

Transportation tax, Trump highlight Glazer-Baker Lafayette Town Hall

By Nick Marnell



Lafayette Mayor Mike Anderson introduces Sen. Steve Glazer at the April Lafayette Town Hall. Photo Nick Marnell

California's new \$52 billion transportation funding bill cast a large shadow over the Steve Glazer-Catharine Baker Lafayette Town Hall April 3 as demonstrators waved signs demanding its passage, speakers questioned Glazer over his stance and the cohost missed the meeting entirely as she was delayed at a state committee hearing over that very transportation bill.

Gov. Jerry Brown pushed hard for the April 6 passage of Senate Bill 1, a long-term transportation funding package that includes new revenue to repair local streets, highways, bridges and overpasses. The money will come mainly from a 12-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax increase and higher vehicle registration fees.

The first Town Hall speaker, a representative of the Bay Area Council, urged Sen. Glazer to vote for passage of the bill. Glazer, a Democrat, appeared unmoved.

"I have supported three tax increases," Glazer said, speaking of the local road repair measures he backed as a member of the Orinda City Council and the proposed countywide transportation tax increase in 2016. "I'm not sure I see the accountability here," he said. Glazer voted against the bill, having lobbied unsuccessfully for a BART no-strike provision.

Lafayette Council Member Ivor Samson later said that he wanted more specifics from Glazer. "I wanted to hear about changes he would suggest. What would he like to have seen in SB1?"

Other topics broached by the public extended from the lack of state funding for schools to universal health care for California. "Where would the money come from?" said Glazer, who noted that the best answer to the health care crisis is to save the federal Affordable Care Act.

No 2017 Town Hall seems complete without shots at the new administration in Washington. "We need a law to demand the release of tax returns for anyone who runs for president in California," posed an attendee, and Glazer said he supported the thrust of that concept.

Then came a question on what the state can do to protect the public from the actions of President Donald Trump. "There is a lot to worry about, and with good reason," the senator told the largely approving audience at the Stanley Middle School gymnasium. "It keeps me up at night."

Glazer said that the state has retained former attorney general Eric Holder to protect the rights of Californians from federal overreach.

Baker and Glazer conduct the joint town halls to foster bipartisanship in a state whose leaders Glazer said are twice as polarized as the U.S. Congress. "In 2016, Catharine and I agreed on state bills 88 percent of the time," said Glazer, who later commented that he and Baker work together to present a model of civil behavior which he believes makes everyone stronger.

Congressman rips Donald Trump and his policies at Lafayette Town Hall

By Nick Marnell



Congressman Mark DeSaulnier Photo Nick Marnell

From his opening remarks through the questions he took from the audience, Democratic U.S. Congressman Mark DeSaulnier pounded President Donald Trump unmercifully at the Lafayette Town Hall April 12. "The most dangerous person in the world is not a terrorist, but the president of the United States," he said to the attendees who packed the Stanley Middle School gymnasium.

The congressman told the cheering crowd that Trump must remove Steve Bannon as his chief strategist, publicize his tax returns and halt what he termed a Muslim travel ban. DeSaulnier touted his efforts to extend federal conflict of interest laws to include the

president and the vice president.

His response to a question about the proposed border wall evoked the biggest applause of the evening. "Never murder a political opponent who is committing suicide," said DeSaulnier, who has coauthored legislation to override the wall and safeguard sanctuary cities.

He told the crowd that he backs an independent investigation into Trump's Russian connections and he suggested that the crisis in Syria will not be solved solely by the military. "You need a mix of soft diplomacy," the congressman said.

A cancer survivor, DeSaulnier said that money for medical research must not be slashed out of the federal budget. "There's nothing like the National Institutes of Health in the world," he said. "It's crazy to suggest that we would cut this investment."

Trump's failed health care proposal was nothing more than "a tax cut for the top 1 percent of the country," DeSaulnier said, and the audience roared its approval when the congressman said that he favors universal health care.

DeSaulnier assured a questioner that he will vote against HR 610, a bill that calls for sending all federal education dollars to the states in the forms of federal grants so that the states can then distribute the money as vouchers.

The congressman has conducted two Town Halls in Orinda and one in Lafayette since he assumed office. "It's not a slight," he said about Moraga, where he said he will hold a future Town Hall but did not commit to a time frame.

"I am sure Congressman DeSaulnier knows that the people of Moraga are a very engaged segment of his constituency and all of us here would welcome his taking the time to engage with us," said Moraga Mayor Teresa Onoda.

Town Hall Theatre 'green'

Stack recognizes that there will be loss of revenue for the theater but says that this is too important. He says that Town Hall Theatre wants to lead, to dare other local businesses to follow.

"In the current climate, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by dark news. But you can't quit. You have to do something. For our part, Town Hall realizes that we can effect change locally, by doing our part and more, to move things along...whether that is via education, action or exposure."

He points out that the following night is the seventh annual Lafayette Community Music Festival, when local musicians donate their talents for the benefit of the theater. "We are an arts community, and that is our focus, but we can also help on an environmental level.

We are the Town Hall, we want to be the place that the community comes to for multiple resources and experiences."

The popular music festival will feature such musicians as Carroompas Room, Harrison Flynn, Way Fatt Reunion, (a tribute to Steve Sage & Steve Swan), Katy Lawrence Acoustic Trio and Meg Merry & The Locust Street Band.

Sustainable Lafayette Board Member Brad Crane says that by partnering up with THT, they have tapped into a wider group. He says it is about "Pushing the conversation."

"Americans use 135 million plastic water bottles and 500 million plastic straws every day. Only a fraction of that gets recycled. Much of it ends up in our water-

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ways and ultimately our oceans."

He explains that this is the second event at THT. Their January screening of the film on global warming "Before the Flood" was so successful that THT was able to go "deep green," effectively allowing the theater to use all renewable energy for the next three years.

"Sustainable Lafayette is thrilled to partner again with Town Hall Theatre for another inspiring and educational film," Crane says. "'A Plastic Ocean' documents what our addiction to single-use plastic is doing to our marine ecosystems. Come and learn what we can do locally to have a positive impact."

Tickets are \$10 and \$5 for seniors and youth. Further details are available on the THT website, www.townhalltheatre.com.

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