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**Implementing Participatory Budgeting in the City of Vallejo:
Achieving the Goal to Improve the Quality of Life for Vallejoans**

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Running Head: Implementing Participatory Budgeting in the City of Vallejo

Implementing Participatory Budgeting in the City of Vallejo:
Achieving the Goal to Improve the Quality of Life for Vallejoans

Submitted by

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for

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Graduate Research Project in Public Management

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This research paper is dedicated to Craig Whittom, because without him or the opportunity he gave me to be a City of Vallejo intern, I would have never been interested in the public service.

Abstract

There are many ways that local governments receive revenue. More often than not, the municipalities are the ones that make the decisions on what to do with the funds they receive and the public must simply go along with it. Participatory budgeting (PB) has become an effective way for local governments to increase transparency in regards to how funds are dispersed, and for residents and stakeholders to be actively involved in the decision making process — particularly in the city of Vallejo, California. By using personal interviews with City of Vallejo staff and secondary research on various other cities who have successfully implemented participatory budgeting, this paper will determine if the City of Vallejo improved the quality of life of its residents by implementing participatory budgeting to use PB funds on public enhancement projects. The analysis of Vallejo's implementation methods will assist other cities that are interested in this new democratic process of government spending.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Financially ailing Vallejo files bankruptcy.” That’s what SFGate reporter Carolyn Jones wrote on May 24, 2008 (SFGate, 2008). According to the article, the City of Vallejo’s attorneys filed a petition in U.S. Bankruptcy Court shortly following the Vallejo City Council’s unanimous vote to enter bankruptcy after months of cost-cutting and labor negotiations failed to save the city from financial ruin. While the city faced a \$16 million deficit with no money in the reserve for fiscal year 2008-09, this research project focuses on what happened *after* Vallejo emerged from bankruptcy in 2011. A new, transformative democratic process brought to light an innovative way for Vallejoans to hold local government officials to their notion of a more open, transparent, and accountable budgeting process.

Background and History

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a unique democratic process that has changed the way the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre has been spending its budget since 1989. When the PB process first launched in Porto Alegre, tens of thousands of people were deciding how to spend as much as 20 percent of their city’s annual budget. A prime example of the success of PB use in Porto Alegre was demonstrated by the improvement of the community’s health and hygiene. In 1989, only 49 percent of the population had basic sanitation service, but after only eight years of PB, 98 percent of households had water and 85 percent were served by the city’s sewage system (Secondo, Lerner, 2011). Each year since its inception, Porto Alegre has had approximately 50,000 residents involved in either deciding how the budget is spent or voting on the projects in consideration.

Within the past 10 years, the practice of using participatory budgeting techniques has gone global, expanding to more than 1,200 cities around the world and becoming popular in North America, Europe, South America, and Asia. Participatory budgeting's popularity stems from six major benefits: (1) it deepens democracy; (2) it increases transparency; (3) it promotes greater efficiency which increases citizens' trust in government; (4) it educates people about democracy and spending; (5) it promotes social justice by leveling the playing field and directing resources to communities in need, and (6) it helps build community by bringing people together in pursuit of common goals (Secondo, Lerner, 2011). The process isn't limited to just local governments and municipalities; some colleges and universities have adopted the practice to their school's budget as well. To date, there are over 1,500 cities and institutions that have implemented PB as a way for wider populations of people to be involved in how to spend the budget.

Though the U.S. experienced its first rounds of success in participatory budgeting in Chicago in 2009 and New York City in 2011, the City of Vallejo, California, was on its way to establishing the first city-wide PB cycle in the nation in 2012. Just after emerging from bankruptcy, the residents of Vallejo voted on a one percent sales tax titled Measure B that would create revenue specifically for public safety services and community improvements. Brewer (1983) writes, "The civil services is not noted for its risk taking, and any new venture will have by definition elements of bureaucratic risk involved, particularly so in new areas of endeavor or where the proposed changes depart severely from the accustomed norm or involve large scale activities." For a city like Vallejo, one that had already hit the bottom financially when it filed for Chapter 9 Bankruptcy in 2008, doing something unorthodox like participatory budgeting was a critical step to pulling itself back up into a functioning municipality while providing a greater

depth of public services (Participatory Budgeting in Vallejo, 2014). Beginning in October 2012, Vallejo residents brainstormed ideas and developed project proposals for a vote to allocate \$3.2 million in revenue from the Measure B sales tax. In May 2013, nearly 4,000 Vallejo residents and stakeholders ages 16 and older voted to fund 12 projects (www.PBVallejo.org).

Rossi and Lipsey (2004) wrote, “No matter how well a program addresses target needs, embodies a good plan of attack, reaches its target population and delivers apparently appropriate services, it cannot be judged successful unless it actually brings about some measure of beneficial change in its given social arena.” Unlike Chicago and New York City, however, Vallejo’s unique PB process allowed for both capital projects and program improvements *and* service-based projects to utilize PB funds. Because of this, not only were street lighting and road repairs voted in, but youth and senior programs, college bound scholarships, and a cost-savings spay and neuter program were also approved (Participatory Budgeting in Vallejo, 2014). Success with smaller budgets has quickly led to interest at the municipal level, and the non-profit organization called the Participatory Budgeting Project is continuing to collaborate with officials and organizers to develop new practices of PB in more than a dozen other cities in the United States and Canada. By analyzing the City of Vallejo’s implementation process, this research study will help determine whether other similar sized cities could also be successful in implementing their own PB process.

Research Question/Sub-questions

Main Question:

Has the process of implementing participatory budgeting in the City of Vallejo resulted in meeting its goal of improving the quality of life of its residents?

Sub-questions:

1. Based on other cities' implementation process of participatory budgeting, did the City of Vallejo execute its PB policy in the most effective way?
2. How did the Measure B sales tax impact the implementation process?
3. Can other similar sized cities also be successful utilizing the PB process in the same way Vallejo did?
 - a. What if they executed PB without first implementing a sales tax increase (or something similar to increase revenue for PB funding)? Would it still be as effective?

