

Valley VOTE

Valley Voters Organized Toward Empowerment

August 19 Meeting Report by David DeVoss



President Joe Vitti returns to Valley Vote to welcome LA Controller Ron Galperin to the September meeting.

New City Controller Ron Galperin Wants A More Modern, Efficient Los Angeles

Young, personable and engaging, City Controller Ron Galperin told Valley Voters at their September meeting that he will bring technological improvements to Los Angeles city government. “The city is behind technologically,” he declared. “What do we get for the money we spend? At the city hall east parking garage there’s a woman in a booth who has parking requests faxed to her. Who faxes? Why not create a phone app for iPads that will appear on a screen in her booth once it is WIFI enabled? Think about the amount of time wasted on just making something as simple as a parking reservation.”

So why hasn’t this inefficiency been eliminated? “Because it’s always easier to say no than yes,” Galperin concedes. “People working for the city will explain in great detail the 50 reasons why something can’t be done.”

Technological upgrades will force the city to focus on return on investments. “Just look at vast data we have,” he notes. “A lot of staff time is used for public records information requests. Wouldn’t be better to have things online?”

Recently, \$42 million was “found” at the Department of Transportation that should have been deposited in general fund. There are more than 1,040 special funds in the city of Los Angeles and every one of them should be examined, according to Galperin. Targeted for special attention are contracts for consultants who do work for different departments. At present, no neutral party examines these contracts to insure they are price competitive.

Only three audits (LAPD, LAWA and the Port of Los Angeles) are required by the charter. When going beyond the basic requirements of his office, Galperin wants his inquiries to make a positive difference. “There’s going to be a \$3 billion street bond, but the city has no idea what it spends per lane mile compared to other jurisdictions,” he says. “We need to do a better job of benchmarking things.”

Airport Report by Denny Schneider

Bob Hope Airport will be starting a significant renovation to improve terminal passenger service and for better transit access. See www.burbankairport.com.

Meanwhile the saga of LAX continues. The lame duck BOAC tried to approve hundreds of millions of dollars of consultant contracts at its last meeting and will be reconsidering even greater amounts of long lasting consultant contracts and airline leases at its next meeting. Previous Mayor Antonio Villariagosa’s runway expansion plan hit a roadblock when Mayor Garcetti identified a new Board of Airport Commissioners (BOAC). Only Commissioner Velasco, who favored modernization without expansion will be retained. They will oppose the conceptually approved, greatly impacting, runway to be rebuilt further north.

Mass transit into LAX has long been laughed at since the 1970s when the Green Line stopped a couple miles short of entering LAX. Mass transit is beginning to heat up as discussions continue on how to best use the Measure R funding. Proposals include a Crenshaw-LAX Line spur into a new Integrated Transportation Facility along with a high capacity people mover supporting the Central Terminal Area.

Yet another legal battle at LAX continues as media contracts probably will be voided due to conflict of interest charges. Also FreeOntario is expected to have a first appearance in court next month. Inland Empire local entities are demanding return of their airport control from Los Angeles World Airports. In the past few years LA/ONT has lost almost half of its passenger service and there is fear that it will be difficult to recover if the trend continues.

Pensions & Rent Discounts by Vic Viereck

According to new city controller Ron Galperin, wages and pensions at the Department of Water & Power exceed those of other government jobs. Correcting the problem will benefit ratepayers. Not only will homeowners and tenants save on their utility bills, but also their money saved can be used for other purchases. Sales and property tax revenues will grow from the expanded tax base instead of shrinking from higher rates.

Eminent domain is raising its head again. But instead of focusing on property ownership, it hopes to eliminate mortgages on upside-down properties. Some city officials want to require owners of mortgages on such properties to be sold at a discount. This way the interest rates, balances and payments could be reduced for occupants. This may sound good for borrowers, but it likely would make lenders increase charges on future loans. In the long run this does not help affordable housing. Politicians should be aware of the consequences of their giveaways.

Finally, it was great to see Joe Vitti back at the helm of Valley Vote on August 19 after his extended battle with cancer. Valley Vote members welcome Joe's enthusiasm for Valley development. Guest speakers will appreciate receiving a Valley Vote coffee mug from Joe's collection.

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