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Wong leading fundraising in Monterey Park council race

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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.

Councilman 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 loaned himself nearly \$100,000 from his real estate company, Venti Corporation. 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."

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