



Meeting Report for October 17, 2011

by Denny Schneider

Valley VOTE Board members, community leaders, and concerned citizens convened on October 17, 2011 at Galpin Ford to hear from our featured speaker, Los Angeles mayoral candidate **Kevin James**, and also from our Valley VOTE Committee Chairs.

Kevin James - Candidate for L.A. Mayor

Kevin James joined us to provide his ideas for improving LA. He presented his qualifications and reasons for seeking to be Mayor. He told us that he has lived in LA for almost 25 years and is tired of seeing his City "in a decade of decline" and that there are ways to address our ills. He is a KRLA talk show host who has been addressing local issues since 2003, an accomplished civil attorney, and former Assistant US Attorney specializing in criminal enterprises involving money laundering, insurance fraud, mail fraud, and consumer fraud. He referred us to his website, www.KeinJamesForMayor.com, and highlighted six major areas of concern before taking questions:

1. Make LA business friendly and tackle employment.
2. Develop a balanced budget without gimmicks.
3. Fix our infrastructure.
4. Improve our schools.
5. Restore public trust in City Hall.
6. Make LA City Council a part-time position.

He stated that he is the only candidate who has not been a "part of the problem." Mr. James told us that he is a strong advocate for the Neighborhood Council system and the taxpayers. He noted that he is the only lawyer running and will work with the unions to ensure City solvency so that their jobs are secure. Bankruptcy should be avoided so that citizens control City services, not a panel of judges. Mr. James indicated that business and jobs is the most important issue facing our City in addition to continuing to adequately provide services. Mr. James believes strongly in the power of the Mayor to influence via the bully pulpit. He will go directly to the citizens in support issue resolution. He used changes to the LA Business tax as an example of immediately needed action. He feels that our gross receipts tax puts LA at a severe disadvantage. He said, "The proposed four year phase out is inadequate. On day one of my term I will work to put elimination of the gross receipts tax on the ballot." He cited studies from USC and other cities supporting reduction of taxes to improve local businesses and City revenues at the same time. Mr. James noted how close to bankruptcy we have been. Last year the refusal of LADWP to transfer an amount of less than 1% of the budget to the general fund left us within four weeks of being unable to pay our bills. He also questioned why LADWP should transfer funds to the general fund when that money is needed to update our infrastructure that is already past its estimated life. Mr. James made a case for changing the City Council to part time positions. He noted that most major cities outside of California, including New York, Chicago, Houston, Dallas and Phoenix operate as part time Councils supported by a full time staff. This will open the positions to people with more diverse experience instead of just career politicians. He questioned the exceptional pay given to our Council members and noted that the Center for Governmental Studies concluded that the Council votes unanimously almost 99% of the time. Mr. James addressed the AEG convention center project stating that NO taxpayer funds should be risked; agreements still leave our City with some of the risk. He questioned the impacts on local Convention area traffic and an ability to retain larger conventions. -----

Valley VOTE Committee Reports

Vic Viereck -Solid Waste Proposals

Vic Viereck talked about Solid Waste Franchise Proposals within the City. He noted the City investigation of ways to reduce the 104 commercial waste haulers and to provide exclusive franchises for specific areas as a way for the City to collect additional fees. He felt that this would increase apartment dweller costs for waste disposal and increase costs to the consumer. He noted that other cities in LA County which have adopted this approach have experienced increases of 50% in hauling charges.

Bart Reed- Transportation Report

Bart Reed addressed the importance planning for improvement of the rail corridors to the Valley and region. He called for active work on the I-405/Van Nuys rail Corridor and a Sepulveda pass rail tunnel plus other long term improvements. He also addressed the need for improvements in bus services such as the Westwood Flyaway as a way to reduce I-405 congestion.

Denny Schneider LAWA report

Denny Schneider addressed local aviation issues. He noted the call for control of low flying helicopters by Congressman Berman as important to the peace and tranquility of local residents. He also spoke about the need for improvements at LAX without expansion at that location which handles over 75% of all air commerce. Instead, a regional network of improvements to bring airport travel closer to consumers is needed. This will also ensure a back up position to absorb traffic should anything happen at LAX. He also noted that LAWA is finally addressing the LAX Northside development in a positive way. This area used to have 4300 homes; now it will house much needed commercial and light industrial activities that are important to LAX and the local area.

The next regular monthly meeting of Valley VOTE will be on **Monday, November 19, 2011** at Galpin Ford.

Valley VOTE Mission Statement

Valley VOTE, a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley residents, businesspeople, educators, community activists, and organizations, is committed to exploring and fostering the implementation of programs that empower the people of the San Fernando Valley and the City of Los Angeles, to improve local governance, education and public participation on policy matters.

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