These questions were derived from the researcher's interest in how and why PB was brought to the City of Vallejo in the first place. Because the City's budget was in a state of despair, it would be interesting to find out how integral the 2008 bankruptcy and subsequent emergence from bankruptcy in 2011 affected the decision to implement both Measure B and PB in Vallejo.

Research Hypothesis/Sub-hypotheses

Main Hypothesis:

The process of implementing participatory budgeting is how the City of Vallejo was able to meet its goal of improving the quality of life of its residents.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. Using Chicago and New York's implementation processes of participatory budgeting, the City of Vallejo was able to execute its PB policy in the most effective way.
2. If the state of the budget was despondent, then Measure B sales tax critically impacted the implementation process.

3. If other similar sized cities utilized the City of Vallejo's implementation process, then they will be able to successfully implement their own PB process.

Similar to the research questions above, these hypotheses resulted from the main idea that participatory budgeting being implemented was the foremost factor is the City of Vallejo improving the quality of life of its residents. To reiterate the hypothesis, the state of the budget at the time played a vital role in the City of Vallejo seeking out an alternative solution to their budgeting woes.

Purpose of the Study

Through use of this research of the participatory budgeting process, the analysis of Vallejo's implementation methods will assist other cities that are interested in this new democratic process of government spending. If the aforementioned hypothesis is correct, then not only will this research study facilitate spreading the knowledge of participatory budgeting, but it will also garner interest into a fresh method of public budgeting through transformative democracy. The researcher has had a special interest in PB since its inception with the City of Vallejo and is curious to see it come to fruition throughout the 10-year life cycle of the Measure B sales tax.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this project is the City of Vallejo, the local government/municipality for a small Northern California town of 30.67 square-miles and 118,837 residents. The City of Vallejo is a city that has implemented and practiced participatory budgeting, making Vallejo and its residents ideal candidates to study in terms of implementation processes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction:

A lot of research has been done by scholars and practitioners on the subject of participatory budgeting. While much of the literature pertains to a wide variety of topics, there are three major themes that exist and prevail over the others: (1) comparative government with the original pilot site of Porto Alegre, Brazil versus the first city-wide implementation of participatory budgeting in the City of Vallejo; (2) the critical role of community participation in budget decisions; and (3) the importance of transparency of local government leaders and officials when dealing with public budgeting. The overall purpose of this literature review is to provide differing viewpoints from various scholarly works concerning the topic of this research project: participatory budgeting in municipal governments, mainly in Vallejo, California.

Comparative Government Part 1 – Porto Alegre:

Many articles regarding the origin of participatory budgeting in Brazil discuss democracy in action and the demographics of citizens that were involved in the beginning stages. Similar to the United States, when the people of Porto Alegre heard about participatory budgeting, Navarro (2004) described that the vast majority reacted with a mixture of curiosity and discredit due to the lack of details and ideological notions of social participation. “As soon as many social groups realized that the offer by the municipal authorities to share decision-making and jointly decide matters related to the budget was not rhetorical, participatory budgeting ignited a sort of ‘participation fever’ that was unprecedented in the city’s history,” (Navarro, 2004, p. 258). It

took four years for the idea of PB to take off in Porto Alegre, but when it finally did, the residents did not hold back their enthusiasm for the process.

In “Participatory Economic Democracy in Action: Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre, 1989–2004,” Marquetti, Silva, and Campbell (2012) note that Porto Alegre found three different issues in participatory democracy: participation, the nature of choices, and the resulting redistribution. Marquetti et al., emphasizes that effective participation (all citizens have equal opportunities to express their preferences) and voting equality at the decisive stage (votes are counted with equal weight at the final stage of a collective decision) are critical to PB processes.

Where PB really excelled in Porto Alegre was in broadening democratic practices, broadening access of the Brazilian poor to public goods, and renewing the composition of the Brazilian political elite (Avritzer, 2010). These three things were important because PB brought the poor into politics (a place they had never been before), PB encouraged the poor to participate, and neighborhood associations began to emerge demanding local governments provide public goods to the residents. According to Avritzer (2010), PB led to the strengthening of a horizontal democratic option of government in Porto Alegre.

Comparative Government Part 2 – Chicago, New York, and Vallejo, CA:

Lerner and Secondo (2012) described the origin of participatory budgeting within the United States based off of the already working democratic process in Brazil. The article, “By the People, For the People: Participatory Budgeting from the Bottom Up in North America,” begins by providing the number one assumed reason that it took PB so long to get to the U.S., which was, “Sounds interesting, but that wouldn't work here,” and “PB might work in Brazil, but in the US, skeptics have worried that it would never engage the poor or win control over real money,”

(Lerner & Secondo, 2012). In “Chicago’s \$1.3 Million Experiment in Democracy,” the article describes the United States’ first endeavor into Participatory Budgeting in 2009 with Chicago's Alderman Joe Moore being the first elected official in the nation to try PB - which resulted in the residents of Chicago's 49th Ward coming together and deciding on how to spend \$1.3 million of the ward's discretionary funds (Lerner & Antieau, 2010). With word of the successful run at PB in Chicago, New York became the second city in the U.S. to try its hand in this new democratic process (Lerner & Secondo, 2012). The authors also note that smaller budgets have had success with PB and sparked interest at the municipal level. "In 2012, City Council in Vallejo, California, approved the first city-wide PB process, with PBP serving as a lead partner,” (Lerner & Secondo, 2012). Addressing the skeptics, Lerner and Secondo provided proof that, with PB, a deeper democracy can eventually work in the U.S., but also admitted that there were two main underlying issues with the process. First, the authors discovered that poor people in developed countries did not necessarily turn out in droves to discuss basic infrastructure and that low-income people were more worried about issues such as jobs, safety, and housing (Lerner & Secondo, 2012). Secondly, they noted that small-scale PB initiatives did not necessarily transform government more broadly and may not grow beyond token local officials. This is where resident participation becomes a key factor in PB.

