

Mt SAC election forum reflects issues

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Mt. SAC Board of Trustees candidates from left: John Mendoza, Rosanne Bader, Jay Chen, Garrett Terrones and Fred Chyr answer questions during a forum put on by Faculty Association at the Walnut, Calif. community college campus August 28, 2015. (Photo by Leo Jarzomb/San Gabriel Valley Tribune)

By [Steve Scauzillo](#), San Gabriel Valley Tribune

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WALNUT >> Candidates for Mount San Antonio College board of trustees on Friday debated pressing issues swirling around the 420-acre campus, including litigation halting construction of a five-story parking garage and possibly building satellite campuses that would funnel students into classrooms in La Puente, Hacienda Heights and Pomona.

Satellite campuses

Building a second campus outside the crowded Walnut campus was supported by three challengers but not by the two incumbents, who viewed the idea as unnecessary and too costly.

That issue drew a strong dividing line between 12-year board member Rosanne Bader of Area 1 and lone challenger John Mendoza, both of Pomona. Jay Chen, of Hacienda Heights and Garrett Terrones, of La Puente, challengers in the four-person Area No. 5 race, strongly supported satellite campuses, while 20-year board member Fred Chyr, of Hacienda Heights, opposed them. Renee Chavez did not attend the candidate's forum, hosted by the Mt. SAC Faculty Association in Founder's Hall.

Chyr said 30,000 students from Area 5 cities — including Hacienda Heights and La Puente — already attend classes at Mt. SAC, a sprawling campus in Walnut off Grand Avenue and the largest community college in the state. He called the idea “very costly and difficult to manage” and said access to the campus doesn't seem to be an issue because Foothill Transit buses circulate around Mt. SAC.

Terrones, in one of his most pointed responses, shot back: “We have in this local area examples of how this can work. Chaffey College (in Rancho Cucamonga) has offsite satellite campuses.”

Chen, a member of the Hacienda La Puente Unified School District board, suggested the college use surplus classrooms being vacated by the district to hold community college classes. “We will have empty spaces; why not bring Mt. SAC to those surrounding areas?” Chen said.

Bader said sometimes the college will hold classes in the community but did not support a satellite campus. “If we build satellite campuses it might be very costly and we would be duplicating services,” Bader said.

Solar plant

Terrones said he would like to take some of the burden off Walnut residents, who [successfully sued](#) to stop a five-level parking garage 125-feet from homes that they say will lower property values and add pollution. The residents, including United Walnut Taxpayers, also have asked a judge to stop Mt. SAC's proposed 11-acre solar generating plant located near a residential area south of Grand Avenue and Amar Road.

The temporary restraining order was presented to Judge James Chalfant in Los Angeles Superior Court Thursday as part of the injunction on the parking garage. He postponed action until Jan. 21, 2016.

The board will face approval of a grading plan for the solar project in late fall, said President Bill Scroggins. A building contract would go before the board in spring 2016. The project may need approval from the city of Walnut. A separate environmental impact report is in progress, said community members.

Three members of the Walnut group attended the forum. They said they were pleased the candidates understood that 30,000 Walnut residents, about half the student population at Mt. SAC, are suffering from the college's over growth, traffic and air pollution.

City sends mailer

“They can’t keep adding students. There is a point where you cannot sustain growth anymore,” said Layla Abou-Taleb, the group’s president. “When students can’t get into classes, when parking is a problem and congestion and traffic is a problem, we are reaching that point.”

The Walnut City Council voted Wednesday to spend \$6,000 to send out a mailer to residents explaining the various building projects on tap at Mt. SAC. The mailer says: “The city of Walnut fully intends to enforce city zoning code regulations, city general plan guidelines, and California state and land use law as it pertains to any proposed development at Mt. SAC.” It also references the city’s lawsuit against the college to “properly ensure the enforcement the zoning code (sic).”