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VALLEJO

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING HEADING INTO HOME STRETCH



CHRIS RILEY — TIMES-HERALD

A Participatory Budgeting sign in Spanish sits in front of the Marina Vista Towers at the end of Virginia Street in Vallejo. Voting for the 12 projects is open until April 30.

12 nonprofits hoping for funding

By Richard Freedman rfreedman@timesheraldonline.com @richfreedmanvth on Twitter

This year's Participatory Budgeting is heading into the stretch with a tantalizing \$1 million expected to be distributed to most of the 12 qualifying projects or nonprofits.

With the April 30 deadline looming, it's unknown how many Vallejoans have voted online or in person, but only a handful showed up last Tuesday at the Norman King Community Center where each project's "delegate" was available to explain where the requested funding would go.

"I was almost embarrassed. We barely had six show up," said Deme Stall-Nash, insisting that "nobody knows" what the Vote/Vota signs around town refer to.

"Nobody knows they don't have to be registered to vote and nobody knows that this is the people's money to spend,"

Stall-Nash said.

Since Vallejo's PB inception in 2012, \$8.3 million has funded around 50 projects. The formal required age of 16 to vote was lowered to 14 this year in hopes of luring more voters.

Citizens are asked to vote for two of the 12 nonprofit organizations or projects that survived requirements for pursuing funding.

There's no reason not to vote, said PB crusader Teena Miller.

"The citizens of Vallejo have an opportunity here with their vote; where the funding should go, as opposed to going to City Council asking for money for a project or organization," Miller said.

Miller said it "wasn't hard" to vote for her two favorite projects "where my passions lay" and she praised all the nonprofits involved in this year's P.B.

"People who do these projects are amazing," Miller said.

Voting is "typically" slow

midway through the month-long window and "toward the end, residents really start submitting the ballots," said Alyssa Lane, administrative analyst in the city manager's office.

Roughly 50 percent vote online for the obvious convenience, Lane said, and the other half prefer voting in person because they may need further details than what is explained on the web site.

There's been more focus this year on getting materials to schools, churches, and various Vallejo events, Lane said, lamenting that it's "so hard to get millennials" involved.

Lane encouraged residents to attend one of the remaining expos — Thursday at the North Vallejo Community Center and April 30 at the Filipino Community Center — to meet the "very engaged delegates" from each nonprofit and project.

Lane understands if people prefer to vote online.

"People are so busy with work, school, kids... I don't take it (lack of expo attendance) as

a sign people aren't interested," Lane said.

Lane said there will be a "Voting Results Party" in May "somewhere downtown" that unveils the funding results.

To get the city funding, "winners" must spend their own money on a proposed project and present the paperwork to the city for reimbursement, said Lane, explaining that it keeps the nonprofits accountable and assures the city that "we're not paying for services or materials not used."

The 12 projects eligible for Participatory Budgeting funding (funds sought in parentheses). All Vallejo residents 14 and older may vote for two:

- VPD mobile cameras for illegal dumping campaign (\$44,000).
Firefighter Youth Academy (\$65,350).
Vallejo Community Arts Foundation Children's Summer Art Camp (\$40,000).
Club Stride: Youth Civic Action Initiative (\$62,345).

FUNDING » PAGE 9

VALLEJO

SER Latino helping raise the bar for local kids

By Rachel Raskin-Zrihen rzrihen@timesheraldonline.com @racheloth on Twitter

The children of Latino and other immigrant communities face all the same problems U.S. citizens do, but with some added issues, making the going that much more perilous. That's why Mina Diaz of Vallejo founded SER Latino three years ago, she said.

The group, whose name stands for Service Education Resources Latino, was founded with several others, she said.

"I approached (then Vallejo City Unified School District Superintendent) Ramona Bishop and she said she was also concerned about how Latinos are doing in school," said Diaz, who immigrated here from Mexico with her family at age 3. The group has grown to 60 students at Vallejo High School and 19 at Jesse Bethel High School, since she began working with the vice principals of both institutions, along with several teachers, Diaz said.

"We work with students that have been under-served — most of them Latino — though there are also six African Americans involved, as well," in what has been described as the Willie B. Adkins Project.

"We do tutoring, college tours, and we also work with parents on full service community support, so they understand the education system in the U.S.," Diaz said.

The system here differs in several ways from those in Latin America, with the language barrier a main issue, Diaz said.

"Also the grading system is different. They use numbers there — 10 being an A," she said. "Discipline is different — with parents being held accountable for their students' behavior, with fines here, in some cases. Procedures for applying for financial aid for colleges and universities is different here."

For this endeavor Diaz partners with PIQE — the Parent In-

SER LATINO » PAGE 8

INVESTIGATION

Dems subpoena Mueller report amid calls for impeachment

By Lisa Mascaro The Associated Press

WASHINGTON » The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee issued a subpoena Friday for special counsel Robert Mueller's full report as Democrats intensified their investigation of President Donald Trump, but leaders stopped short of liberal demands for impeachment proceedings.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has insisted on a methodical, step-by-step approach to the House's oversight of the Trump administration, and she refuses to consider impeachment without public support, including from Republicans, which seems unlikely. But in light of Mueller's findings, Democratic leaders are under mounting pressure from the party's rising stars, deep-pocketed donors and even a presidential contender to seize the

REPORT » PAGE 9

VALLEJO

Shankar urges locals to vote on projects, get involved

Activist crusades on many fronts

By Richard Freedman rfreedman@timesheraldonline.com @richfreedmanvth on Twitter

There are retired people who spend those golden years traveling abroad. Or decide to endlessly binge-watch Netflix. Or spend hours a day gardening. Or talking about their cat.

Ravi Shankar? The man is a synonym for "taking action." Facing his 65th birthday

next week and four years into retirement, Shankar has made crusading for all he finds positive in Vallejo.

Want a guy who stays involved? He's been on the Participatory Budgeting steering committee since 2014. And — take a deep breath — he's involved with the Solano County Library Foundation, Vallejo Sister Cities Association, Vallejo Police Dept. Advisory Board, Vallejo School District budget advisory commission, Vallejo Community Gardens, and Vallejo Mean Streets to Green Streets.

For the next week or so, he's pushing locals to cast their vote for two of the 12 selected projects/nonprofits of Participatory Budgeting which is expected to disperse around \$1 million.

"I think in my experience in the city of Vallejo 15 years and my years living in America, the best experience of a citizen is being involved in government through Participatory Budgeting," Shankar said.

"Most of us complain about politicians ... that they get to

ACTIVIST » PAGE 9



COURTESY PHOTO

Ravi Shankar with Mayor Bob Sampayan and a Participatory Budgeting sign.

NHL Sharks find themselves, but is it too late?

The San Jose Sharks may have waited one game too long to reprise their best selves. PAGE B1



BAY AREA Spectacular meteor shower this weekend

One of the best meteor showers of the Spring lands on the eve of Earth Day, with up to 20 shooting stars per hour. PAGE A3

NBA Warriors restore order to a one-sided series

Sports columnist Dieter Kurtenbach takes a look at the Warriors' victory in Game 3 against the Clippers. PAGE B1

GOOD MORNING! Have a great day, Joanne Courter!

WHAT'S HAPPENING Check out what's going on in your neighborhood and the community. PAGE A2