



# Valley VOTE

Organized Toward Empowerment Voters  
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## **VALLEY VOTE REPORT: May 18, 2015 MEETING**

Minutes accumulated by Denny Schneider

**Galpin Ford - 2nd Floor Meeting Room, 15555 Roscoe Boulevard, North Hills, CA 91343**

*Valley Vote meetings are held the third Monday of each month to address critical public policy issues impacting the San Fernando Valley. **The next meeting will be June 15, 2015.***

This meeting featured a discussion with LA City Council member Paul Krekorian, Chair of the Council budget committee and MTA Board member, and Dan Feinberg, president of CASM who spoke about the issue of reservoir sediment collection and disposal.

President Joe Vitti spoke of the impacts that Valley VOTE, a premier volunteer organization in the San Fernando Valley, is making to improve Valley quality of life. To volunteer for positions as Board member and Executive Board member of Valley Vote or to see the dozens of impact position statements taken to improve the SFV visit our website: [www.ValleyVOTE.org](http://www.ValleyVOTE.org)

### **Paul Krekorian, LA City Council member**



Council member Krekorian is passionate about helping all of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley in particular. He is proud of the budget work done by LA to eliminate 85% of the structural deficit projected in 2008 and to improve infrastructure and services. He is working to make LA more business friendly. Paul spoke briefly on several key issues while encouraging questions.

As a Los Angeles representative on the MTA Board he has been the voice of the San Fernando Valley for rail and bus improvements. He noted that the two million SFV residents are underserved by rail when compared to the other eight million LA County residents; only two of eighty stations are in the SFV. He points out that MTA includes buses and other transport methods that all need to have interconnectivity and work effectively. Paul stated unequivocally that any follow up "Measure R" transportation tax needs SFV support to be voter approved and that this time his constituents in the SFV deserve and demand more.

He noted that transportation improvements should include a better Orange line which is efficient, faster, and has increased capacity. Paul was cognizant of the issues of upgrading to light rail while the buses are operating. He knew, "It can only be done well with proper planning."

An Orange line extension could also better connect the SFV with points east as well. Further North-South transportation improvements are also necessary for the traffic plagued SFV. Roadway and freeway improvements such as the 101 pinch-points are a priority as well. Other modes must be embraced too and all of our streets and sidewalks need to be addressed.

Although we are not out of the woods in our budget woes, Paul is proud that LA's \$100M stabilization "rainy day fund" is at a funded all-time high while paying down banked police over-time liabilities and increasing the numbers of police and fire fighters. Crime scene investigators are being increased. LA is still the safest major City despite the uptick in crime. Ten plus years ago LA had 1000 annual homicides which is down to 200 now.

Equally important, very large and expensive transport elements such as a Sepulveda Pass tunnel cannot be done by government alone. Public-private partnerships to include toll lanes and freight capacity are critical for success.

Many of the proposals from the 2020 Commission are now being investigated such as budget long term planning for three years is under consideration.

When asked how soon the LA business tax could be eliminated, Paul said not in five years. It provides \$440M in income and although rates are being reduced it is still needed to balance the books. He said that we need to look at elimination of the tax on tax sensitive businesses first.

Another idea being reviewed is the contracting out of some City services.

There is now hope that the sidewalk repair issue will become less impacting since the City settled an ADA lawsuit by agreeing to spend about \$31M/year for 30 years on sidewalk repairs.

Paul agreed to come back to Valley VOTE in the future to discuss many other topics such as development.

### **Dan Feinberg, President of CASM working to improve handling of sediment removal from our water storage reservoirs.**



Dan Feinberg identified yet another issue for those in the SFV to track and address—disposal of massive amounts of sedimentation from existing water reservoirs. His organization website, CASM-SFV.org, describes concerns including safety, health, noise, and truck traffic to name a few. This issue is under the control of LA County Flood Control, Department of Public Works. CASM is looking for both short term and long term solutions that minimize impacts on surrounding communities.

LADPW water supply responsibilities encompass fifteen major dams and 27 spreading grounds in the county. The largest, Pacoima Dam, is the one of primary concern. It survived the Northridge earthquake in 1994 intact.

In his presentation, Dan showed that sediment increases from mountainous water runoff are causing the dam capacity to be diminished. Water released from the dam is used to recharge groundwater supplies. After sufficient percolation and cleaning occurs the water is then pumped out and returned to use in our water supply.

The amounts of sediment to be removed is staggering--in the range of millions of cubic yards. Instead of regularly removing smaller amounts of sediment each year LADPW tends toward waiting until sediment removal becomes critical and requires millions of truck trips depending on the disposal site.

The LADPW has removed sediment from the dams less than ten times over the past eighty years. Current plans call for a massive removal in the near-term. This is a major project instead of doing smaller, more manageable amounts more regularly. The most critical argument is where to place the removed materials and whether to use routes that are more “down hill” adjacent to residences or pump materials up hill for much shorter distances.

