
Comment Letter for CC Agenda Item 13A - Initiative Charter Amendment for Accountability, Oversight, and Transparency

From Luke Coletti <ljcoletti@icloud.com>

Date Sat 10/3/2026 9:15 AM

To City Council Members <citycouncil@cityofpacificgrove.org>; Chip Rerig <crerig@cityofpacificgrove.org>; Alex J. Lorca <alorca@fentonkeller.com>

 1 attachment (3 MB)
Election_Cost_Analysis.pdf;

[**NOTICE:** This message originated outside of the City of Pacific Grove email system -- **DO NOT CLICK** on **links** or open **attachments** unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Mayor and Councilmembers:

As you [receive](#) and accept the certified results of our [initiative](#) petition, I would like to briefly explain the effort behind it and a central point addressed in its findings: the negligible added cost of placing a measure on a regularly scheduled November municipal ballot.

Our effort began with the Council's adoption of an **immediate** 130% pay increase in May 2025, after rejecting a motion to submit the proposal to voters and leaving open the possibility of taxpayer-funded **medical benefits**. Residents responded with more than 1,800 [referendum](#) signatures, and the Council subsequently repealed the ordinance. The Council then placed an even higher pay increase before voters as Measure C at the June 2026 special municipal election, at an estimated election cost of \$63,000. Voters rejected it.

Our charter amendment establishes permanent voter approval of Council compensation and benefits, requiring public fiscal impact reports, and reserving those decisions for regularly scheduled November municipal elections.

That election requirement serves two purposes: greater voter participation and responsible use of public funds. As Finding 9 and Exhibit B explain, adding a measure to an election already being held for mayor and council contests does not materially increase overall election expenses.

The attached election cost analysis documents the negligible added cost of placing a measure on a November municipal ballot, supported by historical City election costs and Monterey County Registrar of Voters Gina Martinez's direct statement: "The cost of Pacific Grove adding a measure to the November election, in which they have candidate contests, is negligible."

The Council's decision to hold a special municipal election for Measure C therefore imposed an estimated \$63,000 expense when the same question could have been submitted at the regularly

scheduled November municipal election for a negligible additional cost.

Our initiative is designed to make voter oversight permanent while avoiding costly special elections. Its November election requirement is a safeguard for both public participation and the City treasury.

Please include this email and the attached analysis in the agenda packet.

Luke Coletti

Candidate for Mayor

Analysis of Pacific Grove Voter Guide Costs Versus Total Election Costs

Luke Coletti

This analysis uses Pacific Grove election invoices and voter guides from 2018–2024 to examine the relationship between local ballot measure voter guide page counts, voter guide costs, and total general municipal election costs. The historical data shows that voter guide costs vary strongly with ballot measure page counts, while election costs (which include voter guide costs) show no meaningful relationship to ballot measure page counts. This demonstrates that adding a city ballot measure to a consolidated general municipal election has a **negligible** effect on overall election costs.

Monterey County Elections’ [Election Cost Estimates - A Guide for Districts](#) provides additional context regarding consolidated election cost structures. The guide explains that its estimated range of \$7–\$10 per registered voter for consolidated elections is based on historical averages across all jurisdictions, consolidated election scenarios, and contest configurations, and that adding a measure does not change the estimated cost range. The County further explains that jurisdictions consolidating with a general election will experience **lower costs** per registered voter than jurisdictions consolidating with a primary election because more jurisdictions share election expenses.

This information is provided in the findings and supporting exhibits of the proposed [Initiative Charter Amendment](#).

Historical Pacific Grove Election Data

Using the 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024 general municipal election invoices and voter guides, the following data was compiled:

Year	Measure Pages	Voter Guide Cost	Total Election Cost *	Total Cost per Registered Voter
2018	36	\$26,523	\$53,583	\$5.34
2020	10	\$13,777	\$60,671	\$5.67
2022	40	\$36,967	\$63,595	\$6.06
2024	35	\$28,517	\$57,893	\$5.52

** Total Election Cost Includes Voter Guide Cost*

What the Historical Election Data Shows

Across the 2018–2024 general municipal election cycles, voter guide costs showed a strong relationship with ballot measure page counts, while total election costs (which include voter guide costs) showed no meaningful statistical relationship to ballot measure page counts. Total election cost per registered voter also remained stable throughout the four election cycles and well below Monterey County Elections’ consolidated election estimate of \$7–\$10 per registered voter, which reflects historical averages across both primary and general election consolidation scenarios.

