

Council member says city sits on too much money

By Nick Marnell

Lafayette's longest-seated council member thinks that city financial officials may be doing too good a job of saving money.

Despite the shelter-in-place order that hit the region this spring, causing Lafayette sales tax revenue to drop 11% March through June, the city finished its 2020 fiscal year with a \$13.1 million general fund reserve balance, equaling 90% of total expenditures, far higher than the 60% goal. And after accounting for re-hiring to fill frozen positions and tackling deferred projects, the 2021 reserve balance is projected to exceed the city's goal by nearly \$2.2 million.

"That's a lot of money," said Council Member Cam Burks at the Dec. 14 city council meeting. He questioned why the city is sitting on so much of the public's money and not using it to fund needed projects.

For the 2020 fiscal year, the city finished in a strong position because it had built a healthy reserve over the years, and once officials recognized the impact of the pandemic, Lafayette immediately slashed \$950,000 in expenses.

"The cuts were impactful to the community but not so bad that we can't come back from them," said Tracy

Robinson, administrative services director.

As the economy recovers in future years, and even as the city enters into a deficit spending mode due in part to continued sluggish sales tax revenue, the reserve balance is projected to remain at or above the 60% goal.

Lafayette has incrementally raised its reserve balance goal from 30% to the current level. After the tragic 2017 North Bay wildfires, which destroyed portions of Santa Rosa and wiped out its entire reserve balance, there was even talk at a Lafayette finance committee meeting of setting a target goal of 100% for the city's reserve balance.

"I don't believe in that approach," Burks said. "There are too many wants and needs that have been identified by the community."

Burks talked about ideas for using the excess reserve balance funds, like paving city roads, or even investing the money. He urged the council to conduct a public survey on how to spend the overage. He also threw out the idea of having a fixed dollar amount as the reserve balance goal.

"It's something we can look at as we prepare our budgets," Robinson said.

No action was taken on changing the reserve balance policy, but the topic will likely be discussed at a city finance committee meeting.

Mayor Mike Anderson bows out



Photo Pippa Fisher

Mike Anderson retires after more than 20 years of service to the city, seen here with Supervisor Candace Andersen in an archived photo.

By Pippa Fisher

Lafayette's most senior council member stepped down from city leadership at the council's Dec. 14 meeting, amid widespread respect, hanging up his gavel for good.

Mayor Mike Anderson is leaving the council after 16 years, including five terms as mayor. Prior to that he served on the planning commission for four years.

On a night when Anderson along with the most re-

cent member of council, Council Member Steven Bliss (who served two years, finishing Council Member Mark Mitchell's term following Mitchell's untimely passing in November 2018), both said their goodbyes, there was much appreciation all around for the two of them from both the public and from Contra Costa County District 2 Supervisor Candace Andersen, and California State Sen. Steve Glazer.

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Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Monday, Jan. 11, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's YouTube Channel:
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Planning Commission Meeting
Monday, Jan. 4, 7 p.m.
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Design Review
Wednesday, Jan. 13, 7 p.m. Zoom
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

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Walnut Creek
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\$1,405,000



1875 Del Monte Court
Walnut Creek
3BD | 2BA | 1,096± SF | 0.17± AC
\$1,035,000
Represented the buyer



1188 Pleasant Hill Circle
Lafayette
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\$1,900,000
Represented the buyer



15 Green Bay Court
Walnut Creek
4BD | 2BA | 1,778± SF | 0.31± AC
\$1,500,000
Represented the buyer



3371 Sweet Drive
Lafayette
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1171 Pleasant Hill Circle
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\$1,805,000



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