



## Meeting Report for July 21, 2008

by  
**Denny Schneider**

**Valley VOTE** Board members, community leaders, and concerned citizens attended the July 21, 2008 meeting at Galpin Ford to hear from featured speakers **Wayde Hunter** on the status of the **Sunshine Canyon Landfill** and **Rick Joseph** and **Don Buritt** of **REC Solar** on the options for installation of solar power on residential and commercial properties.

We encourage everyone to join us at these meetings on the third Monday of each month to hear the latest information and to participate in open discussion of various topics of community interest. For a meeting agenda and prior meeting reviews and press releases we encourage you to go to the Valley VOTE website: [www.valleyvote.com](http://www.valleyvote.com).

### **Wayde Hunter** **Update on Sunshine Canyon Landfill**

Wayde Hunter has been closely following the activities at the Sunshine Landfill for many years. In addition to being President of the North Valley Coalition he has participated on 10 other committees and groups with responsibilities related directly to landfills.

Mr. Hunter's talk highlighted that trash disposal has been and continues to be a major issues for the city of L.A. The location of Sunshine Canyon landfill in Granada Hills is the last available site in the entire area. He noted that this dump is precariously placed; nearly adjacent—one mile south—of the San Fernando Groundwater Basin which is our major area water supply. The landfill is at a slightly higher elevation so that if it were to leak contaminants due to a major earthquake or for another reason it could affect our water supply.

There has been talk for years about closing this facility, but alternative plans have not fully materialized. Councilmember Greg Smith has produced a plan to substantially reduce solid waste which has been strongly supported by Valley VOTE (RENEW LA) in past discussions. His plan would dramatically reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills.

Although a Solid Waste Facility Permit is required from the California Integrated Waste Management Board and a Waste Discharge Permit from the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, there are very convoluted legal controls for a landfill of this type. Sunshine Canyon is operated by Browning Ferris Industries (BFI) as a landfill for both the City and County of Los Angeles. Until recently these two landfills were controlled separately. Although two state agencies have jurisdiction, they have traditionally relied upon City and County staff to monitor compliance with State and federal regulations. Additional City and County land use restrictions also apply. Over the course of the past ten years Memorandums of Understanding were reached by BFI with LA City and LA County to combine the sites after a five year waiting period to allow for a seamless change in operation. The objective was to ensure conditions, such as control on the tonnage of dumping from various sources, were met before consolidation. LA City and the County agreed upon how to share dumping fees.

The conditions for combination were never met. BFI, instead, went around the agreements by requesting that the state create a new Joint Powers Control Agreement. Despite several

misstatements in the BFI application to the State, the Integrated Waste Management Board agreed on July 7, 2008 to proceed. This action negated all prior agreements for control and monitoring of regulations. There is some question as to if the sites are being adequately monitored at the present time. The combination has not yet been fully integrated because the City and County threatened a lawsuit.

Further complicating the process at this time are the proposed mergers at the corporate level involving the 3 major U.S. waste management companies. These potential corporate mergers could jeopardize the hard fought prior community agreements.

## **Rick Joseph and Don Buritt Solar Electricity Options**

Ric and Don from REC Solar pointed out the environmental benefits of going solar—no green house gas emission. REC Solar is a national corporation assembling both commercial and domestic sites.

They mentioned that solar panel life is about forty years. They told us that a typical home system can connect to the electronic grid so that when excess electricity is produced the homeowner gets credit up to zeroing out their electrical bill. Based on current electric costs they estimated the payback period for a typical \$40-50K system is about ten years.

They explained that this is a good time to have a system installed because there is a \$2000 federal tax credit along with an approximate fifty percent rebate by DWP. REC offers a free Solar evaluation and report. Go to [www.recsolar.com](http://www.recsolar.com)

Preceding the featured speakers were Valley VOTE Committee Chair reports on numerous topics. Detailed reports were distributed by committee chairs to attendees. Below is a brief synopsis of the discussions:

## **Housing Report - Vic Viereck**

The hot topic of affordable housing unit needs and keeping existing units while generating more units was addressed. Most affordable housing is under rent controls within the City of Los Angeles and located within multiunit dwellings. Vic noted that some of the City policy is encouraging building degradation and loss of affordable units because apartment owners are prohibited from passing on all of their maintenance and upgrade costs. This has encouraged owners to sell affordable housing to developers for construction of larger condominium facilities that may include a few affordable units and lots more market rate ones. He noted that when families with lower income, handicapped members, and seniors leave an apartment, building owners have allowed units to remain empty and to not re-rent them rather than become obligated to pay high tenant relocation payments.