Community Participation in Budget Decisions:

The second theme that was apparent when researching was the idea that the citizen played a huge role in the participatory budgeting process with the critical task of community participation. In *The Public Participation Handbook: Making Better Decisions Through Citizen Involvement*, Creighton (2005) defined public participation as not just providing information to

the public, but having a definite interaction between the organization making the decision and the people who want to participate. Similarly, the participants must have some level of impact or influence on the decision being made. These two components of public participation are vital to the PB process, because without them, PB would just be traditional budgeting. In the same way, Putnam (2001) found in his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* that many Americans today will enthusiastically participate in educational or school service groups (PTA), recreational groups, work-related groups (labor unions), religious groups, youth groups, neighborhood groups, and charitable organizations because they want to be actively involved in their community.

In, “Defining and Achieving Normative Democratic Values in Participatory Budgeting Processes,” Rossmann and Shanahan (2011) advocate that decision making in public administration should be a process of delivering democracy by authentically engaging the public, and the means of achieving these outcomes are as important as the ends. Because of this, they believe that openness and inclusiveness lie at the top of the democratic values list. In terms of participatory budgeting, the three main questions addressed are: how do committee representative interpret and define their democratic responsibilities, particularly regarding openness and inclusiveness; what are their insights regarding opportunities for and barriers to achieving democracy in this participatory budgeting process; and to what extent do committee members believe they have met these goals (Rossmann & Shanahan, 2011). By defining openness in three ways (lack of secrecy, access to information, and transparency of the process), Rossmann and Shanahan (2011) set the stage for the root cause for success in participatory budgeting.

In “Innovations in Democratic Governance: How Does Citizen Participation Contribute to a Better Democracy,” Michels (2011) claims that citizen participation has multiple positive effects on the quality of democracy by promoting inclusion, influence, deliberation, skills and virtues, and legitimacy. Not only does citizen participation increase knowledge of community issues, but it increases civic skills and public engagement, and it contributes to the support for decisions among fellow participants (Michels, 2011). The idea that the political system adheres to the “social contract” is apparent in that community members abscond their own desires and come together to work together for a common goal, which ultimately encompasses the ideals of participatory budgeting. Similarly, Bingham, Nabatchi, and O’Leary (2005) argue that new governance refers to the creation, execution, and implementation of activities backed by the shared goals of citizens and organizations, who may or may not have formal authority and policing power. They note that participatory budgeting has a “human aspect” and that public administrators need to understand the role of humankind – the citizens, stakeholders, and public administrators are tool makers and tool users (Bingham et al., 2005).

In 2015, Huang and Feeney found that public service motivation resulted in increased citizen participation in government budgeting decisions and general decision making processes. They wrote, “...local government managers with higher [public service motivation] report greater levels of citizen participation in organizational decision making,” (Huang & Feeney, 2015). Their idea that public managers have a very specific role to play in getting the public involved has been proven many times over. Public managers, however, are also tasked with promoting transparency between the municipality and its constituents.

Importance of Transparency:

The last theme that was reviewed was the role of city employees in participatory budgeting and the idea of transparency. Tanase's "An overall Analysis of Participatory Budgeting Advantages and Essential Factors for Effective Implementation in Economic Entities," (2013) looks closely at various international studies which suggest participatory budgeting inevitably motivates employees, increases their performance, elevates their satisfaction and potentially helps in obtaining more realistic budgets within an economic entity. Because the superiors involve the employees in the decision making process and the employees know their views and knowledge are being taken into account, Tanase (2013) assesses that one major advantage to participatory budgeting is that employees assess leadership as fair and trustworthy, and appreciate the transparency in the decision making process. The article describes the working environment's culture as being another major factor that influences the human aspect of public budgeting. "Participatory budgeting is more efficient when the power distance is lower and the individualism is less important than teamwork," (Tanase, 2013). She adds that the PB process is most successful when superiors and subordinates come together internally to achieve its goals in positively affecting the community externally.

Wampler's book *Participatory Budgeting in Brazil: Contestation, Cooperation, and Accountability* (2007) affirmed that mayors, city councils, and civil society organizations are three key factors that shape PB outcomes. His research with multiple case studies determined that cities with mayors who were willing to delegate substantial authority to the participatory process while simultaneously allowing civil society organizations to monitor the process were ultimately successful in their PB programs. On the other hand, unsubstantial mayoral support and a non-engaged society organization often resulted in informal and contested or co-opted

participatory democracy (Wampler 2007). Likewise, Melgar (2014) reiterated that the PB genesis site in Brazil involved key actors to include the executive branch (mayor and various departments) and the legislative branch (city council). While the mayor has the prerogative to formulate and propose a budget, it's the city council that must approve it. Ideally, before adopting a participatory budgeting system, any city should determine if it possesses mayoral support and a fitting environment for the implementation of such a system, because in some cases, participatory budgeting cannot be implemented in an efficient manner.

Conclusion:

These articles are relevant to this research study because they not only set the stage and describe the skepticism of the process, but also define the biggest issues that transpired during the beginning stages of PB implementation in Chicago, New York, and Vallejo. "Perhaps the most demonstrable indication of implementation is observed by comparing the results of a policy with the original conditions that inspired it," (Gerston, p. 120). Gerston's notion that looking at the original source of an idea for implementation and comparing it to the current implementation subject is particularly fitting, as one of the research questions for this study is "Based on other cities' implementation process of participatory budgeting, did the City of Vallejo execute its PB policy in the most effective way?"

Lerner and Seconodo's article's relevancy lies in its research of the first three U.S. participatory budgeting implementation trials and errors. Creighton and Putnam defined public participation and its importance to overall community well-being. Rossman and Shanahan determined that openness and inclusiveness were just as imperative as the idea of citizen participation. Michels claims that citizen participation has multiple positive effects on the quality

of democracy and Bingham et al., noted the importance of shared goals within a community.