## **Valley VOTE Committee Reports:**

### **Joe Vitti – re: membership**

Our purpose is to fight for fair representation for the SFV and to ensure the City acts in the best interest of its citizens. Please send your dues to help defray costs. Your board is all volunteers. Membership applications were distributed and can be found on the website [www.ValleyVOTE.org](http://www.ValleyVOTE.org)

### **Victor N. Viereck- Make It Fair???? Tax**

So many business people are leaving this state it's like leaving the state of Taxes for Texas. Another group that is advocating changing Proposition 13 wants to change the way supposedly large commercial property is taxed. They claim that 90% of businesses will get property tax relief from their proposal. They also claim that "huge commercial property owners continue to be taxed at rates that have hardly changed since Gerald Ford was President."

It's difficult to believe that small businesses, which are tenants in large commercial properties, would benefit when taxes are increased on the properties in which they are tenants. Furthermore, the property taxes allocated to each tenant business are paid for by the customers. As property taxes go up on whatever size of real estate, either customers pay the difference, or the tenant businesses make a smaller taxable profit.

Reality wipes out the claim about taxes on huge commercial properties having hardly changed. Proposition 13 includes a 2% annual increase in the assessed value of taxable real estate. Considering that Proposition 13 became effective in 1979, 2% compounded annually for the 35 years works out to an increase of just over 99% (almost doubling the original tax).

Proposition 13 is one of the last competitive benefits California has against other states. Increasing the basis for charging property tax on commercial property would be another big job killer.

Victor N. Viereck

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### **David DeVoss-Water Use Report- Water, Water Everywhere**

Los Angeles has one of the best records in the country when it comes to water conservation. LA's water usage hasn't increased in over 30 years despite adding more than 1,000,000 people.

Los Angeles' effort to save water has been unremitting. A decade ago, the city offered \$300 rebates to families willing to buy low flow toilets. The Toilet Rebate Program and the Toilet Exchange Program replaced nearly 1.3 million water-wasting toilets. Low-flush toilets alone continue to save Los Angeles more than 14 billion gallons of water each year—enough to fill the Rose Bowl about 56 times.

Since 1979 LA has used recycled water at Griffith Park, Mount Sinai and Forest Lawn Memorial Parks. More than 30,000-acre feet of recycled water from the Donald C. Tillman reclamation plant feed Lake Balboa, Wildlife Lake and the Japanese Garden.

You might think the city would encourage citizens to do the same thing with gray water, the mildly soapy effluent that drains out of showers, bath tubs, washing machines and dish washers. But the DWP website offers no information or incentives on the topic, despite the fact that this clean but non-potable product could meet much of our residential irrigation needs.

Several plumbing companies, at least one based in the Valley, will re-pipe a house to capture gray water for \$2,000 to \$2,500. If the house is on a sloping lot, gravity-fed irrigation eliminates the need for a pump. But under existing municipal rules gray water can't be used for surface irrigation. It must be piped directly into the ground. DWP says gray water could cause air pollution. But is this the real reason?

Some believe DWP's reluctance to allow gray water irrigation stems from its decision some years back to let Valley residents purchase meters that measure outdoor water use. It was a good investment since there was no service charge applied to water used for landscaping. The DWP does not want to lose more sewer fees. Some people believe the next step in the city's war on landscaping will be to abolish this separate metering instituted primarily for the Valley.

David DeVoss [EastWestNewsServ@aol.com](mailto:EastWestNewsServ@aol.com)

### **Ralph Kroy - Sunshine Canyon**

Background: The landfill is located at 14747 San Fernando Road, near and West of the " I - 5" and the 14 freeway intersection. Th facility is now owned and operated by Republic Services, as the BFI Sunshine Canyon Landfill, and operated as a joint L A City and County operation.

Status: The landfill continues to get more and more complaints within the SCAQMD's 10,500 square miles area, more than all the other fifteen landfills combined.

The landfill tries to improve, but still falls short, as noted in the recent Sunshine Canyon Landfill Citizens Advisory Committee (SCL- CAC) reporting on Thursday, May 14, 2015, at the Knoll wood Country Club. The next SC-CAC meeting will be, Thursday, July 9, 2015.

There was discussion at the meeting, of the new air filters installed at the Van Gogh Street Elementary School classrooms, with a partial improvement in the classrooms. A higher grade filter system, with specific gas selection may be required, per the LAUSD environmental representative.

The landfill has noted that the twenty five megawatt landfill gas to electricity system, by DTE, is now in operation, and was shown to the community recently. This makes some good use of the vast amounts of methanes gas that is generated at the landfill. There still is the major problem of the other noxious gases that cause the odors and irritation that is being reported.

