

Wong leads funds race for Monterey Park seats
By Jennifer McLain Staff Writer
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MONTEREY PARK - Council hopeful Anthony Wong has received almost as much in campaign contributions as the other 10 candidates combined, according to financial records.

Wong, a Monterey Park city planning commissioner, has reported nearly \$61,000 in contributions as of Jan. 21. The money has come from a variety of sources, including developers, retirees, businesses and local politicians. Mayor David Lau gave \$200.

The other candidates with the most in their campaign coffers are City Treasurer Mitchell Ing and incumbent Councilman Benjamin "Frank" Venti, each with nearly \$25,000.

Also vying for the three seats in the March 6 election are Doris Lau, Luis Estrada, Frank Hong, City Clerk David Barron, Irwin Zucker, Francisco Alonso, Joe Avila and Lisa Yang.

As the campaign moves forward, a review of the financial statements from July to January show that their strategies vary greatly.

Venti is funding his own campaign and has given himself \$25,000. This follows suit with past campaigns in which he was his primary contributor and funding source.

From 1998 to 2006, Venti lent himself nearly \$100,000 from his real estate company, Venti Corp. All of the loans came prior to the start of the most recent campaign filing period.

Meantime, other candidates, such as Wong and Ing, have relied on contributions from the community.

Wong has collected \$60,918 in monetary contributions. San Gabriel-based Minh Development and restaurant owner Christine So both gave him \$1,000; Wai Chung Wong gave \$1,500; Hong Kong Cafe kicked in \$3,000, and Wong Family Association Investment Fund of Los Angeles contributed \$4,000.

Stephen Lam, vice chairman of the business improvement district advisory committee in Monterey Park, donated \$3,000 to Wong's campaign.

Ing has \$24,735 in his coffers, according to his financial statement. The amount includes a \$3,800 loan from his wife. He said the key to his campaign is talking to residents.

"You've got to get out there and meet the entire city," he said. "It takes a month and a half and two pairs of shoes."

Avila and Zucker have campaigned without financial backing from anyone.

Experts say that more money does not always guarantee a seat on the dais.

"It varies all over the map," said Steven Frates, senior fellow at the Rose Institute at Claremont McKenna College. "I've seen places where people spend more than \$100,000 and not get elected. It is idiosyncratic."

Hong, who said he hoped to run a grass-roots campaign, said the reality of having to spend money on banners, postage and mailers eventually kicked in.

"I'm not like some of the other candidates who can afford to fund this myself," said Hong, adding that he is taking time off from his day job as a city planner for Los Angeles.

Hong reported \$4,132 in contributions. He loaned himself \$1,700, and the remainder

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came from donors, only one of whom gave as much as \$500.

Alonso has loaned himself \$10,000, records show. He has received three contributions totaling \$1,424.

Luis Estrada reported \$1,050 worth of contributions, from Cathy Wilson, a supervisor at the the Los Angeles County Health Administration, and Maria Estrada, his wife and a former caregiver at the Los Angeles County Social Services.

Doris Lau has not reported receiving any monetary contributions. She has reported \$4,785 worth of outstanding debts.

Yang's campaign has so far been funded by a \$6,500 loan from Lisa's Investments, her real estate brokerage consultation company.

Barron has reported \$9,053 in contributions, including a \$200 loan to himself. The \$6,850 Barron has received in monetary contributions, which came from nearly 30 people, have not been more than \$500. The donors range from teachers to attorneys to Monterey Park Vice Mayor Sharon Martinez, who donated \$150.

Deputy City Clerk Cindy Truong said Thursday is the last campaign filing deadline before the March 6 election.

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