Tanase pointed out the human aspect of public budgeting and was supported by Wampler's case studies of substantial mayoral support for a successful PB process and Megler's affirmation of Brazil's mayor/city council construct in Porto Alegre.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Research Design:

This research project is mainly focused on the implementation process of participatory budgeting in Vallejo, California and how implementing PB has increased the quality of life of the residents in Vallejo. The research design in this project is a case study of the City of Vallejo which will be supplemented with qualitative data. The researcher chose a qualitative case study because of the access of quality, first-hand information available from City of Vallejo employees and Vallejo residents and stakeholders that were involved in the implementation process (Cycle 1) of participatory budgeting in Vallejo. Rather than doing a large sampling of surveys on the implementation process, the researcher felt that high caliber interviews with subject matter experts would be more beneficial to this study.

Data Collection Plan:

The primary data will come from key informant interviews with subject matter experts (City of Vallejo Participatory Budgeting staff members) and other City employees that were affected by the implementation of PB. The researcher located and gathered input from a five stakeholders (residents or community members) who were involved in Cycle 1 of Vallejo's PB process in order to get some perspective outside of City personnel. This group of internal (City of Vallejo staff) and external (Vallejo residents and stakeholders) individuals were primarily selected to interview because they possess first-hand knowledge of Cycle 1 and have a unique outlook on the after-effects of the 12 projects getting approved and implemented. When

conducting personal interviews, the researcher will ask seven universal questions to each interviewee with follow up questions depending on their answers.

Secondary data that will be collected comes in the form of the City's publication of the Cycle 1 Summary Report, where the PB staff reviewed the process, participation, outcomes, and key factors for success in future cycles. This summary report includes statistics, demographics, and other critical information to the implementation process of PB in Vallejo. Additionally, the researcher will review Vallejo City Council meeting minutes to get another perspective from City Council members and residents during the Cycle 1 process. This will provide supplemental information that is particularly relevant in the implementation process of Cycle 1 through the original data accumulated by the City of Vallejo personnel.

Research Question/Sub-questions:

Main Question:

Has the process of implementing participatory budgeting in the City of Vallejo resulted in meeting its goal of improving the quality of life of its residents?

Sub-questions:

1. Based on other cities' implementation process of participatory budgeting, did the City of Vallejo execute its PB policy in the most effective way?
2. How did the Measure B sales tax impact the implementation process?
3. Can other similar sized cities also be successful utilizing the PB process in the same way Vallejo did?

- a. What if they executed PB without first implementing a sales tax increase (or something similar to increase revenue for PB funding)? Would it still be as effective?

Research Hypothesis/Sub-hypotheses:

Main Hypothesis:

The process of implementing participatory budgeting is how the City of Vallejo was able to meet its goals of improving the quality of life of its residents.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. Using Chicago and New York's implementation processes of participatory budgeting, the City of Vallejo was able to execute its PB policy in the most effective way.
2. If the state of the budget was despondent, then Measure B sales tax critically impacted the implementation process.
3. If other similar sized cities utilized the City of Vallejo's implementation process, then they will be able to successfully implement their own PB process.

Research Variables:

Independent Variable:

The independent variable is implementing participatory budgeting in the City of Vallejo.

Dependent Variable:

The dependent variable is the quality of life of Vallejo residents.

During this study, the researcher will review the interaction between the independent and dependent variable and determine if implementing participatory budgeting was the defining factor in improving the quality of life of Vallejoans.

Operational Definitions:

Process of implementing – For this research project, the “process of implementing” refers to a systematic series of events and guidelines that follow the participatory rule-making and design of the Participatory Budgeting Project, a non-profit organization that empowers people to decide together how to spend public money while deepening democracy, building stronger communities and making public budgets more equitable and effective.

Participatory Budgeting – For this research project, “participatory budgeting” refers to a democratic process in which residents and stakeholders directly decide how to spend part of a public budget, enabling taxpayers to work with government officials to make the budget decisions that affect their lives.

City of Vallejo – The “City of Vallejo” refers to the local government/municipality for a small Northern California town of 30.67 square-miles and 118,837 residents.

Meeting its goals – For this research project, “meeting its goals” refers to the act of the City of Vallejo achieving its set mission and objective set out at the beginning of the participatory budgeting process. For the purpose of this study, “improving the quality of life of its residents” is, in fact, the goal the City of Vallejo is trying to achieve. The City of Vallejo’s Participatory Budgeting program has four ultimate goals:

1. **Improve the city** – Improve the infrastructure of the City, assist in enhancing the public safety of citizens, and to improve the quality of life for residents through the creation of

and payment for projects without the expenditure of Measure B funds for salary expenses; build a new spirit of civic pride and raise the profile of Vallejo on the regional, state, and national levels.

2. **Engage the community** – ensure that all members of the community have a voice; engage those who are traditionally underrepresented in politics, who face obstacles to participating, or who feel disillusioned with the political process; increase public involvement in civic life in Vallejo. To the extent applicable, public meetings will comply with the open meeting requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act.
3. **Transform the city’s democracy** – empower Vallejoans with the skills and knowledge they need to shape their city’s future; build leadership from the bottom up and forge deeper ties between residents, neighborhoods, and communities.
4. **Open up government** – increase transparency and accountability of local government to community stakeholders; improve communication and collaboration between local government and the community; support a framework within government for decision-making that promotes a more just and equitable city.

*Note that while there are supplementary goals within each participatory budgeting cycle, these supplemental goals are determined by the residents and budget delegates, who ultimately vote on projects to implement. Budget delegates are community members selected by peers to develop specific spending proposals on public projects for the community. Meeting these goals is contingent on whether or not their projects get voted for implementation.

