



Meeting Report for October 18, 2010
by Richard Bort

Valley VOTE Board members, community leaders, and concerned citizens convened on October 18, 2010 at Galpin Ford to hear featured speakers Brian Bauer, speaking about the bid by Granada Hills Charter High School to manage the new Valley Region High School #4; and Joel Fox, consultant in public affairs and politics, discussing the nine initiatives on the ballot on November 2.

Brian Bauer

Brian Bauer is the Executive Director of Granada Hills Charter High School, **the largest charter school in the nation**. Bauer is responsible for the school's instructional, operational, and financial programs that involve almost 4,200 students, over 180 teachers and 150 classified employees, and a **budget of nearly \$35 million**. He oversees all of the school's significant business and operational services, including payroll, general ledger, cafeteria, building and grounds, and human resources, all of which are handled in-house.

Under the LAUSD's Public School Choice Motion of August 2009, the LAUSD is seeking an operator for the new Valley Region High School #4 (VRHS #4), located on Balboa Blvd. near Devonshire St., in Granada Hills, on the site of the former Granada Hills Hospital. The school will consist of 45 classrooms and serve 1,215 students. The Motion charges the LAUSD to develop a more "thoughtful and creative" plan for how its schools will be operated to provide better educational results.

Granada Hills Charter High School (GHCHS) has announced that it plans to submit an application to operate VRHS #4 as a new charter high school when it opens in the fall of 2011. The LAUSD Board will select the operator from among the applicants in February 2011. Other organizations are expected to apply to operate this new school as well. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Five other individuals/organizations have indicated an intent to apply to operate VRHS #4, including a joint bid by the superintendent of LAUSD District #1 together with the United Teachers Los Angeles and several current employees of James Monroe High School and Cleveland High School.]

Mr. Bauer was invited to share with Valley VOTE the qualifications of GHCHS and its plans for operating the new school.

Bauer described the many achievements of GHCHS since becoming a charter school in July 2003, including outstanding improvement in academics with an **API score of 874, the highest of any public comprehensive high school in Los Angeles**. This is the fifth consecutive year the school has scored over 800, which is the goal for all high schools in the state. Equally as impressive, the school has met its academic targets in every other state-determined socioeconomic and racial subgroup. With a **graduation rate of 99%**, an in-seat **attendance rate of 98%**, and a student wait list of almost 2,500, GHCHS is a top school of choice in Los Angeles.

These successes have been achieved even with a very diverse student body, which he broke down as follows:

Race - White 32%, Hispanic 36%, Asian 20%, African American <10%, **Nationalities** - 60, **Languages at home** 40+.

VRHS #4 will be a separate charter high school, not merely a branch of GHCHS, but will be managed by GHCHS. It will have its own Governing Board, which will be chosen initially by the GHCHS Governing Board. The Governing Board will be composed of local parents, community members, and employees who will oversee the school's budget and determine policies and programs.

Bauer said that he fully expects that, by installing the GHCHS governance structure and academic performance standards at the new school, similar educational results can be achieved. He noted that most of the students attending the new high school will come from outside the GHCHS boundaries.

Bauer outlined the planned approach for the new school, including:

- * Sharing GHCHS' best practices in a smaller student body
- * Hiring the same high quality teachers who want to work in this kind of environment, with similar pay and proportionate budgeted expenditures
- * Offering a rigorous college prep curriculum
- * Having a strong School-to-Work component of the curriculum with cutting edge and industry-driven career strands that prepare students for work life in the 21st century.
- * Working within a \$10 million annual budget (1,200 students @ \$8,800 per year), resulting in a projected surplus
- * Placing strong reliance on stakeholder advisory committees
- * Serving all student populations including special-needs students and English learners

GHCHS and District #1 are holding meetings over the next few weeks to inform the community of their respective plans and to obtain feedback and input for how the new charter high school should be operated.

Joel Fox

Joel Fox is a consultant in public affairs and politics. He also currently serves as President of the Small Business Action Committee, founded in 2003 to battle for small business on important political issues. Perhaps he is best remembered as the former president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. Joel is also a member of the Valley VOTE Board. **Mr. Fox is co-publisher and editor-in-chief of a popular political blog, Fox and Hounds Daily (www.foxandhoundsdaily.com), which offers commentary and news on California business and politics.**

Joel Fox preferred to lead a discussion of the nine ballot initiatives on the November 2nd ballot, rather than to make a speech. His insights into most of the initiatives are unique, and he shared much of it with us.

Propositions #20 and #27 (Redistricting) - Fox recalled that the framers of Proposition 11, the 2008 proposition that provided for a 14-member citizens panel to redraw the boundaries of California's Assembly districts, intentionally omitted mention of boundaries for California's Congressional delegation. They feared that California's congressional delegation would oppose Proposition 11. Proposition 11 passed and, sure enough, the Congressional delegation and numerous state legislators as well, now oppose Prop. 20. Moreover, these same people sponsor Prop. 27, which would explicitly repeal Prop. 11 and return the redistricting task to the self-interested state legislators.

