

Valley VOTE

October 16,2006 Meeting Report

by
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Wendy Greuel

A Home of One's Own

City Council member Wendy Greuel, one of the Valley's most popular politicians, appeared before Valley Vote earlier this week to support Measure H, a compelling yet controversial proposition on the November ballot that would authorize \$1 billion in bonds for the purpose of building affordable housing. Passage would increase property tax bills \$14.66 for every \$100,000 of assessed valuation.

"Initially, the city council wanted inclusionary zoning, but for that there was little support," Greuel admitted. "Measure H will reduce traffic, take homeless people off the street and enhance our communities by allowing teachers, policemen and fire fighters to afford to live here."

Does Los Angeles need more affordable housing? The statistics Greuel presented are convincing:

Sixty-five percent of renters in LA can't afford Fair Market Rent, which is calculated as \$1,189 a month for a two-bedroom apartment).

Less than 2% of the homes sold in LA County last quarter were affordable for families earning a median income of \$56,200 a year.

"This bond measure will cost the average homeowner an extra \$50 a year," Greuel said. "That's one café latte a month. "This is a pro-business measure that will allow people to invest in their community." Assistance for first-time home buyers is intended only for those who need it," she added. "This means a family of four must collectively earn less than \$84,300 to qualify for assistance."

Five percent of the bonds' proceeds will be used for administrative expenses. Twenty-five percent will be used to house the 90,000 people who sleep on the streets every night. The remainder will go to build around 10,000 housing units along major transportation corridors.

Greuel's arguments are compelling, but it was clear from the tone of the questions asked that many members of Valley VOTE have serious doubts about what the *Daily News* calls a "Special Interest Bonanza." Property developers, banks and real estate speculators already have contributed more than \$2 million to support the bond proposal. Among the major donors: Tutor-Saliba, the Sylmar-based construction company whose past projects have been criticized for cost overruns and suspect construction.

A last-minute substitute for Richard Katz, the scheduled speaker who was unable to appear, Greuel deserved and received thanks for her presentation, which also contained the good news that the city plans to review the present Rent Stabilization Ordinance, which many people feel now contributes to the lack of affordable housing.

Time to Party!

Enjoy delicious food, great conversations and meet fascinating people who care about the San Fernando Valley at a Sunday, October 29 garden party hosted by Valley VOTE. The event will take place at the home of Richard and Barbara Leyner 17312 Dearborn St. in Northridge between 4:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Meet some of the Valley's most dedicated political leaders in a relaxed, informal setting. Admission is \$30 per person. Call (818) 933-5980 or email kmelanson@naicapital.com to RSVP.

Clean Money Campaigns – Now or Never?

Robin Gilbert reminds us that Proposition 89 will be on the November ballot. It will raise corporate and banking taxes by \$200 million a year to pay for the public financing of state campaigns, cap donations to state candidates and limit the amount contributors can give to candidates and political parties. For additional information about "The Clean Money and Fair Elections Act" go to www.89now.org.

On October 24 at 9:30 a.m. the LA City Ethics Commission will meet to consider enacting a system of full public financing for city elections. There will be time for public comments. The meeting will be in City Hall room 1070 on the 10th floor.

Flying Away

The LAX continues to plan for its modernization, reports **Denny Schneider**. The sixth set of public meetings will be held Wednesday evening October 25 and also on Saturday morning October 28 to address issues pertaining to the lengthening and spacing of the North runway.

Simultaneously, LAWA has floated eight ambitious project alternatives to expand the fluidity of the present airport. Each is very expensive. They claim none of the alternatives will increase capacity because there is a Settlement Agreement in force until 2020. After that date, however, simple modifications and loading gate additions could rapidly increase airport capacity and surrounding traffic. There are rumors that LAWA is bidding for the Radisson Hotel located directly across from the LAX entrance to the Central Terminal Area.

Recently, the largest single building contract in City History—about \$576 million—has been approved to improve the Bradley International Terminal. All of the work will be completed while the building continues operations.

Finally, LAWA has established a new remote baggage check in service at the Van Nuys FlyAway - 7610 Woodley Avenue, Van Nuys in the San Fernando Valley (intersection of Woodley Avenue and Saticoy Street). The check-in service fee is \$5 per person with up to two bags, each of which must be 50-pounds or less. Tickets for the Van Nuys FlyAway non-stop bus services to LAX cost \$3 one way (\$6 roundtrip), \$2 for children 2 to 12 years old (\$4 roundtrip), and free for children younger than 2 years.

Free Falling on Ventura Boulevard

Polly Ward, who monitors Neighborhood Councils for Valley VOTE, says there is a growing issue of street front dealers of medical marijuana in the South East Valley. There are now 14 of these dealers in the North Hollywood/Studio City area, four of which are on Ventura Blvd, from Lankershim to Whitsett. The problem stems from the conflict between Federal, State, County, and City laws (or absence of such laws). "The solution would seem to be some coherent regulation of production, processing and selling of this product," says Ward, "which is now sold without supervision or taxation."

"The problem is that people are breaking into the store fronts and stealing the marijuana," explained council member **Wendy Greuel**, adding that "there is consensus that these places are legal because of the state initiative."

Some NCs are also concerned, reports Ward, about the suspected vulnerability of electronic voting machines to manipulation and fraud. Additional unhappiness on the NC front is emerging over the behavior of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment Interim General Manager Lisa Sarno. Sarno has been confirmed for another six months as Interim Manager, but some NC members complain Sarno has been slow to respond to problems with elections.

Save the Lankershim Train Depot

Thousands of people pass it every day but few stop to appreciate the 111-year old Southern Pacific train depot which sits on the west side of Lankershim Blvd. next to the Metro Orange Line station. The oldest building in North Hollywood, the depot served as the departure point for Chatsworth stone sent south to build the Port of Los Angeles and fruit sent east. Once a terminus for Pacific Electric Red Cars, the depot was placed on the national register of historic places in 1984 but

that distinction has not saved it from ignoble decay. More than \$1 million was given to preserve the station, but the MTA, its present owner, has done nothing. Meanwhile the estimated rehabilitation cost has soared to \$3.6 million. **Guy McCreary** hopes to preserve the crumbling depot, but developers want the building moved to they can build on the five acres on which the depot now rests. "This is a terrible case of government negligence," says McCreary. "We have to fight like hell to save this last bit of history."

The LA Conservancy, the United Chambers of Commerce and the Valley Village Neighborhood Council together with City Councilman Tom LaBonge want the old depot turned into an MTA customer service center with rest rooms, bicycle parking and perhaps a concession stand. The Metro Board will discuss the depot's fate on Thursday, October 26. If you'd like to get involved in the preservation effort, call McCreary at (818) 762-3998 or **Cherry Hepburn** at (818) 505-1104.

Commuting Made Simple

Others may demand a subway to the sea or a Maglev through the mountains, but Bart Reed, executive director of The Transit Coalition, believes in commuting made simple. "We already have a commuter rail system in the Valley," he says. "It's called Metrolink." The problem, Reed explains, is that Metrolink almost closes down except for peak commuting periods. Having hourly service certainly would make it easier to get to the Bob Hope Airport, which is only a seven-minute walk from the Metrolink station.



Passengers alight at Bob Hope Airport

Valley VOTE's next meeting will be on November 20,2006

Valley VOTE Mission Statement

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

[Click here to return to the Reports page](#)