



Valley Voters Organized Toward Empowerment
July 21, 2014 Meeting Report
by
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LA Watchdog Barks



Jack Humphreville

Do you trust City Hall and have confidence in your elected representative? In most cities the question prompts a moment of thoughtful reflection. In Los Angeles, it's a laugh line. The mood turned serious at Valley VOTES July meeting, however when City Council candidate and chairman of the DWP Advocacy Committee Jack Humphreville started to toll the list of LA's rogue organizations and miscreants, some of whom literally have been caught with their

pants down. DWP, LAX, Department of Building & Safety, Jose Huisar, Richard Alarcon, Jose Huiser again. “There’s a lot of out of control development,” Humphreville added. “And corporate giveaways. Why should the city give over \$50 million to Westfield Development when they’re already assured a 20% return on their West Valley investment?”

Humphreville writes the “LA Watchdog” column for City Watch LA, a website covering local politics. Perhaps his most attention-worthy target of late is Brian D’Arcy, the leader of the DWP’s IBEW union who, despite two adverse court rulings, still refuses to disclose what happened to \$40 million in taxpayer money intended for the union’s Joint Training Institute and Joint Safety Institute. For a utility with \$4.5 billion in annual revenues \$40 million is pocket money - unless it’s money from your pocket. “Ten members of the City Council have taken contributions from D’Arcy and questions will be asked the next time they run for office. But the five people who haven’t taken union money are worried, too, since they fear D’Arcy will finance their competition.”

Humphreville doubts the \$40 million was stolen. He speculates that instead of being used for worker training and safety education the funds went to keep some of the 2,000 DWP employees laid off in 2002 on the payroll. Union dues lost by staff reductions probably were recouped by money intended for safety training.

Humphreville is encouraged by the fact that the new DWP general manager, Marcie Edwards (who appeared before Valley VOTE in May) “ is an industry professional not a political hack,” but running a \$4 billion utility with 10,000 people will not be easy. City councilmen use the DWP as a cookie jar, tasking it to install lighting and irrigation systems in their district. The cost adds up since DWP salaries are 35% above the city norm. Mayor Eric Garcetti, city controller Ron Galperin and city attorney Michael Feuer have asked DWP to conduct a benchmarking study to compare its expenses without utilities in the region. It is not a request on which the IBEW is expected to quickly act.

Humphreville believes LA should adopt a “Live Within Our Means” charter amendment that could help the city eventually meet its

unfunded liabilities. At present the city owes its pension system, needs money for street repairs and sidewalks. City Hall refuses to deal with these issues. Because of fiduciary malfeasance in the past, LA's recent attempts to promote bonds have met with skepticism. A charter amendment could force city leaders to adopt more responsible policies.

Mental Health Hookup



Barbara Wilson

Before Ronald Reagan became governor in 1967, California was No. 1 in nation in terms of mental health treatment. Today it ranks to No. 47. This disturbing trend troubles Barbara Wilson, a Valencia resident and advocate for the mentally impaired. "Today," she notes, "Los Angeles has only 14 psychiatric beds for every 100,000 people, the same ratio that existed in 1850. Los Angeles, a city with the highest number of homeless military veterans in the nation, is not a good place to be mentally ill. "The largest mental health facility in the county is the men's central jail," Wilson says. The decision to close

the Camarillo State Hospital was based on cost savings, but in most respects forcing mentally impaired non criminals into the county jail costs more.

Passed in 2012, Prop 63 provides for new services only. It can't be used for existing mental health services, which endured 20 years of cuts. This means that instead of air conditioning an existing facility and entirely new facility must be built in order to have it air conditioned. Wilson's organization, Mental Health Hookup (www.mentalhealthhookup.com) assists relatives seeking care for an unstable person by locating legal services, housing and community mental health treatment.

Vic Viereck on Real Estate

The Los Angeles City Council is proceeding with an unwise plan to grant exclusive franchises for waste hauling from commercial properties.

The Exclusive Waste Proposal has faces a diverse group of community and business opponents. I am a board member of the Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles, which primarily represents mom and pop apartment owners. The average ownership is no more than nine units. They are all opposed to the exclusive waste franchise proposal. I was also on the Greater Valley Glen (Neighborhood) Council, which voted to oppose the exclusive waste franchise proposal. Most of the neighborhood councils involved in the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils oppose the proposal. I am a member of the Universal City North Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and the United Chambers of Commerce. Both organizations represent many small businesses, and are strongly OPPOSED to the Exclusive Waste Hauling program. Valley VOTE, of which I am a long time member, also opposes it. While including the environmental needs in trash collection, the County of Los Angeles is not including the job killing Franchise Exclusion.

The disastrous faults included in the proposal would create the following problems:

1. It would grow the city's already horrendous anti-business image.
2. Destroy about 120 existing waste haulers, and eliminate all of their jobs.
3. The image would prevent many other businesses from entering Los Angeles.
4. Keeping other businesses from Los Angeles will prevent job growth and will prevent property and sales tax revenue growth, by much more than the Franchise fees that are planned, and would reduce state income tax revenue.
5. If larger trucks are included, their weight will create significant new street damage that will require expensive street repair work.
6. Apartment owners will be penalized for tenants' failure to recycle. The City Council's RSO eliminates any control apartment owners would have when a tenant breaks such a law. The consequences would be devastating.

Community members, recognizing the potential damage to the economy are now promoting a ballot initiative to REPEAL the Exclusive Waste Franchise proposal.

Denny Schneider on LAWA

"Century Crunch" will begin Friday, July 25 at 6 A.M. and will cause delays into and out of LAX. The good news is that the Crenshaw-LAX line is going to be built. It will also be forerunner of what traffic will be like as LAX meets its target planned expansion rate of passenger travelers by diverting existing traffic into the two Sepulveda north and south entrances for LAX. See http://www.metro.net/projects/crenshaw_corridor/webmasters-spread-word-crenshawlax/.

There are no local road improvements, the train and bus routes are not improved, and nominal terminal improvements in the Central

Terminal Area will exacerbate traffic woes in and around LAX. LAX has a virtual monopoly consisting of over 95% of all So. Cal air passengers and is again slated to hit an all-time high record of over 70 Million passengers this year. Press releases tout the closure of Century Boulevard at Aviation, but note also that the north-south route along Aviation will be closed as well.

There is a new alternative to get to LAX. At \$8 it is the same cost as the Van Nuys and Downtown LAX Fly-Aways. Seventeen daily buses, dubbed the Santa Monica Fly-Away, now route to LAX from Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. Don't count on a rapid train solution into LAX. It will be a long time coming...

Valley VOTE is a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley residents, business people, educators, community activists, and organizations that are committed to exploring and fostering the implementation of programs that empower the people of the San Fernando Valley and the City of Los Angeles. Some of the issues we support include: business tax reform, expanded cultural activities for the Valley, campaign finance reform, promoting smart growth, improving traffic conditions, increasing government efficiency, regional airport expansion, insuring fair police response times. We also act as a "watchdog" to see that promises made by City Hall are fulfilled.

Valley VOTE is a non-profit 501c(4) organization incorporated in 1998. Membership applications are available on line at Valleyvote.org. There is no paid staff and we are supported financially by membership dues. We look forward to your participation and support.