Geringer's brevity in her comments and honored her work to lead the staff during a year filled with challenges.

The council completed the election with all members voting in favor of the nominations and a "passing of the virtual gavel," as referenced by Geringer, to Anduri and Dawson.

Anduri in his comments outlined five challenges for the city in 2023: The continued impact of COVID-19 on public health safety and on local businesses; the reality of the climate crisis, especially related to greenhouse gas emission and wildfires; the housing crisis that in particular requires building more affordable housing in the city; upholding national and local values and calls for equal rights, freedoms and liberties for all citizens and residents of Lafayette, and establishing - and meeting - the all-age appropriate and friendly goals and criteria of Lafayette, a city in which the number of older residents is increasing, widening the generational span of the demographics. Anduri said the council from these challenges had adopted four priorities: Wildfire prevention and utility safety; improved traffic and pedestrian safety; creating a downtown core and Mount Diablo Boulevard Specific Plan; and developing short- and long-term fiscal stability plans. He asked for public input as those priorities are reviewed and updated in January 2023.

Offering "only a few of his individual goals as mayor," Anduri emphasized strengthening city-school partnerships, working closely with the recently formed DEI committee, expanding collaborations with the Chamber of Commerce, supporting the Park Theater Trust in its efforts to renovate the Park Theater, continuing to support the library and other city entities, obtaining approval of the final Housing Element, implementing Vision Zero, and seeking to add more green space and downtown parks.

He proposed reviving an initiative in partnership with Chamber of Commerce leadership to visit local businesses to gather ideas to best support the business community as it recovers from the pandemic and deals with a struggling economy. He said a celebration of the city's 175-year history would include "plus" years by acknowledging the history of indigenous people on whose land the city was established and the Spaniards and Rancheros who were here before founder Elam Brown arrived.

Additionally, ordinances for EV charging and other initiatives to address climate change will be pursued and re-invigorated through a collaborative relationship between the city and Sustainable Contra Costa. He issued a challenge to Moraga and Orinda to see which Lamorinda community will conserve the most water and

avoid more carbon emissions during 2023. In light of the competition and for safety reasons, Anduri encouraged all residents to drive at or below the speed limit. New technology used for targeting speed violators through monitoring will be discussed by the council in January.

Vice Mayor Dawson kept her comments brief, thanking staff, commissioners, volunteers, contractors and partners, fellow council members and her family. She encouraged residents to stay engaged.

In a public comment from former mayor Don Tatzin, who said he was representing Sen. Steve Glazer, he congratulated the council for the peaceful transition of leadership: "We've learned in various countries and in communities that's not always the way it works." He reminded the council to reach out to the state in the next year because it "can do things for you and not just do things to you."



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