## **MTA Universal Project - Polly Ward**

Polly Ward submitted the following report:

On Tuesday, July 8, 2008 at the Hillside Federation meeting, Alushim Hammond and her team from the Thomas Properties presented their plan for the MTA Universal Project, a development on a 12 acre site across the street from the NBC Universal, located on Lankershim Blvd. in Studio City. A power point presentation consisted of statistics and was accompanied by a modeling of the project consisting of cardboard boxes of various sizes. There were no rendering or drawings. Phase 1 of the project is 350,000 sq.ft., building height 357 ft., with 1780 parking spaces. Phase 2 is a 490,000 sq.ft., building height 382 ft., with 1929 parking spaces. Another parking structure with 800 spaces will be built for MTA use. The purpose is to house NBC Universal offices, and attract other good jobs, improve mobility by improving 34 intersections and a pedestrian bridge over

Lankershim.

The EIR should be released in the next 2 to 3 weeks, followed by a 45 day comment period, a Planning Commission hearing in the Fall and a Council Hearing in the winter. Construction to begin in 2009, to open by 2011/2012. I was left with the impression that there are no firm plans, that this is a trial balloon to see what the neighborhoods would accept, just how much dissent would be generated by this change in height and size in the area. Answers to questions were vague. For instance, when asked how the water would be disposed of (the projects adjoin the L.A. River and include 6 underground floors of parking) there was no answer than "we will dewater as we go." I believe we need to oppose any change in zoning restrictions or face the loss of the East Valley to high rise construction.

### **Prop.11- Voters First Act**

State Legislators are currently drawing their own district boundaries to ensure their reelection. There is now a 99% reelection rate in California legislative races. A new proposal to reduce the gerrymandering of California districts will be on the November ballot. Valley VOTE's Executive Committee supports this ballot measure. A fourteen member panel of non-politicians will oversee the redistricting process. The panel will consist of 5 Democrats, 5 Republicans, and 4 members not associated with either party. This plan is sure to increase accountability and help break the policy logjam on key state issues.

Detailed information is at [www.YesProp11.org](http://www.YesProp11.org) .

### **Neighborhood Councils - Geroge Truesdell**

This year is the first time that Neighborhood Council (NC) elections are being supervised by the City Clerk. Voting in these elections ranged from 2% of the stakeholders to as little as 0.3%. Elections were recently standardized to be every even year with four year terms for all Board members. Numerous regional meetings are being held for NC board members and stakeholders. This is a good way for citizens to become aware of recent developments and to participate in government.

### **LAWA Actions and Concerns- Denny Schneider**

The Bob Hope Airport (Burbank/Glendale Authority) has received a 14 page FAA response to its request to divert all night time air traffic to other airports. Without rejecting the request, the FAA raised extensive restudy and air traffic concerns. (Valley VOTE has taken a position to oppose the plan to divert night time air traffic from BUR to the Van Nuys airport.)

Regionalization of Southern California airport traffic is taking a big hit. Massive fuel cost increases is forcing consolidation of airlines and is resulting in hundreds, of flights monthly to be canceled. Over 75 cities have lost all commercial traffic to date and this number could be as high as 100-200 by year end. Ontario Airport has lost a substantial number of flights and the air traffic at LAX is also off considerably. The LAX Master Plan process is continuing. The NASA contract to study north airport safety was finally signed.

### **DWP Update Jack Humphreville**

DWP has requested another substantial rate increase. At the 6/28 meeting DWP called for the focus of the Oversight Committee to depart from rate payer advocacy. Jack noted that although DWP is more forthcoming with information than before, even more is needed. DWP is wholly owned by LA with about 1.4 million electricity and 650K water rate payers. Proposals to increase DWP electricity fees are in process. Monitoring "time of day" electric usage in addition to total use is considered desirable because peak usage has exceeded capacity during very hot days. They are looking into smart meters which log time of day usage, but handling the recorded information is

much more expensive. Water rate changes are purported to be revenue neutral for a tiered price structure based on total usage. DWP proposed the tier increases with the highest for the largest users. This is undesirable to Valley residents whose climate is hotter than several other parts of the City. Most homeowners would see a significant jump in fees.

### **Mass Transportation - Bart Reed**

The MTA pays for more than the busses and trains. It also pays for some sound walls and metrolink trains. Due to increased expenses and the costs to expand service this agency is short of money. A high speed rail initiative will be on the November ballot. It will call for a north-south train across California from San Francisco to San Diego. The measure will be for a public-private partnership to build and maintain the train using about \$10 billion public funds including federal matching funds and an equal amount of private funding. It will be done incrementally with a target completion of 2025-2030.

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The next **Valley VOTE** meeting is scheduled for **Sept.15, 2008**.

### **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.

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