



Meeting Report for **October 15, 2007**

Caprice Young
CEO California Charter
School Association

Remarks by Caprice Young reported by Richard Bort

She's busier than ever, counseling and encouraging the formation and enhancement of charter schools throughout California. Caprice Young is President and Chief Executive Officer of the California Charter Schools Association (www.myschool.org). She formerly headed the LAUSD Board, among numerous other career stops. Caprice visited with Valley VOTE once again to provide an update on the charter school movement in California and especially in Los Angeles. Ms. Young summarized the charter school situation by saying that the movement is healthy and growing, raising API scores, breaking new ground in education at all levels. To gain first hand knowledge and to work closely with administrators, faculty, and parents, she visits about 150 schools a year out of the approximately 9,000 schools in the state. Los Angeles now has 130 charter schools – more than any other STATE – including about two-dozen new ones that opened this fall. More than 45,000 students attend the 130 LAUSD charter schools.

All charter schools are public schools, meaning that they are funded by public dollars, have open enrollment, and must meet standards set by the government. Caprice distinguished between so-called “Dependent” charter schools and “Independent” charter schools. The “dependent” charters control their curriculum, but unlike the “Independent” charters they do not control their own finances, scheduling, personnel, or set their own priorities.

Both types of charter schools have seen successes, which is largely the result of the leadership in the individual schools having a vision. Too often, an existing school will want to convert to a charter school to avoid a problem, like the payroll snafu that has been plaguing the LAUSD for the past year. But that isn't a sufficient reason to “go charter,” she said.

Charter schools have demonstrated that their students typically outperform for several critical reasons:

1. The schools are typically smaller groupings of students, often with fewer than 300 students to a school.
2. Faculty, and parents set higher expectations for the students.
3. Charters can focus on particular challenges, such as poverty-impacted students, English language learners, ethnic and racial minorities, and combinations of these subgroups.

Caprice mentioned that her organization works closely with KIPP, the Knowledge Is Power Program, which is a national network of free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory public schools in under-resourced communities throughout the United States. There are currently 57 locally run KIPP schools in 17 states and Washington, DC, including two in Los Angeles, which are serving over 14,000 students. KIPP schools have been widely recognized for putting under served students on the path to college. More than 80 percent of KIPP students are low-income and more than 90 percent are African American or Hispanic/Latino. Nationally, nearly 80 percent of KIPP alumni have matriculated to college.

KIPP typically starts in the 5th grade and requires school attendance from 7:30 AM to 5 PM daily,

with two hours of homework a day and attendance for a half-day on Saturday for special programs. In addition, the teachers give the children their cell phone numbers and invite the kids to call for help until 9 PM any day. The results achieved by the two LAUSD KIPP schools have been fantastic, she said.

Caprice responded to numerous questions about . . .

... Green Dot Schools – Green Dot Public Schools is a nonprofit organization that, according to its website (<http://www.greendot.org>), is directly focused on influencing LAUSD to transform its failing high schools into clusters of small successful schools. Founded in 1999 by Steve Barr, whom Caprice complimented for his drive, creativity, and ability to build a very strong management organization, Green Dot has opened 10 successful charter high schools in some of the highest need areas of Los Angeles. Caprice said that the Green Dot people are expert in operations and administration, and their school sites are efficient and very well run. In September 2007, the Los Angeles Board of Education voted to turn over Locke High School, one of the city's most troubled high schools, to Green Dot, marking the first time an outside group will run a traditional public school in Los Angeles.

... Locke High is described in education circles as a “failed” high school because it ranks among the lowest-performing schools in the district and in the state. In 2005, 332 students graduated from a class that, as ninth-graders, had 1,318 students. Only 143 students qualified for admission to the University of California and California State University systems.

... Fenton Avenue Charter School and Vaughn Next Century Learning Center are the original charter elementary schools in L.A., both located in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. Their successes have been well documented and publicized. Caprice told Valley VOTE about their heavy use of technology to improve learning and student performance. Besides hundreds of networked computers in each school for use by teachers and students, every teacher uses a wireless headset microphone so that s/he can be heard loud and clear throughout the classroom. This relieves the teacher from having to shout as in most classrooms, and the students use handheld microphones in the classroom. This makes it much easier for English language learners to hear, speak, and gain understanding of the language. Meantime, the teacher can switch off the microphone to talk one-on-one with pupils when appropriate.

... Granada Hills Charter Academy – With nearly 4,000 students, this high school is the largest charter school in the country. Caprice noted that it has been extremely successful academically, financially, schedule-wise, and in virtually all other respects.

Bart Reed reports on Metrolink Max

Bart Reed discussed efforts by The Transit Coalition to increase Metrolink service through its Metrolink MAX campaign. Under the proposal, trains would run every 30 minutes between Chatsworth and Laguna Niguel, with similar increases on lines from Los Angeles to Lancaster and San Bernardino. Late night and weekend service would also be increased. Only a minimal capital investment would be required, and the service increases can be implemented gradually as new infrastructure is built. Metrolink would thus grow from a commuter-oriented service to a regional service that is competitive with auto travel and is easily accessible and convenient to potential passengers.