Proposition 19 (Marijuana) - This is probably the highest profile issue on the ballot, and last week fuel was added to the fire when U.S. Attorney general Eric Holder announced that federal law trumps state law when it comes to prohibited substances such as marijuana. Fox noted that nobody can really know how much tax revenue the legalization of marijuana will generate, and the issue carries many unknowns and uncertainties.

Proposition 21 (Vehicle surtax for state parks) - Fox noted that there is not much opposition to this proposition. Therefore, it will probably pass.

Proposition 22 (Walls off local funds from being borrowed by the state) - The California Teachers Association (CTA) and other public employee unions oppose this proposition because it would prevent the state from dipping into local revenues to fund schools.

Proposition 23 (Repeals the state's Global Warming/Greenhouse Gases law - AB 32) -Fox's problem with this proposition is that it would suspend AB 32 for many years, until the state's unemployment rate is at or below 5.5% for a year. Besides which, Fox noted that the promoters of Prop. 23 seem to have run out of money and have cut back on TV ads. Therefore, the proposition "may be in trouble," he said.

Proposition 24 (Repeals the tax changes made in budget negotiations in 2008 and 2009) - This proposition is mostly funded by the CTA, and it would affect mostly big companies when the tax changes would otherwise take effect in 2011. Those tax changes affect how a company may handle net operating losses to offset future profits, and how multi-state, multinational companies may elect to measure the size of their California business for tax purposes.

Proposition 25 (Reduces the vote required to pass the state budget, from two-thirds to one-half) - Fox noted that this is a classic issue between the public employee unions, who want the "majority" threshold to pass a budget, and the business community that wants to retain the higher hurdle.

Proposition 26 (Fees vs. taxes) - Fox explained that if a charge pays for a specific service, such as a fishing license, then it is a fee and would remain a fee. Another example is a charge added to alcoholic beverages to pay for programs for the inebriated. Or that part of the charge for a marriage license that goes to programs dealing with spousal abuse. But the latter two examples show the difficulty of distinguishing between a fee and a tax. Not all people who consume alcoholic beverages become inebriated; and not all of those who do need a program for chronic alcoholism. Likewise, not every couple who get married will need to take advantage of spousal abuse programs.

In closing, Joel Fox pitched his first novel, "Lincoln's Hand" (Echelon Press, 2010), which is based on a true story about Abraham Lincoln's grave.

Valley VOTE Committee Reports and Announcements

Announcements - Joe Vitti

Joe Vitti, Valley VOTE President, reminded attendees that Valley VOTE will be hosting **an event to honor Galpin Ford's Bert Boeckmann**. Mr. Boeckmann has supported Valley VOTE in many ways for many years, both financially in the campaign for Valley Independence and by providing Valley VOTE with meeting space for more than 12 years. The event will be a reception on Thursday, December 2 at Skirball Cultural Center from 5:30 to 8:00 PM. Reservations to attend are \$15 per person payable in advance, and parking is free. Sponsorships are available to help defray the cost of the event.

Joe Vitti also noted that, as reported recently in the press, the Valley Fair is seeking a permanent home under a threat by the State of California to revoke its access to some \$2.5 million that the fair has accumulated as a state agency over many years. The fair is operated by the 51st District Agricultural Association, which was created by the California legislature in 1946. Joe said that the state needs to know the extent to which there is popular support for continuing the Valley Fair, and he **urged all Valley VOTE members to show their support for the Fair by contacting the organization by letter mailed to 5121 Van Nuys Blvd. Ste 204, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403, by e-mail at info@thevalleyfair.org, or by phone (818) 461-9431. The Fair's website is TheValleyFair.org.**

Housing Report -Vic Viereck

Vic Viereck spoke about the ineptness of the city's attempt to modify the **Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO)**. He said that after seeing unusually high attendance by apartment owners (particularly the Mom and Pop owners) at the May 7 and May 21, 2010 City Council meetings, the Council requested new Rent Stabilization Ordinance recommendations from the Housing Department. Raucous tenants at the end of the May 21 meeting did not help their cause at all, Vic noted.

