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## Fox in the hen house?

October 27, 2010



**Guest Editorial, by Trevor Higby, Member of Lafayette's Water**

### **Committee**

Last night, I attended Lafayette's volunteer Water Committee meeting, where I saw some amazing rudeness from the City Public Works Director Jim Anderson and an unholy alliance between a hired firm and Anderson to spend your money.

The premise of the committee is to ascertain the water infrastructure shortcomings, identify missed efficiencies and propose solutions to the Council.

This particular meeting was intended to collect insight and information from the City Engineer.

However, when questions were asked that pertained to the shared assets with Dayton, the City's Public Works Foreman and the Engineer became immediately defensive.

Simple questions such as, “Jim, how many gallons per minute does our pump at the treatment plant produce?” were met with difficulty.

The answer provided by Jim was a lengthy diatribe, in an argumentative tone, regarding the amount of runoff we experience at another location. Simple questions become hostile confrontations with the foreman and little to no answers have been provided.

Other information requested weeks ago still has not been provided to the committee.

I have become acutely aware of city employees within Lafayette using smoke and mirrors to answer questions, as I feel occurred last night.

When the Engineer was asked if Lafayette could incorporate the shared reservoir capacity to supplement “fire flow” requirements, he treated the question and answer as nothing short of a red herring.

We also learned that he is the City Engineer for Dayton AND is in the process of re-writing their water master plan, which incorporates the reservoir our cities own jointly.

How this is not perceived as a conflict of interest and position is a question to me.

He and our Public Works foreman also informed us that the wells that supply the reservoir must be treated as a secondary source. Up to this point, there has been no legal counsel that has provided this interpretation they have concluded, yet they state it as fact.

In addition, if this water source truly is to be treated as a “supplemental” source, the money prior Lafayette leadership chose to spend on this “back-up” resource would seem ludicrous.

Why would Lafayette spend millions on this project, putting the city taxpayers in serious debt for a “supplemental” source?

But once again, is Public Works making statements without substantiation?

We have made headway in uncovering truth, though.

We have been shovel fed water restrictions under false pretenses and also told that the reservoir was paramount to ensuring we have enough drinking water. The members of the water committee have empirically debunked the annual water crisis and even proved that restrictions are counterproductive to water usage.

Now the justification for the multi-million dollar reservoir has shifted to one in which we need to plan for a catastrophic fire scenario and subjective fire flow requirements.

My main contention with the meeting this week is that I feel neither the Public Works Foreman nor the City Engineer advocate for Lafayette as fervently as they do for Dayton.

It was very clear that the two of them had a preconceived agenda going into a meeting that was intended to gather information rather than to act in a supporting role to a city committee.

Furthermore, the conduct and behavior portrayed by our Public Works foreman is inexcusable.

There is a certain level of courtesy that should be expected of public servants and last night was a mockery of those standards.

Based on the Foreman’s past performance and conduct as well as the Engineer’s conflict of position, I have no confidence in the recommendations and assumptions of either.

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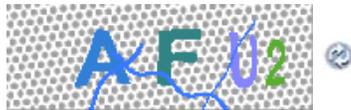
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