LAX report by Denny Schneider

LAX remains committed to expansion despite the 2006 Settlement Agreement to the contrary. Airport funds can only be used for airport specific projects. Aside from devastating the Westchester business district and forcing removal of more homes, LAWA's plan would suck up the region's

infrastructure money to help pay for the community portion of projects required to indirectly support the expansion. The LAWA rationale for the expansion is that safety enhancements are needed, but local surrounding communities and their elected officials remain unconvinced that the LAWA projects will have the promised effects. This skepticism is supported by the FAA Air Traffic Controllers Union who blame other factors for the recent increase in safety incursions. At the insistence of local Councilmember Bill Rosendahl and community leaders the FAA has agreed to install runway status lights on the runways, but current progress has been very slow and project completion is projected to be at the end of 2009. Local activists such as ARSAC have demanded that this be done immediately, not into the future.

Housing Report - Vic Viereck

Passage of the 1986 Tax Reform Act led to a national shortage of apartment construction. The State of California does not even have a reduced rate for long term capital gains, and has increased from 30 to 60 the number of days an apartment owner must give on an eviction notice. But it's the City of Los Angeles that really discourages preservation of existing units. That leads to the deterioration of the units, and forces owners to sell to developers just to escape the city's oppressive ordinances.

Many long time owners have refinanced to fund buying other property and/or improving the already owned property. Under such circumstances, they cannot afford the financing needed to fund required major repairs. If improvements cannot be financed, they cannot be done. When investors are discouraged from buying rental property, tenants have a difficult, if not impossible, time finding shelter. As a result, not only are taxpayers subsidizing people living where they otherwise could not afford to live, but through tax exemptions, nonprofit affordable housing projects are eroding the tax base.

Land Use - Sidewalk Repair - Pauline Tallent

Subject: The City has come up with a solution to the sidewalk repair crisis, by once again burdening the seller, with a "point of sale" remedy. Our objective is to come up with an alternative solution.

The City's Solution: According to a Public Works document dated May 20, 2007, there are approximately 10,750 miles of sidewalks in the City of Los Angeles, with as many as 4,600 miles needing repairs. The City's 50/50 program has had some success since its institution two years ago. "Point of sale" is an attractive solution for the City, in that it does not have to be passed by the voters in order to be implemented. Another observation was that if "point of sale" was implemented, the City could regulate the repair process, and at the same time free up funds for other ventures, in other words, not budget for sidewalk repairs at all!

A Counter Proposal: First, there needs to be clarity of ownership of the sidewalks. In 1911 the State of California through an Improvement Act, provided Cities the authority to require property owners to effect repairs to sidewalks abutting their properties. This policy was in effect until 1973, at which time Federal funds became available to make sidewalk repairs at no cost to the property owner. In 1976, in order to make use of these funds, the City rescinded its authorization for property owners to do the repairs.

As the City's 50/50 program has had some success, let's base the solution on that concept. The concept should be restructured and enhanced. Property owners should have a choice, to partner with the City and pay for half the repairs, with the City doing the repairs. Or undertake the whole repairs, using private contractors that have been certified by the City, so that the repairs conform to

City specifications. In both cases, the property owner should be indemnified from law suits. Some streets are State owned. The State should be similarly involved. Also an adequate budget should be in place at all times.

Benefits of Suggested Solution: This takes the burden off the seller, as in today's market there is often little or no equity. Neighbors could benefit by going together on the repairs, and thus avoiding the "patchwork" results of individual repairs. Property owners would be aware, that having needed repairs done, before listing the property, would enhance the value of the property.

Neighborhood Councils

Mayor's Budget Day - George Truesdale N.C. President

On Saturday, October 13, 2007, the Mayor held his annual Budget Day discussion at City Hall. The presentation started with introductory remarks by Wend Greuel and Bernard Parks, a few comments (maybe 5 minutes) by Mayor Villaraigosa, concluding with a Power Point presentation by a representative of the CAO's office. The presentation described how the budgeted funds were allocated in the 2007-2008 budget, as well as well as the challenges presented in the upcoming (2008-2009) budget, due to falling city revenues. This section of the meeting lasted approximately 1 hour.

At the conclusion of the general meeting presentation, the attendees were asked to break out into regional Neighborhood Council areas to discuss items of mutual concern. I was involved in the North Valley discussion with representations from the Northridge East and Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council's. We concluded that the regional priorities which we felt required funding in this budget, for the north valley were: accountability of government to deliver on previously approved and funded bond issues, not to cut any funds from DONE or the Neighborhood Councils, sidewalk repair, the 311 phone system and graffiti removal, traffic and street congestion, the need to address the aging process in our communities, and public safety and the CERT program. We were also asked to ensure that all members of each NC complete the Mayor's Budget Survey which be available at the Congress of Neighborhoods, at the Convention Center on Saturday, October 27th.

The final comment which was voiced after the meeting was that it would have placed more importance on the entire process if the mayor had taken a few minutes out of his busy schedule to visit each of the 7 regional breakout groups to express some interest in our importance to this process. As it was, he left after making a few brief and somewhat disjointed remarks.

Valley VOTE Special Event

Thanks to the warm hospitality of **Richard and Barbara Leyner** the Valley VOTE special event was a great success. About 50 or so guests, members and friends enjoyed good food, drinks and conversation with the weather cooperating very nicely. Remarks by Wendy Greuel, Julie Korenstein, Lloyd Levine and Mitch Englander and others added to the enjoyment of the evening.

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 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.

Please forward this Email to interested individuals and organizations. If you would like to be removed from our distribution list please send an Email to javittisr@cs.com. We apologize if you receive more than one notice for this meeting.

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