



Las Milpas residents turn out for Pharr project forum

Elizabeth Findell | The Monitor | Posted: Thursday, July 17, 2014 10:21 pm

PHARR— Only a handful of citizens milled with Pharr city leaders at a forum soliciting public input Thursday evening, but one group of Las Milpas residents wanted their views heard.

Eddie Anaya, a member of the executive committee of Valley Interfaith, heard about the forum and organized his own community meeting Wednesday of some 35 residents to create their own list of concerns to present to the commission.

About 20 people accompanied him to the Thursday workshop to present those views themselves.

“We saw it in the paper and we thought it would be a great opportunity to come and let the commission know of the needs in our community,” Anaya said. “We have over 20 colonias in our community.”

Anaya emphasized the need for a satellite library on the south side, as well as general development. His group of attendees encircled City Manager Fred Sandoval at the meeting, highlighting needs in that area, requesting the city hold a workshop there and asking about procedures for attending regular city meetings.

“The most important thing about this is teaching our people to voice their opinion and understand the process,” Anaya said.

Some 86 people signed in as participants at the forum. Each was given five dots to stick next to the city projects they considered most important — organized on poster boards categorized as civic, environmental, economic, infrastructure or social.

Projects which collected the most stickers included improving city roads, making downtown a cultural destination, creating a city-wide parks system, offering professional career training and bringing higher-paying jobs to the city.

“For me, I’m very concerned about our water supply... because of the drought situation in the Valley,” said Oscar Vera, who put stickers on an item to seek alternative water supplies. “We really need to plan for that.”

Las Milpas residents Lucy Resendes and Maria Gomez said in Spanish that their area was in need of many services including lighting, more public transportation, a greater police presence and, most importantly, a library where children could do homework at night.

Tom Greuner, who lives off of Moore Road, said he focused on recycling and drainage, emphasizing the flooding problems when it rains.

The city hosted the forum ahead of a budgeting workshop next week, when leaders will decide on next year's priorities from a hotel on the San Antonio RiverWalk. Voting on city projects was also available online and would remain open Friday at Pharr-Tx.gov/Vote, IT Director Jason Arms said.

City Commissioner Jimmy Garza said he hoped more people were home voting that way.

“I mean, I would do it at home,” he said of the seemingly-low turnout at the events center. “I’d like to think it’s a combination (voting at home) and that people like where the city’s going and think everything’s great.”

City Manager Fred Sandoval said the feedback hadn’t surprised him.

“Streets, library south of Pharr, street lighting,” he said. “Nothing I didn’t expect to hear. ‘Do more of these’—that was interesting. We do need to do one of these south of Pharr.”

Moises Martinez, 14, said he put his dots on recycling, street improvements and parks. The Las Milpas teen had never had any involvement with the city before, but came with his parents and the others from his church.

“We wanted to make it a better place to live,” he said.

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