Meeting Notes – Sep. 17, 2024

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, September 17, 2024. Rotarian Calvin Milford was responsible for the program and invited as his guest speaker LaFayette Fire Chief James Doody. In addition to being the fire chief, Chief Doody is the new president of Main Street LaFayette and president of the East Alabama Regional Training Association.

Chief Doody gave an update on the local museum, which has been closed for the past five years. He had invited the Alabama Museum curator to visit LaFayette and give feedback on our museum and the viability of reopening it. They also visited the Joe Lewis statue. The curator offered a letter of support from the state museum to restore our museum. There is grant money available for which the city could apply to help with restoration. Currently, the county commission is paying the insurance on the building. Chief Doody would like to see the museum placed under LaFayette Main Street's jurisdiction, to reactivate its 501(c)(3) status, and to formalize the transfer of the property back to the city of LaFayette's control. Chief Doody feels the timing is perfect for restoring the museum. With the installation of the EV charging stations, while cars are charging, visitors could walk down and visit the museum. With the progress being made in downtown LaFayette thanks to the revitalization efforts of LaFayette Main Street, the restoration of the museum could become another centerpiece of that effort. It would also provide a great educational opportunity for the students and citizens of LaFayette. There are many incredible items within the museum.

The League of Municipalities offers a designation for cities called Alabama Community of Excellence. Chief Doody applied on behalf of the city of LaFayette last year, but it was not granted. He wants to resubmit an application this year, with additional letters of support. He has asked that our Rotary Club consider writing such a letter. He already has support from three LaFayette City Council members to receive the required training, which is a year-long process. The designation would allow the city to be eligible for additional grant money.

Through his work with the East Alabama Training Association, Chief Doody told of their support of the Tunnels to Towers Foundation, which supports veterans by providing mortgage free homes. This same organization will bring the mobile 9/11 museum to our area next September. It is an 1100 sq. ft. display dedicated to 9/11. It will be in Opelika at Southern Union State Community College from September 11-16, 2025. There will be a flyover from Maxwell Air Force base. Governor Ivey will be in attendance. This area will be the first community in Alabama to host the display. There will be a full police/fire/EMS escort into the state, as it comes from Boston. The museum will be open to local schools in the area, with an emphasis on middle school students.

Diane Sherriff