

Meeting Report for April 16, 2012
By Denny Schneider

Valley VOTE Board members, community leaders, and concerned citizens convened on April 16 at Galpin Ford to hear from featured speakers; Bill Carter, Chief Deputy LA City Attorney and congressional candidate Mark Reed, In addition brief reports from Valley VOTE committee leaders on a variety of subjects were presented.

William “Bill” Carter, Chief Deputy of LA City Attorney’s Office

Bill Carter graciously filled in for City Attorney, Carmen “Nutch” Trutanich, who had an urgent appointment come up at the last minute with Washington D.C. leader Janet Napolitano, precluding him from joining us.

Bill was born and raised in LA. He attended UCLA and Loyola Law School. He has worked in private practice as well as in State and Federal offices where he specialized in environmental law and OSHA issues. As a friend and colleague since 1984, new City Attorney, Nutch Trutanich appointed Bill his Chief Deputy. Bill told us that he is proud to work with Nutch Trutanich because Nutch is an innovator and the only City elected official with an MBA. Bill described the responsibilities of the Office of the City Attorney (CA). Their office has about 500 attorneys to cover all civil and criminal matters related to the City. He told us that the CA Office is involved in virtually all City issues by the very nature of their responsibilities. The CA doesn't make policy. The CA office is more efficient than the past because several groups of lawyers were reorganized and consolidated to save money. Another cost savings was to eliminate City cars. Instead Nutch arranged for old DEA cars. Bill noted that their Office is significantly underfunded. They set Department priorities to conform with the City Charter so that "shall" responsibilities were addressed, while "may" responsibilities could be deferred. Bill told us that a critical part of the job is to help the City manage risk. They are constantly advising departments that doing things poorly is a risk management problem. Most of the city actions are civil, but a component of their efforts is criminal. When the County District Attorney fails to prosecute the CA has an option to prosecute these people, but using lower level misdemeanor indictments. Their office wants the power to convene a grand jury form with subpoena power. That power is important to collect the necessary information. Nutch wants schools to teach civics. He stressed the importance of how people must learn to interact. Also, he noted that school functioning needs major improvement and 80% of inmates in prison are school dropouts. AB109, early criminal release, is causing a revolving door effect that must be addressed. Petty crimes are increasing because ability to jail misdemeanors is lost to overcrowded jails. Bill also addressed the CA involvement in the drafting of ordinances. He told us that only about 10 of 500 staff lawyers draft ordinances. These efforts are prioritized by those efforts for the full Council, then those that generate revenue or cost savings or impact safety, and then all others. Last year about 350 ordinances were passed. In response to another question about enforcement of zoning issues. He told us that Jane Usher working on methodology to make the "voluntary" operating agreements associated with permits and zoning enforceable. When asked who is the CA's client--the Council or us? Bill told us that they represent the municipal corporation of the City and that there is an assumption that what the Council does is in our interest because of the fiduciary relationship. Another question raised was

how the Sign Ordinance impact free speech. The question related to this 1st amendment issue will need more exploration. We thanked Bill for his candid and informative discussion.

Mark Reed - Why I am Running for Congress

Mark was raised in the San Fernando Valley and has lived here for a long time. He is a father of three with seven grandchildren. He is the product of a military family. He also has the perspective of his Indian heritage. He stressed his pledge to country, not those in a political party. He is dedicated to fiscal restraint and limited government intervention. Mark observed that quality of life is degrading and that the once robust manufacturing base of car plants, etc. in Valley are all but gone. Businesses continue leaving for other areas. One example given was Rocketdyne which is down to almost nothing. The forty year trend is scary. People are leaving and business lost. Mark feels that government needs to stop trying to manage our lives. One of his primary goals is to reverse this and notes that his opponents are career politicians who were responsible for this area during the extended decline. Mark pointed out that electricity costs are 59% higher than in some other areas of the US and that one in three small businesses have been lost in addition to many major companies. Film production difficulties are another big concern. Competition from other states which are offering sweet heart deals and tax incentives to film companies have been effective in reducing CA production. Mark has an impressive list of endorsements including Michael Reagan. He is not as well financed as his career politician opponents and is concerned about campaign rhetoric accuracy. Mark pointed to strong influences by outside the district campaign funding and a need for campaign reform. He stated that Representative Berman claims the endorsement of Supervisor Antonovich but Mike showed us a written letter from Antonovich stating it not to be true. Mark told us that he would fight for his District, noting that the Valley still provides more tax dollars than services receive. He praised efforts by Valley Vote to improve the situation recognizing that we now have a proportionate share of commissioners and City Council members.

See MarkReedforCongress.com for more info.