Improving the quality of life – For this research project, “improving the quality of life” refers to bringing Vallejo into a more desirable condition (in terms of the standard of health, comfort,

and happiness experienced by an individual and/or community) while increasing the value of people and property by betterments, and making good use of public funds. For the purpose of this study, improvements will be measured by analyzing the final outcome of the projects that were voted on by the residents and stakeholders in Vallejo and how those projects have affected people, property, and the community.

Residents – For this research project, “residents” refers to the individuals and families that live, work in, and populate the area of focus, in this case, Vallejo, California.

Plans to Ensure Internal Validity:

Unfortunately, there are a number of factors that could improve the quality of life of Vallejo residents other than just the implementation of participatory budgeting. Because there are other dynamics that go along with desirable conditions in terms of the standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by the community and increasing the value of people and property, this study evaluated only the effects that the participatory budgeting process has had on the quality of life of Vallejo’s residents.

External Validity:

Through use of this research of the participatory budgeting process, the analysis of Vallejo's implementation methods will assist other cities that are interested in this new democratic process of government spending. If the aforementioned hypothesis is validated, then this study will help facilitate spreading the knowledge of participatory budgeting, as well as garner interest into a fresh method of public budgeting through transformative democracy. The researcher, who was an intern with the City of Vallejo before and during the implementation of

PB, has had a special interest in PB since its inception with the City of Vallejo and is curious to see it come to fruition throughout the 10-year life cycle of the Measure B sales tax.

Development of Interview Questions:

By determining the main research question and sub-questions, the researcher developed seven questions to ask the City of Vallejo subject matter experts and Vallejo residents/stakeholders that will assist in answering those questions. The list of interview questions follows:

1. In what ways, if any, was the implementation of participatory budgeting beneficial to Vallejo residents and stakeholders?
2. How integral was the influence of City of Vallejo's 2008 bankruptcy and its 2011 emergence from bankruptcy to the passing of Measure B and the adoption of participatory budgeting?
3. What, if anything, would you change about Cycle 1's processes or operations?
4. What specific elements of the first stages of Chicago's or New York's PB process were particularly useful in Vallejo's Cycle 1 PB process?
5. What was the easiest part of the implementation process?
6. What was the most difficult part of the implementation process?
7. In what way, if any, has the quality of life changed for the Vallejo residents and community members because of PB?

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

Results and Findings Objectives:

The results and findings for this research study were provided from primary interview data from five City of Vallejo personnel and five Vallejo residents/stakeholders from February 15, 2016 to February 24, 2016. The researcher developed seven specific questions pertaining to Cycle 1 of participatory budgeting in Vallejo that fall into line with the main research question and hypothesis. The universal questions were designed so that both the City of Vallejo staff and Vallejo residents/stakeholders could answer open ended questions regarding the implementation process of Vallejo's participatory budgeting program. The answers were then collectively reviewed and separated by positive, negative, and indifferent responses.

Secondary data was provided by the Cycle 1 Summary Report written by City of Vallejo Participatory Budgeting staff in 2014, in which the PB staff reviewed the process, participation, outcomes, and key factors for success in future cycles. This summary report includes statistics, demographics, and other critical information to the implementation process of participatory budgeting in Vallejo. Supplemental secondary information was collected from City of Vallejo City Council meeting minutes from 2012 to 2013, during Cycle 1 of participatory budgeting. This information was reviewed in correlation with the interview responses and separated accordingly.

Research Question and Sub-questions:

The following questions were answered by the primary and secondary data gathered by the researcher:

Main Question:

Has the process of implementing participatory budgeting in the City of Vallejo resulted in meeting its goal of improving the quality of life of its residents?

Sub-questions:

1. Based on other cities' implementation process of participatory budgeting, did the City of Vallejo execute their PB policy in the most effective way?
2. How did the Measure B sales tax impact the implementation process?
3. Can other similar sized cities also be successful utilizing the PB process in the same way Vallejo did?
 - a. What if they executed PB without first implementing a sales tax increase (or something similar to increase revenue for PB funding)? Would it still be as effective?

The information reviewed from the key informant interviews, the Cycle 1 Summary Report, and City Council meeting minutes showed that there was an improvement in the quality of life for Vallejo residents and stakeholders through the use of participatory budgeting. As stated in Chapter 3 of this research study, there were four goals established during the implementation of PB: (1) improve the city, (2) engage the community, (3) transform the city's democracy, and (4) open up government. One of the most unanimous responses from all the interviewees was that using the PB process gave the residents a voice

by allowing them a say in how a portion of the budget was spent. By doing so, the City of Vallejo was able to meet the four goals of PB, which translate to an improvement in the quality of life of the residents.

With the help of the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP), a non-profit group that helps cities implement PB for the first time, and previous PB implementation experiences from Chicago and New York, the City of Vallejo was able to create a rule book based on the framework provided by the two aforementioned cities. While the City of Vallejo's bankruptcy was an integral part of the residents' decision to pass Measure B, the bankruptcy had no real bearing on the implementation of PB other than it provided an innovative way to increase transparency and get the residents involved. Other similar sized cities may or may not be able to benefit from an analogous PB implementation process because there are many variables that factor into making PB successful, one main variable the financial threshold of the city prior to implementation. If, for example, an Alderman or city council has a certain amount of money in discretionary funds like Chicago and New York did, then that city would not necessarily need an additional source of funding to implement PB. In another example, if the city constantly had a surplus of budget at the end of its fiscal year, then that city could implement PB without additional funding. Ultimately, the effectiveness of PB is not dependent of the state of a city's budget.

Research Hypothesis/Sub-hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were validated by the primary and secondary data gathered by the researcher.

Main Hypothesis:

The process of implementing participatory budgeting is how the City of Vallejo was able to meet its goals of improving the quality of life of its residents.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. Using Chicago and New York's implementation processes of participatory budgeting, the City of Vallejo was able to execute its PB policy in the most effective way.
2. If the state of the budget was despondent, then Measure B sales tax critically impacted the implementation process.
3. If other similar sized cities utilized the City of Vallejo's implementation process, then they will be able to successfully implement their own PB process.

