

Why these candidates are the best choice in the Walnut City Council election

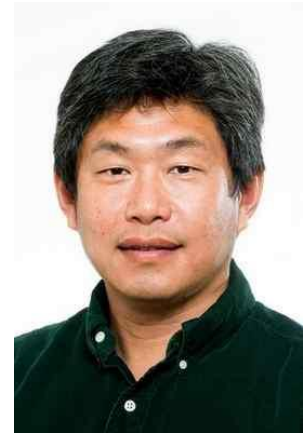
SAN GABRIEL VALLEY TRIBUNE

By [The Editorial Board](#), The San Gabriel Valley Tribune

Walnut City Council candidate Eric Ching at San Gabriel Valley Tribune in Monrovia on Wednesday, March 9, 2016. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda/ San Gabriel Valley Tribune)

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Walnut City Council candidate Dino Pollalis at San Gabriel Valley Tribune in Monrovia on Wednesday, March 9, 2016. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda/ San Gabriel Valley Tribune)



The city of Walnut — always attractive and affluent, with some country-like neighborhoods — is rapidly becoming the San Marino of the East San Gabriel Valley, a real draw for the upwardly mobile and for immigrant entrepreneurs.

Politically, it's also running into some tough town-gown issues, with several current conflicts between the city itself and its residents and the administration and board of Mt. SAC, one of the largest and best community colleges in the nation. That fight — about a large parking structure the college wants to build bordering on a neighborhood, and a huge solar-panel array it also wants to install on the campus — has resulted in fireworks aplenty, including the wonderfully theatrical move by the entire council to adjourn its meeting in City Hall and reconvene on campus at the simultaneous meeting of the college's board of trustees.

And internally, on the City Council, there have been theatrical fights as well. It sometimes happens in our local cities that have a tradition but not a mandate of rotating by seniority into the

mayor's seat that a dissident slim majority on the council upsets the apple cart and votes for a new rotating mayor who wasn't in line to take the partially merely honorary, partially agenda-setting position. That's what happened last fall in Walnut, when council members Robert Pacheco, Mary Su and Antonio Cartagena pushed Pacheco into the mayor's seat even though Eric Ching was next in line for the traditional rotation. For the ordinarily tranquil town, political chaos ensued, with catcalls from the audience.

That's perhaps one of the issues that is driving an issue that is on the local April 12 ballot to establish term limits for council members in the city of some 30,000 residents. The editorial board has mixed feelings about term-limit restrictions in general, especially on the national and statewide level, when they can rob citizens of the best and most experienced representation. But there is no question that they can also bring new blood into politics, and that they eventually eliminate the advantages incumbents have. So we endorse Measure A, which creates a 12-year term limit for Walnut City Council.

Longtime council member Tony Cartagena is stepping down, so there will soon be one newcomer on the council as there are three seats on the ballot.

We strongly endorse the candidacies of the two incumbents seeking re-election, Nancy Tragarz and Eric Ching. Tragarz grew up in Walnut, became a lawyer, and is raising her family in her hometown. She served on the Parks and Recreation Commission before successfully running for council, and says she is seeking a third term because "the city needs leaders with ethics and experience right now." Her experience and smarts as an attorney are good for a city negotiating with the college.

Ching has experience running a large IT firm and was successful in his campaign promise of getting rid of an irksome red-light camera in town.

There are two other excellent contenders for the third seat, but we give our strong endorsement to Dino Pollalis for his experience as a civic volunteer, his service on a Mt. SAC task force and the time he will have to serve the city as a recently retired electronics executive.