



Valley VOTE

Organized Toward Empowerment Voters
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VALLEY VOTE REPORT: September 21, 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 October 19, 2015.***

This meeting featured newly elected LAUSD District 3 school board member Scott Schmerelson whose portion of the district is in the SFV who has spent over 35 working at all levels of education including Principal of Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. middle school. He is treasurer of the Cuban-American Teachers' Association and has held various offices in the Association of California School Administrators. Also featured was Cindy Montanez who has had a career of firsts in varied levels of government representing the Valley including Mayor of the City of San Fernando and California Assembly. Within Los Angeles she served on the LA Planning Commission and was Assistant General Manager of LA Department of Water and Power.

Also presented were reports covering various topics of interest by several Board members. 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

Scott Schmerelson – LAUSD District 3



In the most recent election Scott Schmerelson was elected to the LAUSD School Board with an attitude of inclusion and that people are responsible for their actions. He has always worked in schools, not administration buildings. He alerted us that the current Superintendent will be leaving soon and that in the near future we will be seeing surveys about the characteristics needed for a new administrative leader for LAUSD. He encourages Neighborhood Councils to be vocal on this issue.

Mr. Schmerelson is one of seven board members and he is dedicated to good education for all. He told us that there is hope. Our schools are “producing very good, excellent students” and “they are our future.” He suggested that we tour our local schools and, if any of us has the time, we should volunteer our services.

He noted that he does not oppose recent initiatives to increase charter school participation. They must be open, fair, and take their share of special education kids. We have all kinds of schools to meet needs—large schools, small schools, traditional, and others. He feels that eliminating manual arts classes was a mistake and should be restored into the curriculum, but expects that only some classes addressing building trades training will be added within current the \$7B annual budget. He is pleased to note that the school board members have had experience in operating schools and educating children.

Every student who graduates from LAUSD has the correct courses to attend college, but not all will do so. Some students will go into the trades. Everyone, however, needs higher education.

Control of student behavior is difficult. To suspend a student now-a-days is almost unheard of. LAUSD does more and more counselling. Food service in our 1000 schools needs tailoring. Right now students are mandated to accept all components of a lunch if the school is to be reimbursed. This is done even if students just want an apple and plan to throw out a large portion of the food provided. Mr. Schmerelson

wants to change this. He provided an example of his concern that children are only willing to drink flavored milk, not regular white milk. Sugar in the flavored milk is not significant, but it gets the children to drink it. He agreed to look into more serving of water in the schools.

Mr. Schmerelson supports sustainable gardens and water conservation and wants to see the district do even more. He told us about a problem with some artificial turf which cannot handle the heat and needs to be watered!

He addressed the low test scores of LAUSD. He noted that the computer programs have not kept up to give the students experience of using computers to answer test questions. Some students were not well versed in navigating the computer skills and that put them at the disadvantage of trying to work the problems while learning to use the computer.

Mr. Schmerelson told us that LAUSD is one of the least funded districts (per capita) within California and that the ratio of administrators to teachers is also lower than most at the schools.

Computers are in the schools and in sufficient quantity for testing along with internet services. There has been lessons learned and they are being corrected. Children are now being computer use trained. The district is getting \$6.7M from the suppliers. As a principal Mr. Schmerelson collected the school books back a couple weeks early and left one set in the classroom. This dramatically increased the return rate and ensured that students had a book available until the end of school year. At the end of the school year almost 1000 computers were unaccounted for. Because they had tracers they recovered about 600 of them. "This is public money and we must protect it."

Cindy Montanez, citizen representative



Ms. Montanez is a believer in open government. People should have access to their elected officials. Ms. Montanez acknowledged Valley VOTE as a critical driver for improvement in the San Fernando Valley with greater access to services and representation since the secession movement in the early 2000s.

She is still active in the City of San Fernando where she was Council member and then Mayor. She is working to protect her city from the invocation of the High Speed Rail as currently planned because it divides the 27,000 person city in half. She had initially supported the project, but at that time it was in the area of \$9B with one third from private sector funds. Today it's up to \$68B and all of the money is to come from AB32 taxpayer funds. This is the bill that addressed global warming by reducing the carbon emissions to that which existed in 1990. This was to be accomplished by a cap and trade system where carbon use credits could be bought and sold from non-polluters for more polluting projects. She feels that if HSR was to be voted on today it would fail to be approved. Cap and trade represents over \$1B per year of income for CA. Twenty-five percent of AB32 money is going to HSR. In perspective, the CA budget is \$160-170B of which several hundred million dollars is for initiating HSR.

