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Maintaining local control for land use high on new mayor's list



Photo Pippa Fisher

Lafayette's new mayor, Cam Burks
By Pippa Fisher

This year sees Lafayette coming off a divisive election with two brand new city council members and, as of press time, one yet to be appointed. Without a permanent city manager, it will fall to the experience of the city's new mayor and vice mayor to provide leadership over the coming weeks.

First-time Mayor Cam Burks is optimistic. "For me, 2019 is about coming together and uniting as a community, encouraging even stronger public participation to enable how we govern the city, and to

do so in a civil and respectful manner around every turn."

Burks says that debate and the expression of alternative views are absolutely critical and often result in better decisions. "It's important, however, to do so in ways that do not alienate any element of our community. This is something that I will encourage at city council meetings. My hope is that our entire community provides their views on everything that comes before us."

Burks has defined several goals for the upcoming year, although he is quick to point out that he would like to see any goals be strategic – longer term than just one year. "The foundation of my vision for 2019 rests on taking action that will unify the city, stimulate respectful and civil collaboration and strengthen the community," he says.

Perhaps his number one priority concerns protection of local control on land use and development from what he describes as "Sacramento's overreach." He says the city must be proactive, being prepared to lobby and work with local representatives and the league of cities as well as defensively.

Noting that several

General Plan elements are in need of revision, Burks says that work on this will be critical. "Now more than ever, as Sacramento continues to express a strong legislative desire to strip our local control in the land use and development space, we need robust strategies and tools to protect our city and its special character. While the General Plan won't mitigate all risks in this regard from our state legislature, it's critical that our community, council, staff and in particular, our terrific planning and design review commissions come together and focus on this effort. It's all hands on deck," he says.

Burks says the city is financially stable and well managed and that roads and infrastructure are in superb shape. "Our police department is the best in the Bay Area. They continue to do outstanding work to keep our community safe and plan for emergencies," he says, noting that he would like to see an expanded emergency preparedness focus, particularly in the area of wildfire preparation. "Our senior services commission continues to do great work for the community," he says, adding that he would like to see

development of robust senior community inclusion strategies as the senior population grows, including strategies around emergency evacuation planning such as coupling households with less mobile neighbors.

Additionally Burks wants to foster a strong relationship with both the Lafayette School District and the Acalanes Union High School District, holding public meetings and socials. "While we have a very good relationship at present, a lot of our collaboration is piecemeal and at times, reactive, so perhaps it's time to look holistically at what we can do together," he says.

Burks might be picking up the mayoral gavel for the first time but he is no stranger to public service, serving from 2011 on the Crime Prevention Commission (and elected chair in 2013) prior to being elected to the city council in 2016. He served as vice mayor on the council last year.

Burks is a Bay Area native who worked for many years as a diplomat and special agent in Washington, D.C. and at U.S. embassies around the world. He led U.S. government counterterrorism strategy in multiple foreign countries; managed multimillion dollar budgets; oversaw complex

public programs; and negotiated policies in the best interests of U.S. diplomacy and the national security of the United States. He is now the deputy chief security officer at Chevron Corporation.

He settled back in the Bay Area eight years ago and lives with his wife and two school-age daughters in Lafayette. He has been involved coaching youth soccer and is passionate about the trails, which he walks with his dog. He enjoys fly-fishing with his girls and skiing and backcountry hiking.

Burks says that he is honored to be mayor and sincerely thanks the community and council for their faith in him. "My family and I love Lafayette deeply and I'm committed to helping our community achieve a positive and productive 2019. I feel very fortunate to be on a city council with three other outstanding public servants – colleagues that are profoundly dedicated to our city and have already made a tangible impact," he says.

Among the first challenges for Burks and the new council will be hiring a fifth council member and a permanent city manager.

New Year, new city council lineup

By Pippa Fisher

Although at press time the city council was still awaiting the appointment of a fifth member, who will fill the seat left by the sudden passing of Council Member Mark Mitchel, right now the lineup

is Mayor Cam Burks, Vice Mayor Mike Anderson, and council members Susan Candell and Teresa Gerringer.

Vice Mayor Mike Anderson
Anderson was elected to the city council in 2004 and has served three terms as mayor in 2008, 2013 and



Photo Jeff Heyman, City of Lafayette

The 2019 Lafayette City Council, from left: Council Member Susan Candell, Vice Mayor Mike Anderson, Mayor Cam Burks, and Council Member Teresa Gerringer.

2017. He was chair of the planning commission in 2004, appointed to the commission in 2000. Additionally he was a member of the Lafayette General Plan advisory committee from 1993 to 2002.

Anderson has lived with his wife in Lafayette for 27 years. Now retired, during his 32-year career with the East Bay Regional Park District he planned, designed and developed parks and trails, was responsible for finding funding for such projects, working with residents to get their input through workshops and surveys.

Council Member Susan Candell

Candell has been an active resident in the community, attending council meetings for many years, taking special interest in proposed development on Deer Hill Road. She is a big supporter

of the recently passed more rigorous Conflict of Interest policy for the Planning and Design Review Commissions. She was appointed to the Circulation Commission in early 2018. Additionally Candell is president of the Springhill Valley Homeowners Association and is a Lafayette Community Foundation board member.

Candell's educational background includes a bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering from UC Berkeley, and master's degree in nuclear engineering from MIT. She works at Carl Zeiss X-Ray Microscopy in Pleasanton, as an image quality engineer developing a world-leading industrial MicroCT device. She spent 20 years as a medical CT engineer for Imatron, General Electric, and Siemens Oncology Care.

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Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council
Monday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission
Monday, Jan. 22, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review
Monday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Arts & Science Discovery Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

School Board Meetings

Acalanes Union High School District
Wednesday, Jan. 16, 7 p.m.
AUHSD Board Room
1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District
Wednesday, Jan. 22, 7 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
District Office Board Room
3477 School St., Lafayette
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us