From Police Reform To Playgrounds, San Diego Coalition Seeks A City Budget For The People

MAY 29, 2018 BY AT LARGE — LEAVE A COMMENT

By Susan Duerksen / Center on Policy Initiatives

San Diego’s Community Budget Alliance (CBA) has won approval of environmental, labor, police reform, and pedestrian safety projects this year, and will continue to push for more equitable spending throughout the final month of brewing the 2018-19 City budget.
The City Council has several chances in June to modify the proposed budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1. The CBA coalition, which advocates for budget equity to benefit low-wage working people and underserved communities, is asking the Council to fund these items:

- Training in restorative justice practices for 125 police officers working in City Heights, to help keep youth in school and out of prisons.
- Contracts with community organizations for outreach to inform workers of minimum wage and sick leave laws and help resolve cases of violations.
- New playground equipment, play surfaces, toilets, and drinking fountains at Emerald Hills Community Park, which hasn’t been renovated for 50 years.
- Translation services at Community Planning Group meetings, to allow all city residents to be involved in land-use decisions affecting their neighborhoods.
- Prioritizing neglected neighborhoods for traffic safety projects under the Vision Zero program.

The local coalition has successfully advocated for the following projects this year and wants to make sure they stay in the budget:

- An annual Racial Impact Report providing public access to analysis of Police Department data on racial bias in policing practices.
- Staffing for implementation of the City’s Climate Action Plan, including a full-time position focused on equitable application of the plan.
- Analysis and reconfiguring of commercial truck routes through Barrio Logan, to reduce pollution and health concerns for residents.
- A study of the local jobs to be created by a Community Choice Energy program.
- Court surface repairs at Emerald Hills Community Park.
- Pedestrian crossing signals at the corner of El Cajon Blvd. and Altadena Avenue, site of a recent fatality.
- Restoring a program to connect frequent emergency service users with other resources.

The CBA’s successes in recent years demonstrate the power of direct community advocacy to make changes that improve daily life in San Diego.

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The Trump administration has instituted a new policy of separating children, some as young as 53 weeks old, from their parents when the families are taken into custody by immigration officials, even though the parents are not a threat to the safety of the children. How safe are these children who are then processed by the Office of Refugee Resettlement which typically then places them in shelters or with sponsors? Last month, the New York Times reported that Health & Human Services has lost track of nearly 1,500 children placed in the custody of sponsors. White House Chief of Staff (and former Secretary of Homeland Security) John Kelly has described this policy of breaking up families a “tough deterrent”.

If you believe that this policy that is being implemented in your name, ostensibly for your security, is unjust and inhumane, then as Chris Hayes remarks at the end of this segment, “I urge you to contact people that represent you in the United States government and tell them that you feel that way.”
Dozens of local residents affiliated with the CBA attended the City’s evening budget hearing a week ago, to support each other in making these and other budget requests. The coalition several years ago had convinced the City Council to hold the evening hearings to allow people who work standard workdays to be heard.

The City Council is scheduled to discuss potential budget revisions at meetings on June 11 and 12, with a final vote expected June 26.

The CBA’s core members this year include the Center on Policy Initiatives, ACLU San Diego, Alliance San Diego, Climate Action Campaign, Emerald Hills Town Council, Environmental Health Coalition, Interfaith Worker Justice, Mid-City CAN, and San Diego 350.