The Housing Department recommendations were released prior to the September 29, 2010 meeting of the Housing, Community and Economic Development Committee. While the recommendations included concepts to please owners and tenants, the net effect does nothing to meet the industry's needs, according to Viereck. After hearing 92 owners and tenants on September 29, another committee meeting was set for October 6, 2010 to hear just from staff of the Housing Department. **At the end of the meeting, the can was kicked another 45 days down the road, with more time to study the ordinance.**

Land Use Report (Group Homes & Zoning) -Pauline Tallent

Pauline Tallent reported on the October 14th meeting of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission, which covered two areas of interest: group homes, especially those dedicated to "sober living," and zoning issues. Group homes are gaining increased notoriety in residential neighborhoods, and the Commission has proposed a new Community Care Facility Ordinance. Sober living homes are currently unlicensed, and they are veritable businesses being conducted in residential neighborhoods. Furthermore, because they are unlicensed, existing nuisance laws are not being enforced. Ms. Tallent reported that residents spoke in favor of the proposed ordinance, while operators of group homes spoke emphatically against any regulatory ordinance. **The public outcry at the meeting was so intense that the Planning Commission postponed any decision until November 4.**

On the other matter, zoning, Pauline reported that the City Planning Department is trying to simplify the process of approval of development plans. The present system is laborious and slow, and hasn't been changed in many years. The Planning Department staff has been cut back, emphasizing the need to revise the process, particularly for Conditional Use Permits. During the preceding week, a citizen had taken out several full-page ads in the Daily News and the L.A. Times, loudly decrying what the Planning Commission was about to do by way of arbitrarily changing zoning regulations. Apparently, however, this turned out not to be the case and **any decision by the Planning Commission was postponed until January.**

LAWA Report - Denny Schneider

Denny Schneider, who is a Valley VOTE Director and president of A.R.S.A.C. (Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion) reminded attendees that the Southern California region needs a safe, secure, and convenient LAX airport for our economy to thrive. The impact of LAX's proposed expansion plans, however, will be felt all over the basin. Roadways in the vicinity of LAX will suck up money destined for roadways in the entire region; LAX expansion will add traffic to an already gridlocked 405 freeway; it will add costs to airlines and ultimately travelers, and it will facilitate gridlock in the sky making navigation less safe. Denny made reference ARSAC's website (**www.RegionalSolution.org**) **for more details about this issue.**

The most appropriate option would be to improve runways, but LAWA (Los Angeles World Airports) is expected to continue to push for moving the North Airfield further north. The result will be destruction of the Westchester business district and increased residential impact, Denny said. LAX expansion will cost \$billions at a time when LAWA is finding its resources too scarce to start all the facility retrofits that are needed immediately. **All of the options are inadequate** and Denny said he hopes LAWA will listen. The local community will have to use its own design resources to draw up an effective alternative to moving the north runways and provide it to the LAWA "experts."

Safety is again THE proper issue. Statistics for the North complex show that it is safe, with only 12 incursions last year. All were minor, with nine having occurred on the southern (fixed) runway complex and **virtually all were pilot errors that would not be addressed by runway movement.**

One must ask openly, therefore, about LAWA's priorities. Why is LAWA delaying completion of the Runway Status Light installation if safety is really important to them? Similarly, why have the important northern taxiway safety improvements that LAWA identified over two years ago not been started yet?

In the meantime the Notice of Preparation for the Draft EIR of the LAX Specific Plan Amendment Study has been released and public meetings are scheduled for Nov. 3rd and Nov 6th.

Denny encouraged anyone with a question or concern to contact him at: Denny@WeLiveFree.com or by phone at: (310) 641-4199 or (213) 675-1817 (cell).

Mass Transit Report Bart Reed

Bart Reed, Executive Director of the Transit Coalition reported that last week a **major positive development occurred in the effort to get the federal government aboard Mayor Villaraigosa's "30/10 Plan"** (about which much has been reported here previously). Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced the

approval of a \$546 million low-interest rate federal loan to the MTA to begin development of the Crenshaw Light Rail Line. [EDITOR's NOTE: According to the MTA's map (www.metro.net/projects/crenshaw_corridor) , the northern end of the Crenshaw Line would begin at Crenshaw Blvd. near Exposition Blvd. by connecting to the Exposition Line (the famed "Subway to the Sea" from downtown). It would run south to Inglewood, then bend southwesterly to Manchester and Aviation, where it would bend southward along Aviation Blvd. with a stop at Century Blvd. and ending at the Green Line. Despite media reports to the contrary, it does not appear to have a stop at LAX.]

Bart also mentioned that he has been working with Richard Katz and Metro staff and management to **bring more frequent transit services to Mission College.**

NEXT MEETING: The next regular meeting of Valley VOTE will be:
Monday, November 15, 2010 at Galpin Ford.

Valley VOTE is a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley residents, business people, educators, community activists, and organizations, 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.

For additional information about Valley VOTE, for an upcoming meeting agenda, or for previous meeting reports and press releases, we encourage you to go to the Valley VOTE website: www.ValleyVote.org.

Please forward this e-mail to interested individuals and organizations. If you would like to be removed from our distribution list please send a e-mail to javittisr@cs.com .