After reviewing the information gathered from key informant interviews, the Cycle 1 Summary Report, and previous City Council meetings minutes, the researcher found that City of Vallejo PB staff noted that residents reported an increase in the number of neighbors they knew on a first-name basis. Bringing the community together during the implementation of PB played a large role in the improvement of the quality of life of Vallejo residents. During the Cycle 1 overview, in regards to using Chicago and New York as models of PB, there were a lot of differences between Chicago and New York versus Vallejo – mainly that the City of Vallejo's PB process was not limited to just capital improvements projects, but allowed for public services and programs, and community improvement projects as well.

Despite the state of the City's budget in Vallejo, bankruptcy is not what prompted the PB process. Bankruptcy and the loss of public services is what prompted the passage of the Measure B sales tax in hopes of using some of that additional funding to bring back public services such as police officers and fire fighters. It was the passing of Measure B that allowed the idea of PB to come forth, not the previous bankruptcy. Lastly, PB is not something that can really be standardized, because every city is different. Because of this, if another city was to use Vallejo as an example for their PB process, but is only limiting their projects to capital improvements, then their implementation process may or may not be as successful.

Primary Data Results – Interviews

Question 1: In what ways, if any, was the implementation of participatory budgeting beneficial to Vallejo residents and stakeholders?

Many of the interviewees responded that the most beneficial part of PB was the opportunity it gave to residents to have a voice. It also broadened access and involvement, and ultimately gave policy makers a better understanding of what was really important to the residents. Interviewees also noted that PB enlivened the residents, offered them hope for a better future for Vallejoans, and gave them something to believe in.

What these responses show is that PB is a way to spark real involvement between municipalities and the people they serve. With PB, residents are no longer restricted to a three-minute time limit at the podium during city council meetings. It was a way for the public at large to have a direct impact on how some of their tax dollars would be spent. Lastly, PB was a way to get individuals involved in local government decision making where they were not involved before.

Question 2: How integral was the influence of the City of Vallejo's 2008 bankruptcy and its 2011 emergence from bankruptcy to the passing of Measure B and the adoption of participatory budgeting?

These answers varied based on the capacity of the person answering. City of Vallejo employees had responded in a more practical way, whereas the residents responded with what they thought was happening with the budget at the time. While the residents' answers were more based on what they read in the news provided by the mass media, City personnel had facts on what was really happening with the budget.

Craig Whittom, the Assistant City Manager of the City of Vallejo, said that PB was independent of the City's bankruptcy and quite possibly would have been more successful if the City had not been bankrupt. The bankruptcy made the City's government think differently about what to do to rectify it, and the Measure B sales tax and, subsequently, PB were vehicles for getting residents involved with budget decisions. Joanna Altman, another City of Vallejo staff member and the person in charge of PB in Vallejo, stated that the City's bankruptcy brought about a certain amount of exposure from the media nationwide and implementing PB gave the Vallejo residents an opportunity to do something for their city, allowing a lot of residents to be optimistic about the outcome of PB.

The majority of Vallejo residents believed that the City's bankruptcy had everything to do with the passing of Measure B sales tax. The residents believed that the only way to restore public services was to fund their salaries through Measure B, and that the idea of PB never would have come up if the budget was not in disarray.

These responses show that there is a definite need for transparency between the City and its residents. While the City staff knew what was happening with the budget, the residents were in the dark regarding the matter, which definitely caused distrust from the residents and allegations that the City was severely mismanaging its funds. Even though Measure B barely passed on the ballot, it *did* pass, which meant the residents were once again putting faith in the City to spend the additional funding wisely.

Question 3: What, if anything, would you change about Cycle 1's processes or operations?

These responses were also split between the City personnel and the Vallejo residents. While each City staff member said they would change everything about Cycle 1, the residents picked singular things they would change. The biggest thing to note from City staff is that they all said they would change the wide range of things the residents would be able to propose and then vote on. Residents' responses ranged from having dedicated City staff assigned to PB from day one of implementation (rather than just when the projects would be implemented) to more money being allotted to city enhancement projects and services.

Again, this shows another level of disconnect between the City and the residents. While the City of Vallejo was prepared to implement projects like street maintenance and updating lighting fixtures to more energy efficient lights, City staff was not equipped to supply money to residents for things like community gardens without having to do much research and instating legal contracts.

Question 4: What specific elements of the first stages of Chicago's or New York's PB processes were particularly useful in Vallejo's Cycle 1 PB process?

This question prompted the most similar responses across all interviewees. The use of the rulebook template from Chicago and New York was the most useful tool of previous implementation processes, because it served as a template and guidelines in terms of what steps needed to be taken by both the City and the residents who participated. Although Vallejo's projects were much broader than Chicago and New York, the rulebook was fairly standard. The other useful part of Chicago and New York that Vallejo applied was using the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) nonprofit organization to help with the initial implementation process. Because PBP was meant to assist cities with their preliminary processes, the organization had many resources that City of Vallejo staff did not have. The collaboration between PBP and the City of Vallejo is part of what made the implementation process so successful.

This unanimous response showed that the best thing a city can do during its initial implementation process is to utilize the services offered by PBP. Because they are a seasoned organization that has helped a number of cities jump right into PB, PBP has the best knowledge of how to start, and consequently continue PB for future cycles.

Question 5: What was the easiest part of the implementation process?

Another unanimous response was the easiest part of the implementation process, which was implementing the projects that the City had the capacity to complete – which meant road maintenance, city light fixtures, and the like because it was projects that the City was already doing prior to PB's implementation. PB simply added funds to these kinds of projects and the

City could continue its process of awarding contracts to companies for the work, or carry on with completing the projects themselves (Public Works department doing street repairs, for example).

