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Celebrating Don Tatzin's 30 Years on the City Council

By Cathy Tyson



State Senator Steve Glazer presents Don Tatzin a proclamation honoring his years of service Photo courtesy Teresa Gerring

Contra Costa LAFCO (the Local Agency Formation Commission), and U.S. Rep. Mark DeSaulnier, and of course the outgoing mayor, Brandt Andersson.

Former Orinda city council member and mayor, now state Senator Steve Glazer complimented Tatzin as a mentor who brings insight to his many roles.

Because they represent low service, low tax cities, Moraga mayor Mike Metcalf and council member Dave Trotter and Orinda city council member Amy Worth joked, "We couldn't afford a proclamation."

Former Lafayette city council member Ann Grodin reminisced that Tatzin was the critical person to have the vision and to figure out the financing for the spectacular new library.

Ivor Samson, former Citizen of the Year, as well as mayor, put Tatzin's length of service in a humorous context, comparing his 30 years to the Castro Brothers of Cuba, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, among others.

Explaining that an official recognition usually occurs when someone steps down, City Manager Steven Falk quipped: "We're concerned you're not going to retire." He pointed out that Tatzin leads by example, is very supportive of staff and that there is no job he is unwilling to do.

Avon Wilson served on Tatzin's first city council many years ago; she called him "the guiding light" who serves with grace, nuance, intelligence and capability.

"He's the Cal Ripken of local politics," said Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson.

Responding to the outpouring of support, Tatzin diplomatically credits persistence, not taking

Local luminaries and statewide government representatives came together to honor Don Tatzin for his unprecedented three decades of volunteer service on the Lafayette City Council. Everyone in the packed Community Hall was affected in some way by Tatzin's indefatigable efforts. Each speaker expressed heartfelt gratitude for the many key roles that he has played, all at the princely pay rate of zero dollars; the best return on investment the city ever made.

It was a special night, and a first for the city - never has someone served for so long. Kicking off the festivities, Bob Athayde, music director at Stanley Middle School, performed on a grand piano prior to dashing out for another performance at Stanley. The night's honoree plays the euphonium, or baritone horn, multiple times per week with one of the school's bands.

Tatzin has quite a fan club, receiving proclamations from District II Supervisor Candace Andersen,

himself too seriously, striving to learn something and enjoying himself. He concluded that he has gained more than he has given to the city.

Reflecting on his civic career and many accomplishments, Tatzin first thanked his wife, Ellen Reintjes, and said there are many things he is proud of. Tops on the list is implementing a virtuous cycle, a chain of events that reinforce themselves through a feedback loop.

He praised a community of volunteers along with prudent planning to protect hillsides and ridgelines. "Thirty years ago people complained that we had a downtown with nowhere to go," now the opposite is true as the city seeks to "manage its success." He is also proud that the city has opened its arms to those less fortunate, built affordable housing and welcomed those with developmental disabilities.

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