_Valley VOTE Committee Reports

Vic Viereck-Los Angeles River (Claimed) Improvement Overlay (RIO)

The January 12, 2012 revised version of the River Improvement Overlay (RIO) is claimed "to establish new standards that facilitate appropriate development in designated areas adjacent to waterways in order to enhance the watershed and urban design of the area." The Planning Department's ten-page report claims that overtime, the implementation of multiple RIO Districts will increase awareness of, and sensitivity to the ecosystems and native habitats that have suffered severe neglect and degradation as a result of the concrete channelization of Los Angeles' rivers. According to a RIO Fact Sheet prepared by the Planning Department in July 2007, the proposed RIO boundary generally extends ½ mile on either side of the River, creating an area that is potentially 32 miles long and one mile wide. According to the 2007 "Fact Sheet," the RIO does not require changes to be made to existing property and/or structures. The requirements only become effective when owners choose to build new structures and/or

substantially renovate existing structures. A major problem is, structures age, and neighborhoods change with time. Eventually improvements need to be made, or structures need to be replaced. Depending on what restrictions and/or requirements are set, the value of owners' property can be severely reduced from what it was or could be. Such takings need to be avoided. Additional information can be found at www.lariver.org.

Pauline Tallent -Broken Sidewalks, A City Responsibility?

The last time I addressed this topic was back in September 2009. The sad part is that nothing has changed. The City, pleading "broke," has basically ignored the problem. The 50:50 Program, whereby the City and the Property Owner would share the expense, which held some promise, has also died for lack of funds. However the Planning Department is still insisting that sidewalks in a horse-keeping area is a must before a developer can get final approval of his building plans, which makes no sense. Meanwhile, the City trees keep growing and the sidewalks' upheaval worsens. The City acknowledges that 43% of their 11,000 miles of sidewalks need repair. The leading cause of the damaged sidewalks is of course the type of trees planted by the City years ago. In order to qualify for Federal Funds, the City in 1973, assumed responsibility for repair. In 2009 the City suspended repairing the sidewalks, though they still patch. A couple of years ago, in a declining real estate market, the City came up with the brilliant idea of forcing the property owner to repair the sidewalk before the property could be sold. In real estate vernacular, this was another "point of sale" expense. Fortunately, the real estate industry was able to fight back, and squelch this idea. The Daily News, in an article about a year ago, estimated the cost of repairing the City sidewalks was in the area of \$1.2 billion to \$2 billion. The latest thinking on the problem is apparently these alternatives: (a) Float a bond; (b) Turn the problem back to the property owner, (c) City to inspect and bill the property owner, and (d) Require the property owner to apply for a permit, then pay for the work. None of these are attractive solutions. What I have not been able to find out is whether the City is still receiving repair money from the Federal Government. During questions it was noted that 4600 of 15000 mi of sidewalks is an old, required number that needs to be updated. (Another suggestion was that Santa Monica uses recycled rubber.)

Bart Reed – Transit Coalition on Valley Centric Transportation Issues

Bart highlighted the establishment of a bus stop at VanNuys/Plummer to service vets was approved by MTA. He noted that increased availability of bike racks on buses is becoming a priority and that there is increasing pressure all over CA for these racks. The Transit Coalition has a group of student interns working to document the interchange timing of buses and trains; only 17% match. Fixing this could increase MTA revenue by 12%. New corners in Sylmar are being fixed. In some cases there were no curbs at all. Bart told us that Metro is working to connect the Valley with West LA. There is a meeting next Wednesday to address this. There was a question of which bus routes were effective. Bart told us that putting buses on Sepulveda instead of Van Nuys increased bus usage. Bike rider day was a big success where 10 mi of streets were closed.

Denny Schneider - Aviation Topics in the Region

The LAWA Program Level Environmental Impact Review is due for release in June. The most controversial portion of all plans considered is the LAWA goal to move a runway north which will be VERY expensive, impact local major highway traffic flow for an extended period, and destroy the local business base paying taxes to LA. LAWA continues to refuse to monitor the large tunnel that is located under the runways for an unknown water source which greatly complicates the runway movements. Safety was raised as the initial reason for runway movement, but a Northside Runway Safety Study conducted by the top academic experts in the US along with NASA simulations showed safety to be a non-issue. Tom Bradley upgrade cost estimates are increasing and their completion date has slipped into next year.

LAWA is working with the LA Planning Department to develop anew Sign District for inside LAX. All types of signs including those banned in the rest of the City would be at the discretion of the Executive Director. Local groups are pushing to ensure that Plan wording includes prohibitions on signs that can be seen outside of LAX. ARSAC recommended that signs be made capable of relating security warnings and other traffic avoidance notices to motorists within the CTA but no word on that suggestion is available at this time. Regionalization continues in the wrong direction. LAX increased flights while ONT airport continues to lose flights. A preliminary report on the offer from the City of Ontario to give the LA General Fund \$50million to cancel the management MOU is due next month. Airports can't use their funds for non-airport uses. The Ontario offer provides \$50 million toward our annual General Fund deficit.

Los Angeles Residential Helicopter Noise Relief Act of 2011, H.R.2677, was introduced by Rep Berman, Howard L. [CA-28] on 7/28/2011 and is cosponsored by Rep Schiff, AdamB. [CA-29], Rep Sherman, Brad [CA-27], and RepWaxman, Henry A. [CA-30]. It remains stalled in House subcommittee on Aviation since July 2011.

The next regular monthly meeting of Valley VOTE will be on Monday, May 21, 2012 at Galpin Ford.

Valley VOTE Mission Statement

Valley VOTE, a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley residents, businesspeople, 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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