The 2020 and 2022 general municipal elections illustrate this distinction clearly. During that period, ballot measure pages increased from 10 to 40 pages, an increase of 300%, while voter guide costs increased from \$13,777 to \$36,967, an increase of 168%. However, actual election costs only increased from \$60,671 to \$63,595 during the same period, **an increase of only 5%**.

A simple review of the historical data demonstrates that additional ballot measure pages primarily affect voter guide costs, while having only a **negligible** effect on total election costs.

Statistical Summary and Charts

Relationship between measure pages and voter guide costs:

- Pearson $r = 0.940$
- R-squared = 0.883
- P-value = 0.060

Relationship between measure pages and total election costs:

- Pearson $r = -0.146$
- R-squared = 0.021
- P-value = 0.854

The statistical relationship between measure pages and voter guide costs is strong. However, there is essentially no meaningful statistical relationship between measure pages and total election costs.

Approximately 88% of the variation in voter guide costs across the four election cycles is explained by differences in ballot measure page counts (R-squared = 0.883). By contrast, only 2% of the variation in consolidated general municipal election costs is explained by differences in ballot measure page counts (R-squared = 0.021).

This clearly demonstrates that additional ballot measure pages primarily affect voter guide costs, while having only a **negligible** effect on total election costs.

Measure C, placed on the June 2, 2026, statewide primary ballot—a special election for the City—consists of a single question about whether to raise the salary of seven elected officials and will account for **100% of the estimated \$63,000 election cost**. Unlike the consolidated general municipal elections analyzed above, where ballot measure page counts explained only **2% of the observed variation in total election costs**, the entire cost of the June 2026 election is attributable to the placement of this single measure on the ballot. [Cynthia Garfield's claim](#) that “...the consolidated election in June of 2026 and the November election of 2026 have exactly the same costs” clearly demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of the relative cost impact of local ballot measures on different types of consolidated elections. [Bill Kampe's claim](#) that “Ballot Measure costs are large and significant” is directly contradicted by both the historical election cost data and the statistical analysis presented above.

