

March 6, 2017

From Pacifica Progressive Alliance

Pacifica City Council Election Dominated by Huge Out of Town Real Estate Spending

Out of town real estate industry sources made huge financial contributions to the 2016 city council race. Out of town real estate industry sources spent \$48,438 to elect Sue Vaterlaus and \$39,493 in support of MaryAnn Nihart. Deirdre Martin and Bridget Duffy received no real estate industry funding. The National Association of Realtors spent \$76,408 on the Pacifica city council race, swamping all other contributors combined. The California Association of Realtors contributed \$9,000, and out of town realtors donated \$5,300. These figures come from official campaign financial reports on file with the City of Pacifica.

When the money spent to elect a city council candidate is many times more than for other candidates, it raises a concern that the council seat is being “purchased” for that candidate. Much greater funding buys many more mailers and ads and other campaign materials. And when most of that funding comes from out of town and one special interest, it raises even greater concern that the council member is beholden to those funders and may represent their interests rather than those of local constituents.

The finances in the 2016 city council race were unusual. Typically, Pacifica city council candidates raise around \$15,000 and usually the overwhelming majority of funds are local and come from many different sources.

Outside of Pacifica Real Estate Industry and Other Contributions to the 2016 Pacifica City Council Race

Candidate	Source	Amount	Percent of total
Deirdre Martin	Non-Pacifica Real Estate	\$0	0%
	Other	\$16,683	100%
	Total	\$16,683	
MaryAnn Nihart	Non-Pacifica Real Estate	\$39,493	75%
	Other	\$12,903	25%
	Total	\$52,396	
Sue Vaterlaus	Non-Pacifica Real Estate	\$48,438	74%
	Other	\$16,824	26%
	Total	\$65,262	

Total direct and indirect contributions from all sources to candidate Vaterlaus were \$65,262, to Nihart \$52,396, and \$16,683 to Martin. Duffy declared she would spend less than \$2,000 on her campaign and therefore did not have to report contributions, and did not file detailed financial reports. The National Association of Realtors paid for online pop-up advertising and mailers for Vaterlaus and Nihart rather than contributing directly to the candidates. The California Association of Realtors gave \$3,000 to BACPAC which then spent it for a mailer and canvassing for Vaterlaus and Nihart. BACPAC is a political action committee originally set up by the Pacifica Chamber of Commerce and now run independently.

Real Estate Industry Donations by Source

Donor	Amount
National Association of Realtors	\$76,408
California Real Estate PAC	\$9,000
California Apartment Assoc. PAC	\$500
Out-of-town realtors, brokers, etc	\$5,300
In-town realtors	\$7,450

While Vaterlaus and Nihart received the bulk of their funding from out of town (83% and 81% respectively), Martin received 83% of her funding from in town. The majority of Martin's funding came from 107 local contributions under \$500, while Vaterlaus and Nihart raised only 8% of their funds from local contributions under \$500.

Local Donations Less Than Five Hundred Dollars

Candidate	Number of donation	Amount	Percent of total
Deirdre Martin	107	\$9,848	59%
MaryAnn Nihart	26	\$4,100	8%
Sue Vaterlaus	34	\$5,450	8%

This analysis was prepared using official campaign financial reports. These reports are available from the Pacifica City Clerk's office.

For more information, contact the Pacifica Progressive Alliance at pacificaprogressive@gmail.com