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Another committee member talks about mismanagement

September 26, 2010



Errors have cost the city thousands.

Lafayette resident Todd Holt was appointed to the new city sanctioned Water Committee in August and was approved by Council as one of the newest volunteers to join the city's water investigation.

Holt, who is a member of the city's Planning Commission, has seen the city's water infrastructure, met with Public Works staff and was willing to share with NewLafayette.org what his concerns and goals are as a Water Committee member.

Holt stated that after touring the facility, his initial impression was that the city's water resources "are poorly managed."

When asked if he was willing to go on the record with that statement, he said, "Absolutely, and I will stand behind what I say."

He went on, "This is nothing personal, it's been going on for several years. I came to that conclusion by what I know and what I saw." He added, "With newer equipment malfunctioning and breaking down, obviously, we have a problem."

Holt says that after meeting with Public Works staff, he shared his concerns with Foreman Jim Anderson.

"There is well damage and wells not pumping to their capacity. There is evidence of malfunction and improper maintenance. I informed Public Works of my opinion."

Lafayette residents getting involved

Mayor Chris Heisler says he is impressed with the credentials of the Water Committee members and what they bring to the city." He said, "They'll take over the investigation that's already begun and make recommendations. These are really qualified people."

"We have people investigating our water that are part of the fabric of the community and will get to the bottom of our issues. I'm really happy that we're moving forward. We'll get solutions and this is something everyone wants," Heisler said.

He added, The water information is out there now and more is coming. It's being investigated by volunteers we can fully trust."

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Holt seems to know the ins and outs of water systems, water debt and improving infrastructure.

Holt is a former dairy farmer of 15 years, but also spent seven years serving as a volunteer for a Tillamook water district.

“During that time, we completely replaced our whole system. With an all volunteer board, we made decisions, took on bonds and had it all paid off in nine years.” “I could run my entire farm for less than \$100 per month. And I had a lot of cattle that drank a lot of water.”

Holt says he’s also aware of how Lafayette’s water issues have been a source of political battles for years.

“My personal goal is to stop the overall asperity and control over the water and making it a political issue. I want to get to the bottom of this. It’s been used as a battering ram in the city,” Holt stated.

He said, “I can remember 15 years ago battling over water. It needs to stop.”

Water shortage claims in Lafayette over?

“We’ve already resolved the issue of water supply,” he said. “Jim Anderson even told me that, yes, we have enough water.” “He admitted that it’s basically a matter of him being able to manage it properly. So at least we’re beyond that issue.”

When asked if he believes we need a new reservoir, he said, “No, because we’ve proven we have enough water right now. We may need one in the near future, but there’s not enough data right now that supports it.”

He added, “Eventually we might need a reservoir, but the resolution is to get the system working properly.” Holt stated that it’s about better management first.

When asked about the equity of our relationship with Dayton, he said, “Once we have the system maintained and running properly, we can talk about Dayton. First we need to get our own ducks in a row.”

Holt said, we may need to bring in outside consultants to help improve the management of our system. I’m in favor of whatever it takes to make this thing right.”

Being new to the water investigation, Holt said he was not ready to talk about shared resources with Dayton and the intergovernmental agreement that the two cities share. He stated that “will come next,” and that perhaps new legal advice on the issue might be necessary.

When asked about the Water Committee as a whole, he stated, “I can’t speak for anyone but myself, but I believe, yes, the committee as a whole agrees on the goals.”

Water rates and expenses will be part of investigation

When asked if the committee would be looking at rates, he said, “Yes, absolutely.”

“It comes down to, are we using our financial resources to the best possibility? We’ll be looking at all of that to come to some conclusions.” The Water Committee is scheduled to beginning looking at the “financials” of Lafayette’s water resources at their next meeting, on September 27.

Holt is one of four Water Committee members that are taking over the investigation begun by the Mayor’s recent “Water Task Force.”

The Mayor began his own investigation into the city’s water resources by forming his own task force early this year. It evolved into a city sanctioned water committee in August.

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With a new council makeup, leaders seem to show unified support of the ongoing water investigation.

Recent past councilors had publicly opposed questioning city staff on water issues, stating them to be “the experts.” This had been a source of council conflict for at least the past year.

RELATED: [Some councilors won’t acknowledge Mayor’s water investigation](#)

Councilor Harper stated recently, “We are just now finally coming to know about our water resources.”

Anderson himself has stated in recent meetings that most of the past water administration and information was handled by former Administrator Diane Rinks or Dayton staff.

Anderson was in attendance at the first Water Committee meeting and will be used as a resource, if needed.

NewLafayette.org hopes to interview other new Water Committee members as the investigation continues.



This entry was posted on September 26, 2010 at 9:10 pm and is filed under [Feature](#), [Water](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed.

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