

Comprehensive plan comments due by Monday

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Lafayette residents have until 5 p.m. Monday to provide input for the second stage in creating the comprehensive plan, which will guide the area's growth for the next 20 years.

About 200 people participated in the second round of public forums held in late November, and officials are hoping to have another 300 people participate in either a "meeting in a box," which re-creates those forums, or in two online surveys to collect input for the plan.

A total of 500 participants, however, is only about half of the approximately 1,000 residents who gave input during the first round of public forums earlier this year.

The comprehensive plan, sometimes called a

master plan, will address all aspects of Lafayette's future growth, from schools and fire stations to traffic problems and economic issues.

The consultants hired to create the plan will use input collected from the forums, meetings in a box and online surveys to create several "alternate futures" of Lafayette to present to the community in February for the third round of public forums. Community members will learn about the costs of those visions and how they may be achieved before helping decide which portions should be included in the final plan's framework.

Kevin Blanchard, chairman of the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee, said during the group's meeting Wednesday that the third and final round of public forums to collect input on the plan



Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee member Tim Supple, right, listens as the group's chairman, Kevin Blanchard, left, guides a small group discussion on Lafayette's future at the Lafayette Science Museum on Wednesday. NICHOLAS PERSAC/NPERSAC@THEADVERTISER.COM

will be held Feb. 5-7.

He said the upcoming forums will be open-house events where residents view a brief presentation about several visions of the way Lafayette could look in 20 years and then cast votes to determine which

ideas are most popular.

"The next round will be about making choices," Blanchard said. "Of all of the plans that have been proposed, which one do we want to follow? The general idea is to present choices and make it so people can

make informed decisions."

Lafayette Consolidated Government is paying Philadelphia-based consulting firm Wallace Roberts and Todd \$1.2 million to create the plan. The Downtown Development Authority is paying LCG nearly \$140,000 for a separate portion of the comprehensive plan that focuses on only the downtown area.

The consultants unveiled this past month a community assessment, which shows problems created from a lack of zoning requirements in the unincorporated portions of the parish, shows the city of Lafayette's population isn't growing as quickly as other areas of the parish and illustrates the need for local governments to build new infrastructure, like roads and water supplies, as well as to beef up police and fire protection

and quality-of-life projects like parks.

The consultants will ultimately create not only the vision of how residents want Lafayette to be, but also will suggest policy proposals and possible paths to achieve those goals. Local government officials, primarily the City-Parish Council, will likely consider those proposals individually but may give the general plan its blessing to keep future politicians on its track.

"This plan is going to say, 'this is what the people want,'" Blanchard said. "Can we do it, or what do we have to change to do it, is a political decision that will be left to the council."

Officials hope to release drafts of both the downtown and broader plans of next spring, and the finalized comprehensive plan will be unveiled before the end of 2013.

Cajuns

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tensive Care Unit's clinical supervisor.

Brett Baer, a senior from Brandon, Miss., and the team's standout placekicker, met with Shelby and Brad Brooks of Opelousas, who were in the hospital watching their 5-week-old son, Bryton Jack Brooks.

Born more than three months prematurely, Bryton, who was staying in LGMC's NICU, weighed only 3 pounds and 1 ounce, but Baer eagerly held the tiny, young child in his arms while his parents watched affectionately.

"It was really special," Baer said. "I've never held a baby that small, and I've never been in a neonatal unit like this. It was cool to see how everything works."

Bryton's parents were just as excited as Baer.

"It's great that they came out here," Brad Brooks said while photographers snapped pictures of his son, Bryton, with the UL football players. "He's already a celebrity at 5 weeks old."

"I'm sure he'll be a little football player someday," Shelby Brooks added.

The Ragin' Cajuns football team will face the East Carolina University Pirates during the R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl on Dec. 22 in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. The game, which takes place at 11 a.m., will be nationally televised on ESPN.



UL football player Jemarious Moten smiles while holding Lincoln, a 1-week-old boy, Wednesday in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Lafayette General Medical Center in Lafayette. LESLIE WESTBROOK/LWESTBROOK@THEADVERTISER.COM

Ethics

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In August, Saxton filed a motion asking the Ethics Board to produce a wide array of documents and recordings that were part of the investigation. Gachassin's team is seeking the identity of everyone interviewed by the Ethics Board staff, everyone the case was discussed with,

and all staff members who participated in the investigation and report.