Chart 1: Voter Guide Costs vs Measure Pages

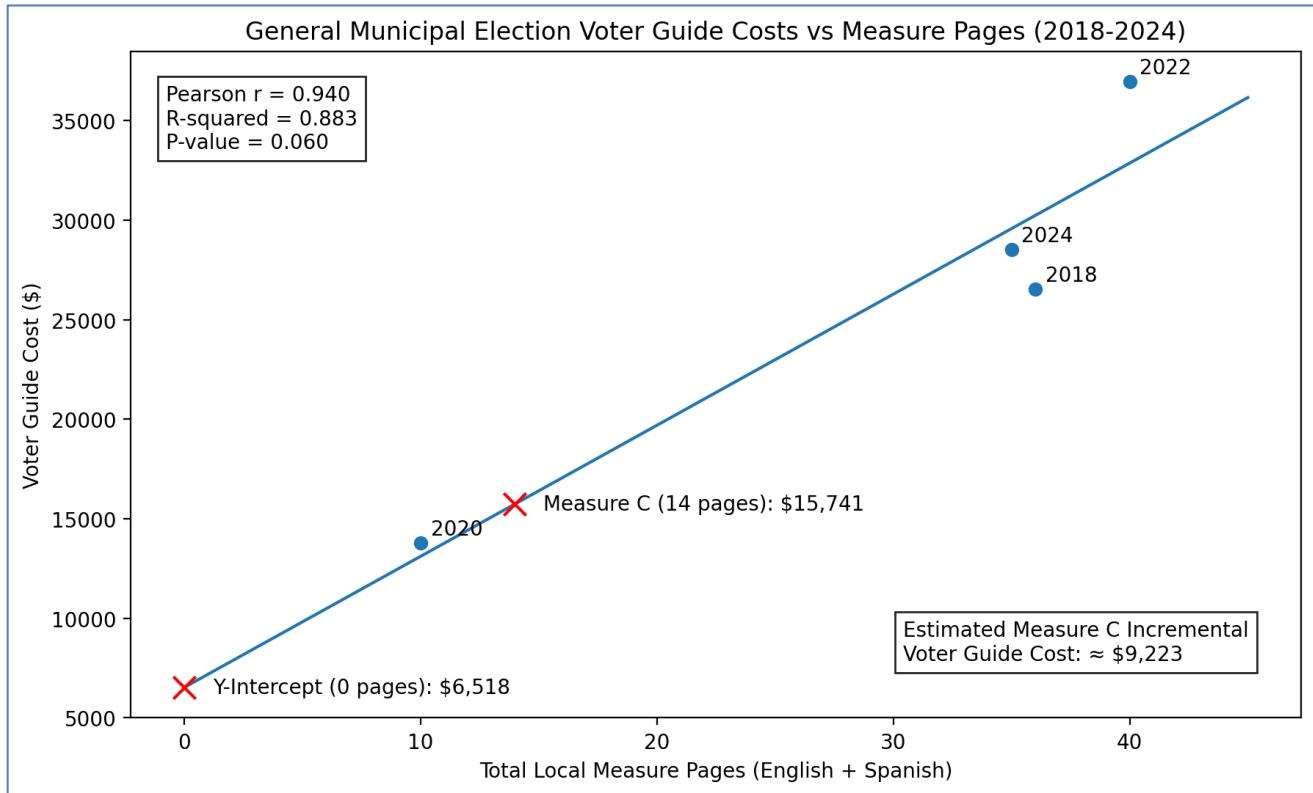
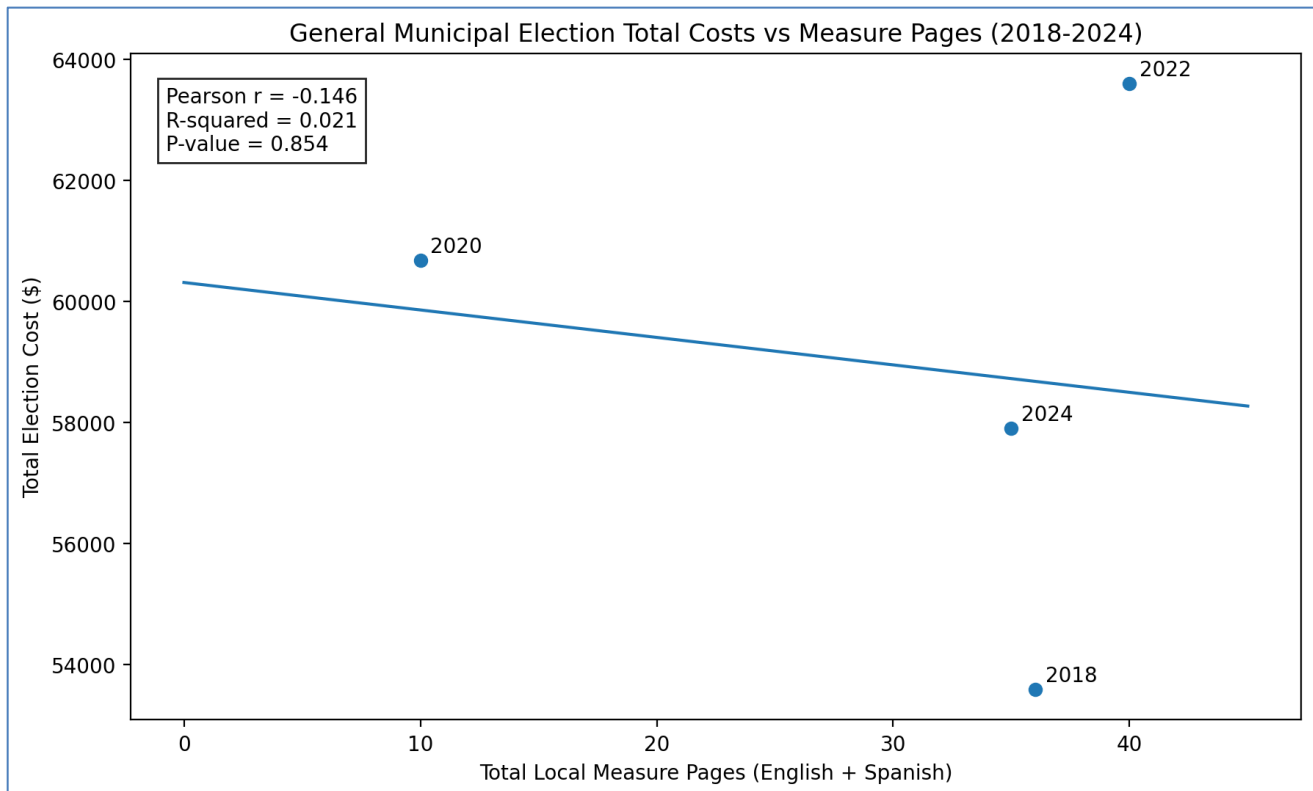


