

## **TWO MILLION AND COUNTING!**

**(As of October 5, 2016)**

### ***Santa Monica Elections Don't Come Cheap***

*by Laurence Eubank*

With the November 2016 election still a month away, five City Council Candidates of the ten running have raised about \$115,000 (\$97,000 in monetary donations and \$18,000 in loans) with a PAC primarily funded by Lexus Santa Monica providing \$2,077 and the Santa Monica Employees PAC providing \$340 of support to each of the four incumbents. The remaining five City Council candidates have raised \$0 in the fight for the four seats.

The four SM College Board candidates (who are not limited to City's \$340 donation limit that the City Council candidates are) out raised them collecting nearly \$125,000 (\$111,000 in monetary donations and \$14,000 in loans). These candidates are in a race for three seats.

The four Rent Control Board candidates (restricted to City's \$340 donation limit) have raised about \$23,000 (\$6,000 in monetary donations and \$17,000 in loans) with the Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights (SMRR) PAC providing nearly \$4,000 across two candidates. This is a race for two seats.

Even the three sitting School Board candidates have gathered nearly \$28,000 in contributions, though one could reasonably wonder why since they are running unopposed.

The appropriately \$271,000 raised by *individual candidates* is small ball compared to the nearly \$1,778,000 (\$1,765,000 in monetary and \$13,000 in non-monetary donations) raised as of October 5th by fourteen Political Action Committees (PACs) which affect both candidate races and four ballot initiatives (a fifth measure is unfunded to date). The candidates' races have had PAC support of a trivial \$14,000 and the money is on the four big ballot initiatives.

Election disclosure statements indicate that of the organizations marshalling resources, seven are perennial players in Santa Monica election politics, while six are newly formed political action committees (PACs) targeted at supporting or defeating specific ballot initiatives and re-electing the four sitting Councilors. The remaining player, Residocracy, falls somewhere between the two.

Examination of legally required September 30, 2016 election disclosure statements plus review of forms (through October 5th) that must be submitted almost immediately for contributions of \$1,000 or more illustrate two major factors: 1) the power of incumbency; and, 2) the big money (from all over the country) is aimed at ballot measures that generate the most controversy and have the greatest financial consequences, Measures LV, V, and GS/GSH.

Here's the lineup, first *candidates*, then ballot measures:

## City Council

- The four sitting City Councilors up for re-election have raised the following. The numbers include money contributions and loans – *Mayor Tony Vasquez(\$16K)*, *Gleam Davis(\$30K)*, *Terry O'Day(\$17K)*, and *Ted Winterer(\$44K)*
- *Armin Melkonians* has raised \$9K;
- *Oscar de la Torre*, *Terence Later*, *Jon Mann*, *Mende Smith*, and *James Watson* have raised zero;
- Santa Monica Forward has formed two separate PAC's, one to support the four City Council incumbents (\$11K), Lexus Santa Monica donated \$10K to this PAC and they have already provided about \$10K of support which by law cannot be coordinated with the candidates, and another to defeat Measure LV (see below);

## Rent Control Board

- Four candidates - *Anastasia Foster(\$3K)*, *Elaine Golden-Gealer(\$17K)*, *Caroline Torosis(\$3K)*, and *Christopher Walton(\$0)*, have collectively raised \$23K which includes monetary and non-monetary donations and loans.
- Santa Monicans For Renters' Rights have provided support of \$1,800 each for *Foster* and *Torosis*;

## School Board

- Sitting members *Jon Kean*, *Maria Leon-Vazquez*, and *Ralph Mechur* have raised \$28K to run against nobody, though it remains to be seen how much of these monies are redirected to other races
- We have already seen where *Jon Kean* for School Board has donated \$1,500 in support of campaign for Yes on GS & GSH

## College Board

- *Susan Aminoff(\$20K)*, *Margaret Quinones-Perez(\$27K)*, *Rob Rader(\$24K)*, and *Sion Roy(\$54K)* raised \$125K. These numbers represent monetary and non-monetary donations and loans.

The 2016 ballot measures include:

1. Measure LV (voter approval for land use plans and development projects, i.e. LUVE);
2. Measure GSH (a .05% transaction and use tax);
3. Measure GS (advisory to City Council that GSH proceeds be divided 50/50 for affordable housing and public school maintenance and improvement);

4. Measure V (a \$345M bond, with interest over \$700M payback, approval for Santa Monica College);
5. Measure SM (clarification and strengthening of the existing anti-corruption Oaks Ordinance) has drawn no funds for or against as of October 5th.

Measure LV puts the future skyline of the city at stake.

- Against - Santa Monica Forward Issues Committee raised \$619K
- Against - Housing Opportunity for a Modern Economy (HOME) raised \$361K
- For - Residocracy has raised \$50K in monetary and non-monetary donations;

Measure GS and GSH

- Campaign for Public Education & Affordable Housing – Yes on GS & GSH has raised \$117K
- Community for Excellent Public Schools has raised \$5K from two individuals;

Measure V puts \$345M (plus interest yielding a payback of over \$700M) in bonds at stake.

- Campaign For Safety and Modernization at SMC has raised \$439K;

Organizations assembling financial war chests but keeping their powder dry for now:

- Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City (SMCLC)
- Unite Here Local 11
- SM Firefighters Political Activities
- SM Police Officers Association for a Better Community
- SM City Employees PAC; to date they have donated \$340 to each of the incumbent City Council candidates
- SM Democratic Club

In next week's article, we will drill down to see exactly who is donating – particularly the heavyweights – to affect the future direction of our city and determine the tax burdens and development decisions that will be borne by its citizens.