



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published September 23rd, 2015

Checking Appetite for Increased Sales Tax

By Cathy Tyson

Are residents ready to pay more in order to get more parking, more open space and improve and maintain the downtown? Lafayette City Council members Traci Reilly and Mark Mitchell shared some concerns about forming an independent committee to explore the topic and make a recommendation.

In response to the recent "Community Conversations," council members reviewed the results of citizens' priorities, along with their willingness to pay for those items.

In addition, goals from other sources - the Downtown Specific Plan, and a wish list from the East End Public Works Group - were considered. Bottom line: it's all about the money. Is potential funding available to turn those requests into reality?

Although a letter arrived supporting a sales tax measure from the members of the Chamber of Commerce just before the Sept. 14 meeting, Reilly was hesitant to support a tax measure considering the city's currently healthy budget. She said she would wait until the next meeting to see what a subcommittee comes up with through its investigation, and to see if the idea should go forward.

Some time ago, mayor Brandt Andersson and council member Mike Anderson were asked to clarify long-term visions and priorities for the city, from the Community Conversations, the Downtown Specific Plan and the East End Working Group. The DSP called for pursuing high priority goals, such as adding more parking, new downtown parks and public spaces, moving city offices to the central district, adding public art, and more.

The East End Public Works Group, after more than a year of meetings, had a list of items that need significant capital upgrades and better maintenance.

The Community Conversations' top priorities included open space, police services, more parking, revitalizing the Park Theater, and better bike and pedestrian access. Only police services are fully funded in the city budget; the other projects are either not funded at all or are inadequately funded. City council members narrowed down priorities to three items this summer: provide more parking, protect and acquire Lafayette's remaining open space, and improve and maintain downtown Lafayette.

"Given the loss of the Redevelopment Agency, there is no plan or resources for funding these ambitious programs. Absent new revenue, it is unlikely these goals will be achieved," noted the report by Andersson and Anderson.

Council members at the Sept. 14 meeting voted to continue the matter until the next meeting on Sept. 28. At that time they may consider a revised mission for the investigative committee as more of a fact finding group, recognizing that if there is not community support, perhaps the recommendation would be to not go forward.

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA