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Public Forum

A timely message from Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson

With the knowledge that there is so much information coming from so many sources, I am concerned that this message will only add to the confusion. But here goes:

We are all faced with some really difficult decisions over the next 3-4 weeks maybe longer. We have all moved into the "Containment" phase of COVID-19. I am no expert, but I do know someone who is. Their advice was listen to Dr. Fauci. He is telling it like it is. Politicians, Cable News shows and Influencers all have other agendas. Please, trust science first.

Containment of the virus will come with great sacrifice and economic hardship. The Chamber supports our local businesses, and we have never needed to support them more than we do now. Small business is Lafayette. No BIG BOX Stores. No businesses getting special tax breaks. These are hard working people who have created the kind of town we want to live and work in. So how can we support the local merchants and services without exposing ourselves or others to the threat of contracting the virus? Here are my thoughts:

Start by calling your local favorite businesses. Ask them what you can do to support them at this time. An example: we called a bunch of our local restaurants and they will take to go orders, and deliver them to your car, when you pull up. Some businesses have even offered private shopping.

Continue using common sense and dine either a little early or late when restaurants are slow and you can practice "social distancing."

Go to the grocery store during the off hours. I went into Safeway at 5 a.m. the other day, and there were maybe 3-4 other shoppers. Businesses might want to change their hours.

If a local store has online shopping or deliveries, use it.

If you are not part of the "most vulnerable" group that experts tell to stay home, shop for a neighbor. If that is not "kindness" I don't know what is.

BUY GIFT CARDS NOW. That is a win-win

Small Business owners are our friends. They are the ones that give you those gift cards when you are putting on the school fundraiser. They employ our kids. They help generate nearly 30% of the General Funds that pay for our Police, Public Works and many of the things that give you reason to live here. This period of time is going to be crucial for their survival. They will surely make decisions to help their bottom line that will not be easy. But if you can find a way to help them now, the recovery will be that much easier. It is easy to shop on Amazon! However, investing in our community has never been more important. Not only do businesses need to find creative ways to connect with you during this phase, they also need to provide a safe environment for you and their employees. They need to be flexible with sick leave and show compassion to their employees, many of whom do not have health benefits.

If you are a property owner, consider giving your tenants a little more time to pay rent. (I am sure I'll get a response on this crazy idea).

As the recession began back in 2008, the Chamber launched the "TRY LAFAYETTE FIRST" campaign. We asked residents to take a pledge that they would shop here in Lafayette before going elsewhere. During that time, Lafayette experienced the lowest unemployment rate in the State of California. The loss of business and sales tax revenue barely made it into double digits. Our residents got it! They understood why shopping local was so important for all of us. We now stand at the gate of the unknown. We have never faced this kind of assault on our health and the strength of our community.

I urge all of us to come up with more ideas and suggestions to keep us safe and to keep our business community healthy.

Let's do this together!

Jay Lifson

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