This undisputed response shows that a city that might not have the capability to do an enhanced version of PB in terms of projects allowed to be voted on (programs, services, and community improvement projects) could still benefit from a narrow project spectrum by allowing residents to vote on capital improvement projects because the city would be more proficient in completing these types of projects.

Question 6: What was the most difficult part of the implementation process?

Similar to Question 5, the opposite but still common response was projects that the City was not equipped to put into action (broad projects that were outside of the City's skill-set). Projects such as community gardens, College Bound Vallejo, and the Small Business Loans ventures were more difficult to implement because this was new territory for the City of Vallejo and the City was unsure of how to go about funding them in a way that was legal.

A second common response to this question was volunteer retention during the implementation process. Although Vallejo PB had dedicated City staff, it still required a number of volunteers to be Budget Delegates (the number crunchers) and Steering Committee members (the folks who keep projects on track), people to set up meetings, people to work the polls and voting booths. A lot of volunteers had lost interest in participating when they realized their "pet project" would not be funded in the way they were looking for.

Both of these responses show that there needs to be a certain level of introduction to public administration procedures in terms of awarding contracts with public funds and the legalities of implementing certain projects for the residents. While a majority of City staff

understand the process well enough, many residents are unaware of the red-tape, technical language and bureaucratic jargon that goes along with public administration. Explaining that upfront might keep volunteers interested enough if they are aware from the get go.

Question 7: In what ways, if any, has the quality of life changed for the Vallejo residents and community members because of PB?

This was another question that was somewhat split between the residents and the City staff; although there was one common response: community involvement increased dramatically. While both the City staff and residents agreed that community involvement in all things (not just participatory budgeting) increased, there were mixed feelings about the quality of life improving. Many of the residents thought that a lot of exuberance around PB could be dampened by the actual process and procedures of a city government, but it also helped make individuals more aware of what can be accomplished through civic participation. The residents noted a certain sense of excitement about PB, its potential, and what it can bring about for the quality of life.

City personnel was in agreement that PB was able to better the capital infrastructure in Vallejo by fixing roads, enhancing public property (Omega Boys and Girls Club and Florence Douglas Senior Center improvements), and creating artwork on utility boxes. They agreed that there is a better sense of community throughout Vallejo, and an overall increase resident participation in public communication with the City.

Significance of Key Findings:

The most important thing to note is that the decision to implement PB in Vallejo was passed by the City Council with a 4-3 vote. Projects voted on and adopted by the City Council

had similar outcomes where voting was equally as close. If anything, PB provides concrete, tangible evidence of the importance of local decision making. One vote made a hugely beneficial impact on the well-being of Vallejo. The vote could have just as easily gone the other way, but because it was voted for, rather than against, the residents were able to benefit from things like changes in neighborhood improvements, community gardens, resurfaced tennis courts, and updating street lights in the downtown area – projects would have never been funded if it were left up to the City staff to solely manage the budget. PB brought to light the real things that mattered to Vallejo residents, and their votes were able to bring about real change within their community. Primary data proved that PB broadened access and involvement for the community, giving policy makers a better understanding of what was really important to the Vallejo residents.

Secondary Data Results:

Much of the data from the Cycle 1 Summary Report relates to the demographics of Vallejo residents who participated in the voting process of PB, although there was some data collected in regards to the actual projects being voted on.

It is important to note that Vallejo only received 3.4% of its residents participating in the voting process. While this might not seem like much, it far surpassed Chicago's Cycle 1 (1.3% of residents) and New York's Cycle 1 (1.9% of residents) participation numbers. A total of 3,917 residents participated by casting a vote during the week of May 11-18, 2013, at 13 polling locations in Vallejo. In total, the PB voting phase turned out 4% of all eligible voters 16 years of age and older. Youth voters (16-17 years of age) accounted for 18% of the total votes cast, the second largest age population to vote. When excluding youth under 18 years of age, 3,433

residents – or approximately 6% of traditionally-eligible Vallejo residents – voted in the PB election. Most votes (35%) were cast at the City Hall location, but mobile voting at supermarkets, local transit hubs, and faith-based organizations was also successful at turning out voters. With 32% of all votes cast at mobile voting sites, providing mobile voting options brought out voters who normally were not active in the PB process.

The most critical part of Vallejo's PB process was City Council's approval of PB Steering Committee's recommendation to provide a lower voting age. Unlike traditional elections, any Vallejo resident over 16 years of age who was able to prove residence within the city was eligible to vote. There were 24 forms of acceptable identification, ranging from government issued ID's (driver's license, passport, social security card) to leases, titles, paystubs, student or employer ID's, and bank statements.

Vallejo's demographic makeup is among the Nation's more diverse, with the four major groups – Asians, African Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasians – each accounting for at least 22% of the total population. The different phases of PB in Vallejo were effective at bringing out large numbers from each of the demographic groups. As a group, only Asians were statistically under-represented in each of the three phases. Hispanic representation was proportional at the initial stages of PB, but dropped off by the time of the vote. Black/African American and Hispanic representation indicated greater proportional representation when the large contingent of youth participants were included, reflecting the diverse background of Vallejo's young people. Whites (non-Hispanic) were significantly well-represented throughout the process.

There was a fair distribution of resident votes across the six main categories, and two proposals from each of the categories ended up in the top 12 funded projects. Additionally, 86% of voters reported that they would like to see the PB process continue in Vallejo, regardless of

whether their projects appeared on the ballot or not. The Cycle 1 Summary Report noted that throughout the process, PB has positively impacted Vallejo's reputation, resources, relationships and communication with residents, and has built a strong volunteer base and community infrastructure. The innovative process generated positive media covered for Vallejo, thus improving the City of Vallejo's image post-bankruptcy despite the communities' public safety concerns.