Chart 2: Total Election Costs vs Measure Pages



Conclusion

The historical election data and statistical analysis demonstrate a strong relationship between ballot measure page counts and voter guide costs, but no meaningful relationship between ballot measure page counts and consolidated general municipal election costs. Across the 2018–2024 general municipal election cycles, ballot measure page counts explained 88% of the observed variation in voter guide costs, but only 2% of the observed variation in election costs. The historical data therefore demonstrates that adding a city ballot measure to a consolidated general municipal election has only a **negligible** effect on total election costs.

Furthermore, Monterey County Elections Department has explicitly stated that consolidating with a general election is **less expensive** than consolidating with a primary election. Even so, Mayor Nick Smith and the Council chose to consolidate Measure C, a special election for the City, with the June primary election at an estimated cost of \$63,000 simply to increase the pay of seven elected officials.

In [August 2025](#), we specifically requested that the referendum measure (Measure C) be placed on the November 2026 ballot and stated that a Charter Amendment was necessary to prevent future self-dealing. Mayor Smith and the Council nevertheless chose to proceed with the June 2026 primary election.

Sources Reviewed: Monterey County Elections’ *Election Cost Estimates - A Guide for Districts*, Pacific Grove general municipal election invoices and voter guides for 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024, and the County’s June 2026 Voter Guide containing Measure C.

Appendix A

Pacific Grove Local Ballot Measure Page Counts and Election Costs (2018–2024)

The following table summarizes Pacific Grove local ballot measure page counts, voter guide costs, and total consolidated general municipal election costs for the 2018–2024 election cycles. Measure page counts include both English and Spanish voter guide pages associated with Pacific Grove local ballot measures only.

Year	PG Measures	English Pages	Spanish Pages	Total Measure Pages	Voter Guide Cost	Total Election Cost	Cost Per Voter
2018	M, U	17	19	36	\$26,523	\$53,583	\$5.34
2020	L	5	5	10	\$13,777	\$60,671*	\$5.67
2022	M, N, O	20	20	40	\$36,967	\$63,595	\$6.06
2024	Q, Z	17	18	35	\$28,517	\$57,893	\$5.52

* 2020 total election cost reflects the “Total Without Grant Funds” amount from the Monterey County Elections invoice and excludes a one-time federal HAVA grant offset in order to maintain consistency across election cycles.

Appendix B

Monterey County Registrar Statements Regarding Measure C Election Costs

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.

March 20, 2026

The Carmel Pine Cone

13A

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.

'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

Disparate cost projections for P.G. ballot measure

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 maintained 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.

See **ELECTION** page 30A

ELECTION

From page 13A

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.

Appendix C

“Ballot Measure Group Deletes Misinformation About Election Cost”

The [Pine Cone](#) last month asked Monterey County registrar of voters Gina Martinez about the cost of the special election, and Martinez estimated it would run about \$63,000. Alternatively, Martinez said that putting Measure C on the November ballot would amount to a **“negligible”** cost.

Faced with the registrar’s figure, PG Citizens for Sensible Government last week removed the language from its website.

“We are committed to improving the relevance and accuracy of content as needed,” Kampe said.

“Thank you for removing the misinformation you had included on your website,” Coletti said.

Ballot measure group deletes misinformation about election cost

By KELLY NIX

A PACIFIC Grove community group that’s urging voters to increase the pay for members of the city council removed erroneous information on its website about the price of holding a special election in June after The Pine Cone reported on the cost.

