

It's an election year, but really?

By KELLY NIX

GROUPS ADVOCATING for and against a ballot measure that will ask Pacific Grove voters in June to increase the pay for members of the city council are sharing wildly different figures on the cost of the special election. What's true? The Pine Cone asked the county's registrar of voters.

The P.G. City Council in February voted unanimously to hold an election June 2 to allow residents to decide whether to hike their monthly stipends from \$420 to \$897 for council members and from \$700 to \$1,645 for the mayor. If Measure C passes, the council will get its first pay raise since 1998.

The raise has divided residents. So has

the decision to put Measure C on the June ballot — where it will be the lone city measure in a statewide primary — versus placing it on the Nov. 3 ballot, which will include races for the city's mayor and several council members, not to mention the U.S. House of Representatives, the governor of California and numerous state offices.

Disparate cost projections for P.G. ballot measure

'Same price'

A group calling itself P.G. Citizens for Sensible Government, started by former Mayor Bill Kampe to "promote facts, fairness and functional solutions," offers a "get the facts" page on its website. It contains

information on why it backs the council raise, along with numerous questions and answers intended to support its position, including this one:

"Will the June election cost more than the November election?" P.G. Citizens for Sensible Government asks.

"No," the group claims.

"The city received estimates from the county elections department showing that the cost of placing a measure on the June ballot is very similar to the cost of a November ballot measure. There is no meaningful financial reason for the delay."

But Transparent Pacific Grove, a group former councilman Luke Coletti started to promote transparency in government, claimed in an email to members last week that P.G. Citizens for

Sensible Government's cost claims are false.

"The truth is that the June special election will cost \$50,000 for a single measure to raise the pay for seven elected officials," Coletti said, adding that in 2008, when the city last had a single measure on a June primary ballot, it cost taxpayers \$46,252.

Coletti also estimates that since the November regular election will already include municipal offices, adding a ballot measure represents only the incremental cost of including it on a ballot already being printed and administered.

\$63K

There are several factors that go into the cost of an election, including the number of pages in the voting guide and the number of jurisdictions sharing the costs.

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MAYOR

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housing and civic investments, and we received approval for an approach capable of delivering those outcomes. The question is whether we gave that approach a fair opportunity to succeed.

■ **What is proposed**

The proposed revised housing element amendment would move us in a different direction. It would remove city-owned parking lots from the proposed sites and replace them with scattered, voluntary programs to disperse units around town, most without parking requirements. The theory is that many small projects, including ADUs, can add up to meet our mandated numbers.

At the same time, our planning and building department is working through a backlog of major projects, staff capacity is finite, and approving projects with “change of use” can be surprisingly complex. Expecting building

NAVAJO

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could send secret messages that were fast, accurate and secure. More than 400 Navajo Marines joined the effort.

MacDonald served in the Sixth Marine Division during the war. He later was tribal chairman of the Navajo Nation for four terms. Politically active, he gave a speech supporting President Richard Nixon at the 1972 Republican National Convention but also backed Democrat Raul Castro's bid for governor of Arizona.

MacDonald later was sentenced to federal prison for conspiracy, burglary, racketeering and corruption stemming from a 1989 riot and various bribery schemes. Following a 1992 conviction, he was sentenced to 14 years but was released in 2001 after President Bill Clinton pardoned him — making it possible for him to return to his role as a respected, if controversial, elder statesman of the Navajo people.

ELECTION

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Notwithstanding other benefits and drawbacks of Measure C, The Pine Cone asked Monterey County Registrar of Voters Gina Martinez for the total cost of placing the measure on the June ballot.

“The rough estimate for June's election for the city of Pacific Grove is \$63,000,” Martinez said. But it's a different story in November.

“The cost of Pacific Grove adding a measure to the November election, in which they have candidate contests, is negligible,” the registrar said.

owners to respond and the system to absorb hundreds of applications raises questions about whether this approach can deliver results at the required scale to avoid the builder's remedy.

■ **The tool at risk**

This approach could set aside the tool most likely to deliver on our commitments: a competitive request-for-proposal for city-owned sites that invites experienced developers to propose creative solutions. That is what Scotts Valley and Marina are doing. Their process invites the market to bring forward solutions that can deliver housing, retail, parking, and public amenities in a single development with solid financing.

Most of the creative programs already existed, and the enhanced versions of those tools, while pursuing a well-structured RFP under the city's control, would give Carmel multiple paths to success.

Common sense, forward thinking, and honest progress reviews have been key threads running through these columns. As we evaluate the proposed amendment, the question is whether the approach we choose can realistically deliver the housing we have committed to produce while maintaining the qualities that make Carmel special. Learning from our neighbors is only the first step. What matters now is choosing a path that turns those lessons into real results for Carmel.

To hear a podcast generated from this column go to cli.re/neighbors.

Dale Byrne is mayor of Carmel-by-the-Sea. His email is dbyrne@cbs.us.

EJE

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isn't on the list, many people who live there would qualify as disadvantaged. She also said that lack of high-speed internet is an equity issue worth addressing.

Planning commissioner Jessica Hartzell, who also represents Big Sur and Carmel Valley, asked for more details about how the environmental justice plan would work.

“What I notice is there's a lot of why and not a lot of what,” Hartzell said. “It feels like the substance hasn't been developed yet — what's going to happen in these areas?”

Planning commissioner Christine Shaw, who represents Pajaro, had questions about the element's goals — and whether they could be enforced.

“The policies that we already have are not effectively enforced in all of these areas that are on the list,” she observed.

The county just released the plan, and people will have an opportunity to make comments about it through May 11. This summer, the county plans to finalize the environmental justice element, conduct a community meeting and planning commission workshop, and release some kind of environmental report. The planning commission will review it this fall and make a recommendation to the board of supervisors, who are also expected to weigh in on the element later this year.

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