Significance of Key Findings

The most significant finding from the secondary data is that the level of outreach the City of Vallejo and PBP did, which part was fundamental in the voting process. Without the collaborative attempt at public outreach in the community, schools, senior centers, faith-based organizations, and other public organizations, PB would not have been so successful. It is noteworthy to convey the wide variety of people who showed up to vote as well. There were not just affluent white males involved in the voting, but also women, young adults, seniors, Asians, Latinos, African-Americans, and people of all sorts. This level of diversity not only speaks to the general demographics of the city, but also to the equal opportunity to vote that PB provided the residents of Vallejo.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

After reviewing the information gathered from key informant interviews, the Cycle 1 Summary Report, and previous City Council meeting minutes, the researcher concludes that the quality of life was improved for the residents because of PB, although it can be argued that some peoples' lives improved more dramatically than others. While some residents noticed the increased amount of street maintenance throughout the city, others were benefitting from the 13 parks that were either enhanced or developed from the ground up. The research showed that, overall, people reported an increase in the number of neighbors they knew on a first name basis. PB enlivened the residents, offering them hope for a better future for Vallejo, and gave them something to believe in during the city's recent financial crisis. More residents were getting involved with other parts of civic participation, including attending city council meetings, helping out with non-profits, and starting their own volunteer organizations. The after-effect of PB implementation was a higher level of civic pride, youth interest and involvement in public engagement, and an overall increase in transparency between the City of Vallejo and its residents, especially in terms of the public budget.

If asking if the goal of improving the quality of life of Vallejo residents was achieved, the answers can also be subjective, as there are some people who may not be benefitting from PB at all. In Vallejo, the Florence Douglas Senior Center underwent major improvements that were most beneficial to the seniors who utilized that facility, but not all seniors in Vallejo go to the center. Similarly, the College Bound Vallejo scholarships were beneficial to the 70 students who received them, but for the average Vallejo citizen, there was no direct benefit.

The most beneficial part of PB was the broadened access to local government officials and civic involvement for the community, giving policy makers a better understanding of what was really important to the Vallejo residents. City staff and residents all claimed that PB provided the opportunity for residents to have a voice – community members are no longer restricted to a three-minute time limit at the podium during City Council meetings. There was a new platform where they could be heard. Though many of the residents thought that a lot of enthusiasm PB brought about could be spoiled by the actual process and procedures of a city government, PB also helped make the Vallejo stakeholders more aware of what could be accomplished through civic participation. Ultimately, participatory budgeting is a process that can work – if the city implementing it has the right political drive, monetary capital, staff resources, and public engagement.

Recommendations:

Through the evaluation of primary and secondary data and reviewing the results and findings, the researcher has developed the following recommendations:

1. Determine if the City is capable.

The City Council, Mayor, or City Manager of a city that's looking to start its own PB process needs to first analyze its capacity to see if implementing PB is something that can be done with the available resources. A revenue source must be identified – whether it is through discretionary funds, an implemented tax, or a surplus from the general fund – a municipality should not just cut the general funds and pull funding from other departments to give to the public money. In the City of Vallejo's case, the City was able to set aside a certain

amount of the Measure B Sales tax specifically for PB. If it had not been for this additional funding from Measure B, the Vallejo City Council would have never considered PB as an option.

2. Once it is determined that the city in question has the threshold to implement a PB process, city personnel should reach out to The Participatory Budgeting Project.

The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) is a non-profit organization whose main purpose is to facilitate cities with implementing PB in their areas. Not only will PBP help with constructing the Rulebook, technical training, and implementing processes and procedures on the City's side, but they can also assist in organizing meetings, outreach to the community, educational campaigns, project expos, polling, and the final voting process.

The City of Vallejo was able to utilize the resources that PBP had to offer. During the Cycle 1 process, PBP had a few dedicated staff members of their own on site at City Hall in the Office of the City Manager who were able to assist City of Vallejo staff members with the implementation process. Their support was integral to the implementation of PB in Vallejo.

3. The next step is for the implementing City to dedicate City staff/personnel to implement and carry out the PB process.

While PB is a great way to engage the public and increase transparency between a City and its residents, it will most likely include a lot of late nights, additional resources, and City staff members working with different departments within the City – which will also likely need additional staff and resources to implement projects. Having dedicated staff is critical to

implementing processes, procedures, and overall coordination with all things PB. While PB relies heavily on volunteers, having paid City staff out of the City Manager's Office to manage the process is essential. This goes back to the first recommendation, in that if there are no resources available to have a dedicated staff, the City should evaluate if implementing PB is right for them.

During the PB implementation process in Vallejo, there was originally only one staff member from the City Manager's Office who was supposed to manage the process. As Cycle 1 progressed, the City of Vallejo decided to use a portion of the PB funding to create three new positions that would be dedicated to PB. These three new staff members were tasked with carrying out and seeing through the project implementation after the projects were voted on and adopted by City Council.

4. Lastly, when implementing PB, the City should start small, and then increase the scope of projects in future cycles.

In general, for PB it is best to use City funds for City development or economic development. This will help the residents feel like they are not being restricted as future cycles progress. By starting small and increasing the scope later on, residents will feel like they can be a bit more creative in their projects, rather than feeling like their creativity is being taken away or limited.

City of Vallejo staff found that Cycle 1 projects that were approved and funded were not really what the City had intended be implemented. For example, \$540,000 of the \$3.2 million (18.5%) allotted to Cycle 1 of PB went to funding school activities (STEAM program and College Bound Vallejo) which was great for the school district, but overall outside of the

scope of appropriate PB projects. Essentially, voting on and implementing these projects resulted in taking City money and giving it to another public agency – money that could be used for City services was diverted to other things.

One thing to remember is that PB is not a social grant making program, nor is it participatory philanthropy, but rather it's a way to spend public funds with resident input. If the city has the capacity and/or the revenue to increase the amount of projects implemented, then the scope of the projects can be adjusted as time goes on, but effectively start narrow, then expand.

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