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Meet the New Code Enforcement Officer

By Cathy Tyson



Adam Foster Photo C. Tyson

While his job description sounds dry, "enforcing the Lafayette Municipal Code," the charming newcomer to the position of code enforcement officer, Adam Foster, is perky, professional and friendly - definitely not dry.

He works on investigating and resolving complaints about land use and property maintenance, which can include issues from barking dogs, to abandoned vehicles, to fences and beyond. He's often the first city employee many citizens talk to, so he's keenly aware of making a good impression and keeping a positive dialogue going to resolve complaints. Essentially, enforcing the city's codes can improve the quality of neighborhoods and protect property values; who wants to live next to an abandoned car covered with graffiti or crowing roosters?

His excellent communication skills were honed with stints on the UC Davis student paper "The California Aggie" and at "Baseball America," a bi-weekly magazine covering, what else, baseball. Foster was inspired by the movie "Moneyball," his love of the game and talent with statistics, to create algorithms that identify stand-out young minor league players; related stories ran in the

print and digital editions of the magazine, and at "Project Prospect" - a scouting and statistical analysis baseball publication.

Foster has been on the job since early June and manages to bike to work most every day, logging roughly 100 miles per week, commuting from Concord. When not working or biking he spends time with his wife Katie and delightful 1-year-old daughter. Having attended Springhill Elementary School, Stanley Middle School and Acalanes High School, he's intimately familiar with the lay of the land. His grandparents still live in town.

"He brings both enthusiasm and experience to the position, and he's got a natural likability that is somewhat rare in the code enforcement world," said City Manager Steven Falk. "People who receive a visit from Adam will meet a smart, pleasant young man who will listen to their side of the story." Prior to coming to Lafayette, he was the code enforcement officer for Danville.

He also brings a background in planning to the party; he was a temporary planning staffer who worked for various cities around Contra Costa County. Clearly enjoying municipal involvement, Foster wants to run for city council in Concord.

When asked why he likes this position, he responded that it offers the unique opportunity to work with "multiple layers of city government" like engineering staff, public works, parks and recreation along with the city attorney.

He explains that by starting out on a friendly basis, with a phone call or a knock on the door, recipients of code visits are much more likely to be open to suggestion. He sees the job as kind of like being a "land use therapist" who ultimately creates a vibrant community that people want to be a part of. A-frame signs dotting the sidewalk, junker cars left out, roosters crowing at all hours arguably make Lafayette less loveable.

"We're working on an electronic implementation system to track complaints," said Foster. It

will be similar to the app that the public works department already uses. "Most requests for code enforcement action come in via phone and email. The app will give residents the ability to submit pictures and location information while they're out and about." It will tentatively be up and running later this year.

Got a code issue and are nervous about ratting out your neighbors? There's a confidential code enforcement complaint form available online at www.lovelafayette.org/complaint. The city also has a handy code enforcement brochure that spells out what organizations are responsible for a variety of issues along with frequently asked questions. Although he's well versed in an array of civic topics, not all issues are handled by Foster. Swarm of bees? Best handled by the Mt. Diablo Beekeepers Association. Dead deer - that would be Animal Control. Foster is all over noise, businesses in residential areas, signs, storage, tree removal, RV parking and more. To see a complete list, or read the brochure, go to www.lovelafayette.org or reach the code enforcement office by phone (925) 299-3207.

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

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