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Meet the Mayor for 2015 - Brandt Andersson

By Cathy Tyson



In the library's Community Hall, Linnea, new mayor Brandt, Patricia and Erik Andersson celebrate with chocolate cake. Photo Cathy Tyson

He will face more public hearings in the coming year about the revised Terraces of Lafayette project as it moves through the city's review process. Earlier this year the proposed project, now 44 single-family homes with a portion of the property near Acalanes High School slated for a public soccer field, tot lot, parking area and multi-purpose path, took the first of many steps -focusing on the draft environmental impact report; as the year progresses, it will move on to public hearings on the merits of the project.

The mayor and city council members also give direction to staff who maintain the day to day operations that keep the city running, conveniently identified as the four P's - police, public works, parks and planning.

Andersson sees a bit of tension between what residents want and what the city can provide. "Lafayette incorporated as a low tax, limited service city, but there always seems to be a demand for more services." He notes that there are scores of volunteers who donate their time helping on a variety of commissions and committees from downtown street improvements to the Public Art Committee and the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission.

In the coming year he would like to provide more support to volunteers, beyond the very basic date and times of meetings. "Although we are blessed with citizens with a remarkable breadth of knowledge and expertise, cities don't always operate in the same way that businesses or other institutions do." He calls for developing a Commissioners Academy that details the roles they are expected to fill, how that fits in with the overall operations of the city's administration, how to get the most out of meetings, and legal regulations.

Looking forward, Andersson sees several opportunities to focus on; topping the list is downtown traffic. There's currently a downtown traffic study that seeks out game changing ideas about how to reconcile traffic moving throughout the city. It's not yet complete.

Addressing downtown parking is a close second, with ramped up demand due to the success of restaurants and other retail activity. With 10,000 parking spaces in the downtown area, the mayor feels "parking management is where the most significant improvements can be made."

He also sees a pair of opportunities in creek development and environmental activities. Many

This year's mayor looks surprisingly like the 2010 mayor. The five members of the Lafayette City Council rotate the mayor-ship, so Brandt Andersson once again wields the seldom used gavel. He's been serving on the council for a total of 10 years and was recently reappointed for another four-year term, along with Council Member Don Tatzin, at the Dec. 8 council meeting. Look for him, and the other four volunteer members who compose the city council, at two usually lengthy Monday evening meetings per month, until the end of 2018. Traci Reilly will be the vice mayor - or as she calls it, the "understudy" - for 2015.

Andersson recalls three very big issues the council was wrestling with five years ago - the downtown specific plan, road repair and the budget. Now the specific plan is complete; road repair, which overwhelmed the city for decades, has now reached a manageable level and should be substantially complete in the next five or so years; and the budget is on very solid ground.

residents may not know that most sections of creek are privately owned. Improvements will have to be made in conjunction with private development. Currently there are no plans in place to assess what is needed to restore the creeks.

On the environmental front, the city council is looking at giving residents a choice of who will provide their electricity and how that electricity will be generated. Andersson continues to support Lafayette moving toward a greener future - with a goal of diverting 75 percent of the waste stream to compost, re-use and recycling.

Finally, Andersson would like to start a civic dialogue, by sponsoring a number of community conversations around the city to generate ideas looking ahead to longer term priorities, whether that's a community center, a parking structure, or restoring the Park Theater. There are many possibilities, but no clarity about what tops the list.

Andersson works full-time with fellow attorney and very patient wife, Patricia Andersson, in their own estate planning and probate services law office in Walnut Creek. She practices estate and income tax planning and compliance, along with trust and probate administration, living wills and more.

The couple has two children, Erik and Linnea; mom and dad enjoyed an empty nest for about nine months, then both the kids came back home. Erik was attending art school; unfortunately the photography program he was interested in was canceled, so now he's involved in glass blowing. Linnea was attending the Los Angeles campus of the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, but recently transferred to the San Francisco location and commutes from the family's Lafayette home.

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[back](#)

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