City councilmembers in February decided to hold a special election June 2 to allow citizens to decide whether to increase their monthly pay from \$420 to \$897 for members of the council and from \$700 to \$1,645 for the mayor.

The panel has not had a stipend increase since 1998.

‘Improving accuracy’

A group started by former P.G. Mayor Bill Kampe called PG Citizens for Sensible Government to promote the proposed pay hike, per Measure C, stated on its website that there would be no cost difference between holding the June special election or putting Measure C on the Nov. 3 general election ballot, which will include races for the city’s mayor and several council members, along with numerous state offices, the governor of California and a congressional seat.

“There is no meaningful financial reason for the delay,” PG Citizens for Sensible Government claimed on its “get the facts” page.

However, The Pine Cone last month asked Monterey County registrar of voters Gina Martinez about the cost of the special election, and Martinez estimated it would run about \$63,000. Alternatively, Martinez said that putting Measure C on the November ballot would amount to a “negligible” cost.

Faced with the registrar’s figure, PG Citizens for Sensible Government last week removed the language from its website.

“We are committed to improving the relevance and accuracy of content as needed,” Kampe said. Regarding the cost of the election, he said it’s added the group’s perspective under a section on the website entitled “Why June?” The former mayor said that a “number of persons” contribute to the group’s website.

‘Transparency sought’

Former P.G. city councilman Luke Coletti heads Transparent Pacific Grove to promote government transparency. In a March 26 letter to Kampe and the city council, he responded to the deletion of the erroneous election information.

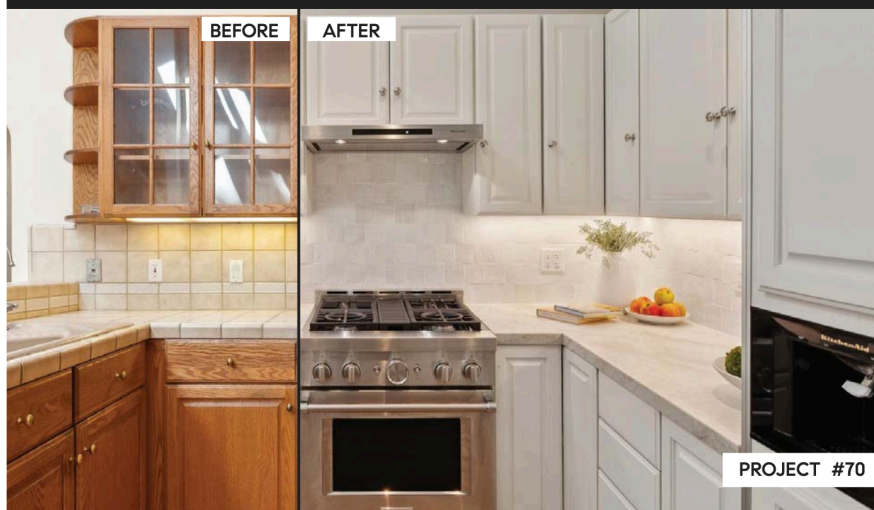
“Thank you for removing the misinformation you had included on your website,” Coletti said.

Transparent Pacific Grove launched a signature-gathering campaign in March to require voter approval of compensation and benefits for the mayor and councilmembers. The group is collecting signatures to get the initiative on

the November ballot, which it says would “ensure accountability and transparency through direct voter oversight at elections where voter participation will ordinarily be the highest.”

Primary elections typically have lower turnouts than general elections.

**You only get one first impression.
Learn how Compass Concierge can help make it your best.**



Bambace Peterson Team

bambacepeterson.com | @bambacepeterson
DRE 01731448 | DRE 01977162
831.200.3178



#1

Compass Team
Monterey County 2018-2025*

Learn more



COMPASS

Compass is a real estate broker licensed by the State of California operating under multiple entities, License Numbers 01996208, 01272235, 01275565. All material is intended for informational purposes only and is compiled from sources deemed reliable but is subject to errors, omissions, changes in price, conditions, sale or withdrawal without notice. No statement is made as to the accuracy of any description or measurements (including square footage). This is not intended to constitute property already listed, no financial or legal advice provided. Equal Housing Opportunity. Photos may be digitally staged or digitally enhanced and may not reflect actual property conditions.