Saxton also requested "every fact" the Ethics Board relied on to charge Gachassin, minutes and sound recordings of Ethics Board meetings, and notes taken by Ethics Board staff members who spoke to anyone about the case.

The Ethics Board refused to release much of what Saxton requested and on Nov. 21 filed a mo-

tion for a protective order, claiming it is not required to produce the documents because the request is "overly broad, unduly burdensome and would require the board to disclose confidential information."

The board's attorney asks that the Ethics Adjudicatory Board rule the documents are privileged.

Saxton said the Ethics Board's refusal to release documents is "a persistent problem," not just with this case.

Despite past rulings by the EAB compelling production of the documents, the Ethics Board refuses to do so until forced to do so, he said. A hearing date before the EAB has not yet been set, Saxton said. When it is, he said, "we intend to present evidence the board has not been fair in production of documents."

Gachassin served

on the Lafayette Public Trust Financing Authority board from November 2003 until he resigned Nov. 17, 2009. Before he resigned, Gachassin created The Cartesian Company, which allegedly was paid for consulting on the Villa Gardens low-income housing project.

The state Code of Governmental Ethics prohibits a public servant from participating in transactions in which he has "a personal substantial economic interest."

It also prohibits any appointed board member, his family or legal entity in which he has an economic interest from entering a contract under supervision of the agency on which he serves, and it prohibits a board member from contracting with or working for the agency he served for two years after leaving his post.

RESIDENTS' RESPONSE

Acadiana residents spoke up loud and clear on The Daily Advertiser's Facebook page on Thursday in response to a story about a proposal to increase safety in Lafayette schools that included placing security cameras in every school. Here's a sampling of responses from readers when asked if they thought local schools needed security cameras:

KYLE BOUDREAUX: Yes. Not only to monitor behavior, but as a security tool as well.

MAIA BUTLER: I think that schools in this state need to worry more about providing instruction and materials that will provide children with the ability to compete with their national counterparts. Invest in better instruction and there won't be a need to turn schools into prisons.

TORI LYNNE ELDER: While I certainly agree with Maia about the quality of education in this state needing improvement, I also know that my daughter found a used condom in the floor of a middle school classroom. And there are predators in our schools... and false accusations of same. With cameras throughout, maybe we will hear less horror stories and teachers can do us on teaching.

ADAM WALKER: They won't stop anything from happening

KYLE BOUDREAUX: Prisons? That's kind of a stretch. Cameras are everywhere - do you feel like a prisoner in Walmart? Think of the money saved from lawsuits from students bringing false allegations against the schools. Maybe stop a predator teacher from harming a child. Yes, the schools need more \$ and better instruction, but let's get rid of the distractions that exist at the school first. Parental involvement does more to increase a child's success than any monetary or instructional issue.

DESTRI BEARD-HESS: If the parish is going to spend \$1.9 million on the schools, it does not need to be spent on surveillance.

TRISTAN COWEN: Every Christmas I go back to Lafayette and every Christmas the town is more and more like some kind of strange gulag. I can't even begin to explain the traffic diversion they have going on downtown at night. They might as well insert RFID chips into the kids so that they can get used to the endless surveillance the children will experience as adults. Then they won't complain because they don't know any other kind of life.

ANTHONY STUHLREHER: Police State 101. Welcome to class, civilians.

SHARI HINKEL: With all the loose guns in this state? Is this a rhetorical question?

Schools

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that we can't kick kids out of school. The focus, I think, in Lafayette Parish needs to be juvenile crime, juvenile justice and discipline in the schools, and I think AMI Kids is the way to go."

The board gave introductory approval to a contract with AMI Kids, although it will not take a final vote on whether to move ahead with the program until January.

Board member Tommy Angelle urged school officials and AMI Kids representatives to make sure that parents are involved in working with their children to address behavior problems.

Eric Hall, director of education for AMI Kids, agreed that families are a key part of making discipline improvements.

"If you don't see the

parents as a partner, that's critical," Hall said. "From day one in our introductory meeting, we assess the needs and the services and treatment that are needed."

Also on Wednesday, the board received a task force report on the status of and possible changes to the district's language immersion pathways.

Nicole Boudreaux, the district's language immersion specialist, said some of the recommendations include consolidating some of the elementary immersion at Myrtle Place Elementary, adding more immersion at Lafayette Middle and partnering with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette to create an international school for students with a keen interest in foreign languages and international studies.

Boudreaux said the overall goal is to have 4,500 in Lafayette Parish enrolled in immersion within six years.

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