Ralph Kroy, [REKroy@aol.com](mailto:REKroy@aol.com)

### **Susan Shelley - Report on Pierce College Farm**

Intent of resolution: For decades when budget times have been hard, the Pierce College Farm has been threatened with commercial development. Over time the Farm was to become a golf course, shopping mall or residential housing. Dozens of acres have already been sold off. Pierce College began as an agricultural farm after WWII and sits on 426 acres, over half of which is a farm.

Forty-one million acres of rural land in the United States have been permanently lost in the last 25 years to highways, shopping malls, poorly planned sprawl and other development, according to a new analysis by the American Farmland Trust. Recently, there was an uproar in the media and by the local community due to the threat of more land being sold for commercial development. Over 10,000 members of the Woodland Hills community signed petitions asking us to "protect the farm."

To that end, we would like to ask the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Pierce College to please fully support this resolution asking for a feasibility study to determine the potential impact of either an agricultural conservation easement (that would prevent commercial development in perpetuity) or an equivalent protection (including a simple deed restriction) that would ensure the community and the college that our farm is safe and ensure donors that contributing to the growing Pierce College Farm Endowment is money well spent. Please endorse the following resolution:

"Be it resolved that the Foundationfor Pierce College supports the following resolution leading toward Permanent Agricultural status for the Pierce College Farm land:

Whereas the Pierce Farm is one of the largest undeveloped piece of land in the San Fernando Valley,  
Whereas the Pierce Farm was created and designed to provide agricultural education,

Whereas the Pierce Farm has periodically been threatened with a diminishment of its size and scope,  
Whereas the Board of Trustees supports the continued Agricultural Education use of the Farm,  
Therefore be it resolved that the Foundation for Pierce College requests that the LACCD Board of rustees ask the Chancellor to utilize the resources needed, internal and external, to develop a feasibility study of the "Permanent Agricultural Protected Land" status options available to the Pierce Farm, including any potential easements, conservancy status, or any other legal options for guaranteeing the permanent protection of this portion of the Pierce College property. Such study shall be completed and reported back to the Board of Trustees no later than September 1, 2015.

The resolution asking the Los Angeles Community College District Board of Trustees to order a study of the feasibility of permanently protecting the Pierce College Farm with a conservation easement or its equivalent has the unanimous support of:

- The Board of Directors of the Foundation for Pierce College
- The faculty unions at all nine colleges, Los Angeles Community College District (by unanimous vote of the eBoard)
- The Associated Students Organization (ASO) of Pierce College
- The Academic Policy Committee of Pierce College (all department chairs at the college)
- The Academic Senate of Pierce College
- Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils, 34 Neighborhood Councils in San Fernando Valley
- The Board of Directors of Valley VOTE

Susan Shelley [Susan@SusanShelley.com](mailto:Susan@SusanShelley.com)

**Denny Schneider - Airport Report**

Renovation and landside upgrades is the watchword for LAX. As part of the \$7 billion airport upgrade United Airlines broke ground last week on a major \$573-million major-hub upgrade for Terminal 7. Terminal upgrades will incorporate better amenities including kiosk check in and increased numbers of TSA queue lines. The target for completion is December 2017.

Mayor Garcetti favors authorizing on-demand public driver services like Uber and Lyft into LAX to drop off and pick up passengers. These companies are expected to have approved entry before year end. Existing taxis, limo, and other public conveyances have asked for a level competition playing field. They ask that all drivers be covered by adequate insurance to protect passengers, that the cars be immediately identifiable with a logo and/or transponder in the window for the safety of riders, and that security background checks be conducted for drivers and LA City or LAWA badges issued (as done for taxi and limo drivers). Plans currently call for drop off only on the upper level; other suggestions have included special drop off areas to reduce the massive congestion already existing in the Central Terminal Area.

Traffic congestion in the CTA continues to increase as passenger levels continue to increase to record highs. Congestion will remain for the foreseeable future as the failed upper roadway expansion joints are replaced. Much work will remain; the creeping rust issues remain un addressed. New roadway patterns and the train/people mover access to the CTA is to begin sometime next year.

Water shortage was on the forefront of our consciousness this month when Mayor Garcetti announced an MOU to allow our LADWP/Sanitation Department and LAWA to jointly build a large watershed along the north side of LAX. The work will be funded with Prop O funds. Project approval was complicated by the FAA insistence that LADWP/Sanitation Department pay LAWA full market value for the use of the land. This is a win for everyone because significant water will be replenished into the ground and become available to be pumped out as needed. The plans include allowing local recreational use on the surface.

Denny Schneider, President Alliance for A Regional Solution to Airport Congestion  
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**Valley VOTE Mission Statement**

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. We meet monthly to address key policy issues and hear reports from our standing committee chairs. 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.