



## March 19, 2007 Meeting Report

by  
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### *Fair The Well*

For more than half a century the San Fernando Valley has enjoyed an annual fair with rides, amusements and agricultural exhibits. Back in the 50s and 60s it was located at Devonshire Downs. More recently Hansen Dam was home. But this year, the fair won't be held in the Valley. The June 7 to 10 event will be located in Santa Clarita at Saugus Speedway.

How did the Valley lose its fair? According to organizer David Honda, the fair had to leave because of the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks' refusal to allow the event to move to Woodley Park. "We had an agreement with the city to move to Woodley Park," says Honda. "Our 2007 brochures were printed. I spoke to the Neighborhood Council and there was no opposition. Now we're told the fair will cause too much noise and traffic."

A general contractor and civic leader, Honda has been president of the fair's organizing body – the 51st District Agricultural Assoc. - since 2002. The fair costs \$180,000 to produce, but in recent years has had attendance problems at Hansen Dam. Last year, it attracted only 14,000 people. Honda says the best place for the fair would be Pierce College, but that's not possible because of political concerns.

Honda's problem was that in attempting to move the fair closer to the Valley's population center, at Woodley Park, he confronted increased restrictions. The fair could sell beer, but it could be consumed only in an enclosed area. The fair would have to close at 7 p.m. and no entertainment could begin after 6 p.m. "We loved it when we were here but we've been abused," he said. "Santa Clarita really welcomes us. It recognizes we are a state fair not a backyard barbecue."

The Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks sponsors its own fairs in places like Northridge, Granada Hills and Chatsworth. Valley Fair organizers believe that in rejecting their request to use Woodley Park the city is trying to eliminate competition.

#### ***Wait a Minute***

At this point Tony Cardenas' chief of staff Jose Cornejo, who had been sitting quietly at the back of the room, leapt from his chair as if propelled by a coiled spring. Waiving a two-page letter dated February 22 he had written to Honda, Cornejo disputed much of what had been said.

"I sent this letter telling what the problems were and asking for mitigation, but there was no desire to discuss," Cornejo said. "We can't let fairs run until midnight (in residential areas); that's why events in parks always close at sundown. As for alcohol, not even the state fair allows you to walk around with alcohol."

Cornejo continued to strongly insist that his objections, which were 15 in number, could have been solved with negotiation. "But there was no desire to discuss."

It's difficult to assess blame for the fair's leaving the Valley. The requests and restrictions contained in Cornejo's letter to Honda do not appear unduly harsh. What is certain, however, is that people who purchase \$6 tickets to this year's fair will have to drive to Santa Clarita to enjoy it.

#### ***Trusting Big Brother***

The City of Los Angeles talks about the need for affordable housing for police, teachers, and firefighters, says Valley VOTE treasurer **Vic Viereck**, but it ignores the fact that many people with lower incomes would be paying taxes to subsidize more affluent tenants.

Measure H was defeated, but Los Angeles still has a \$100 million Affordable Housing Trust Fund that redirects General Fund tax revenue, and some funds from the Community Redevelopment Agency, into subsidizing affordable housing. Not only does that siphon funds that could have been spent on more police, but also about 60% of it goes to nonprofit

affordable housing corporations. Since these corporations are tax exempt, reduced property taxes are paid on properties occupied by people who consume public services. Observes Viereck "Even without ballot items like Measure H, our local tax base continually is undermined by imprudent housing policies."

### ***Spam in a Can***

The event of the week, reports **Denny Schneider**, Valley VOTE's emissary to Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), is the simultaneous landing of the Airbus A380 in Los Angeles and New York City. The arrival of the world's biggest passenger aircraft, served to verify that LAX can accommodate the A380 when the first commercial passenger versions aircraft are delivered to Qantas next year.

In other news, Schneider confirms that Van Nuys Airport, the largest general aviation airport in California, is scheduled to receive a noise monitoring system upgrade next year. Data collected will support the on-going Part 161 Study that could result in a prohibition of Stage 2 jet aircraft landing at the airport. The upgrade will include a new, web accessible, radar tracking system. As part of the upgrade the number of monitoring stations will be doubled from seven to 14.

### ***Condo Conversions***

**Pauline Tallent**, chair of Valley VOTE's land use committee, reports that the City Council will vote March 28th on a measure that essentially will eliminate condo conversions, the lowest affordable entry housing level in the city. "The measure is onerous," says Tallent, "since it will increase housing production fees by 198%, eliminating any margin or profit for developers."

Universal Studios has long-term plans for the 391 acres that constitute the largest television and movie studio in the world. Universal's plan conforms to the smart growth tenants of Vision 2020, the committee chaired by Bob Scott of the Economic Alliance.

### ***What's Up with Neighborhood Councils?***

The Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils recently celebrated its fourth anniversary yet still do not have the right to appeal development approvals, says **Polly Ward**, head of Valley VOTE's Neighborhood Council committee. So much for neighborhood empowerment.

That the bedrock of LA democracy is a foundation of shifting sand should come as no surprise, says Ward, who explained the Facts of Life this way:

"A grandmother's sitting in a rocking chair when one of the children surrounding her asks, "Grammy, do all fairy tales start with *Once Upon a Time*? "No darling," says the grandmother. "There is a whole series of fairy takes that begin with "*If Elected I Promise*."

### ***Measure R – the Saga Continues***

The legality of Measure R, the deceptive local ballot measure that promised ethics reform but instead changed from two to three the terms city council members can hold office, finally will go to court April 11. Valley resident **David Hernandez**, assisted by Judicial Watch in Washington, DC argues that the measure is unconstitutional since it improperly commingled the term limit and ethics issues.

### ***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.

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