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COMPASS

Staff shortages, timing issue affect fiscal year-end budget

By Lou Fancher

The city staff report on the final municipal budget for fiscal year 2022-23 (FY22-23) stated that looming inflation and a potential recession during the current and projected economic environments have the city continuing to practice "a conservative approach to budgeting as always."

Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson said the budget item would return to the council on Jan. 9 at which time the final review will occur.

Highlights in what Robinson said was a "sneak preview" of the final budget included the city in the prior fiscal year (FY21-22) spending \$2.4 million less than budgeted, largely due to timing issues, staff vacancies, police budget savings attributed to the use of overtime, and deferred maintenance and projects.

because the city's recovery from the pandemic was faster than had been projected. The General Fund balance at the end of the 2022 fiscal year on June 30 was \$16.3 million. Robinson reiterated that those savings came largely from deferred projects that will be reimplemented or be evident in the coming fiscal year's budget.

As a result, for FY22-23 the fund is projected to spend \$3.6 million more than expected revenue. The fiscal fund reserves at the end of the FY22-23 year is therefore projected to be \$13 million, representing 69% of the expenses and well over (by \$1.7 million) the reserve target set by the city.

from previous levels in the final budget. The purchase by the city of two properties resulted in borrowing \$5.2 million from the City Offices Fund as a loan, and \$1.7 million from the General Fund towards the purchase. The council will be discussing the uses of those properties over the next few months. As a part of those conversations, repayment of the borrowed funds will be determined.

The American Rescue Plan (ARPA) money from the first tranche, roughly \$180,000 that was put into a sinking fund is beginning to be used for downtown core maintenance. Separately, a six-month extension of the economic development manager position will add \$80,000 to the budget and was a correction from a previ-

ous figure cited for the staffing (\$180,000). Finally, a new work plan to establish downtown objective design standards - an item Council Member Susan Candell inquired about - will be amended at a future meeting and will incorporate the planning commission and council's updated standards after adoption of the Housing Element is completed.

There were no public comments on the budget. The additional \$80,000 and plan to apply ARPA money out of the second tranche to fund the economic development manager position was approved. A motion to move the budget item to the next phase for final review on Jan. 9 was voted upon and approved by all council members.

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 Gerringer (four-year term), and Wei-Tai Kwok (two-year term) - while acknowledging their prior ser-

vice. 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, Gerringer provided remarks about her term in office, thanking the residents of Lafayette for the privilege of serving as mayor during 2022. Gerringer 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.

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 Gerringer'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 Gerringer, Anduri and Dawson for their service. A second speaker, Pat Horn, noted Gerringer'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 Gerringer, 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.

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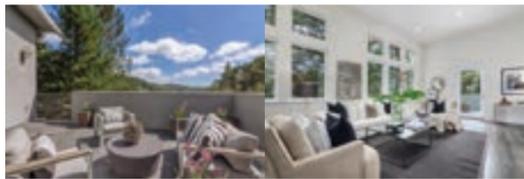


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