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## Replacement process begins for Council Member Teresa Gerringe

By Lou Fancher

Lafayette City Council Member Teresa Gerringe, who has served the residents of Lafayette for nearly 23 years - having been for more than a decade an elected member of the Lafayette School District Governing Board and for the last five years, a member of the Lafayette City Council - recently announced her resignation from her position effective Jan. 23.

In her Dec. 15 resignation letter, Gerringe thanked the residents of Lafayette "for allowing me to represent and work with them, my colleagues on the Council, the excellent Lafayette City staff, the business community, the schools, students, parents, and teachers, and the many committed volunteers and community organizations, all who work together to protect and enhance the quality of life in Lafayette."

Gerringe joined the council in 2018 and her term is not scheduled to expire until December of 2026. State law designates that the council must fill the seat within 60 days of her official resignation. The individual appointed by the council to replace Gerringe will serve only until the next municipal election is held. That election occurs in November of the current year.

City attorney Mala Subramanian at the Jan. 8 council meeting said the November election would therefore include three open positions with four-year terms and one seat that will consist of the remaining two years of Gerringe's term.

In 2019, the council adopted detailed policies for filling vacancies that provides for the announcement of an open position, direction to the city clerk to advertise the position for a period of no more than two weeks, and interviews scheduled upon acceptance of applications that begin with the mayor and vice mayor meeting in advance to prepare draft questions, which would be considered by the entire council at the public meeting on Jan. 26.

Council Member Susan Candell asked about the process used in the past to address filling positions between elections and recalled having advance questions submitted by all members of the council, not just the mayor and vice mayor. Subramanian said that to avoid a violation of the Brown Act - the California law passed in 1953 that guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies, such as the city council - an ad hoc "committee" of two council members would provide the full council a drafted list of questions for consideration. The council would discuss and modify the list at a meeting open to the public.

Council Member Carl Anduri verified whether or not the process adopted in 2019 meant the advertising had to be available for two weeks, or simply any number of days set by council up to two weeks. Having confirmation from the city clerk the advertising could begin as early as the next day, Jan. 9, Anduri suggested an expedited schedule that had the candidate application window closing at 8 a.m. on Jan. 25. The interviews would be scheduled for Jan. 29 and if second interviews are necessary, on Jan. 31.

Mayor Gina Dawson, receiving no in-person or online public comments requests, returned the discussion to the council for final consideration and a vote.

Council Member We-Tai Kwok agreed that the buffer period provided by Gerringe's announcement in December had received wide coverage in the press and on social media. The public, Kwok said, was well aware of her pending departure and a month's "head start" on the official replacement process was sufficient.

With no further discussion, the council reiterated the schedule as proposed by Anduri and approved the process used in the past, with the full council considering the list of questions one hour prior to the first interview on Jan. 29. The calendar and process received unanimous approval from council members.

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