In the question and answer period Ms. Montanez stated that it's likely that cap and trade will become reduced. She also pointed out that Metro budget is about \$5B annually so the present HSR cost estimates are a big piece of that. She would rather see the money invested locally for transportation.

Ms. Montanez has a private company that works with many companies and advocates to reduce impacts from heavy vehicles which post about 40% of the air pollution. The pressure is on the small independent truck owners. She wants to help them by getting a \$100M/year for five years to help retrofits into cleaner burning vehicles. It passed with bipartisan support, but has been suspended in appropriations until the more comprehensive bill, SB350, is enacted to increase renewable energy use to 50% proportion by the power companies by 2030. The audience

questioned, and she agreed, that part of the issue is the definition of renewable. For example, hydropower is accessible to northern states, but less locally. Small hydropower is included in the credits only partially because CA environmental groups do not favor use of dams which impact the ecosystems. This is in preference to the 50% reduction in petroleum produced power because of the increase impact on oil and gas prices.

The water bond provides \$900M to help with groundwater cleanup. LADWP will need one-third of the money for its activities. Timing is important for water clean up and collection. We expect el nino storms this year, but may not be in a position to do adequate water collection. Water recycling, stormwater capture and clean up are all part of the equation to reduce LA dependence on outside water.

Nuclear power plants like the one in Az represents almost 10% of what we produce, but increases have not considered due to political considerations.

One question raised for which there is a limited answer is what do you do when the power is needed at a time when the non-polluting energy sources are unavailable. This is a major challenge. We need to ask these types of questions when LADWP asks for rate increases to pay for these new, more expensive energy sources. Fossil fuel remains the major energy source that is always available for consumer use. Geothermal can be, but it is limited in amounts available.

She is also working on housing issues and is on Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council as well. There's more pressure for multi-family units. One major question is where to put them and the impacts. Ms. Montanez supports housing in the downtown areas, but the SFV is different in character. SFV streets are not designed to handle the larger attendant traffic. She agrees that water usage in multi-units needs to be controlled to the unit level to ensure conservation.

A last item discussed was the impending Iran deal. She was opposed to the deal as proposed and was pleased that Congressmen Brad Sherman and Tony Cardenas felt the same.

Valley VOTE Committee Reports:

Victor N. Viereck- Real estate issues

Apartment Retrofit: A crucial issue under current discussion is retrofitting apartments to prevent fatal injuries and loss of housing from a significant earthquake. Depending upon the type of building structure and subsurface earth structure, not all buildings would be subject to any damage. But many buildings would be subject to severe damage, causing death and possibly total destruction. Property owners need a means of promptly determining the risk at their own properties. Even tenants should make themselves aware of their own risks residing where they do. As soon as owners of properties at risk are able to determine their risk they need to plan their solutions and inform the tenants of their risks and the planned solutions. The tenants should be more concerned about their own physical risk than whether they are going to pay 50% or 100% of the retrofit costs.

Due to a wide range of financial matters of operating real estate, many property owners need to be able to borrow the funds needed in order to pay for the needed retrofits. The amount they are able to borrow depends primarily on the net cash flow generated by the property. If they cannot get an adequate pass through of cost to the tenants, the amount borrowed will be inadequate.

There are City Council members who want to limit the pass through to tenants to 50% of the cost, paid over at least a ten year period, but further limited to \$38.00 a month. They also do not want to include the cost of interest. If over ten years the interest rate is only 3.5%, the interest would still add about 17.5% to the payment cost. Unfortunately, many people do not understand that when businesses cannot cover MORE than their cost of doing business, they go out of business,

and others do not choose to go into a business. That might already be at least part of the reason that there is a shortage of so called affordable housing.

But the city officials and many tenants fail to realize that the 50% of loan cost, and \$38.00 are not the only limitations the owners face. Since newer tenants are paying at or close to market rate rents, no pass through of cost is sensible. That makes it even more critical to be able to pass through up to 100% of the retrofit cost to longer term tenants, subject to market rents.

If the destructive earthquake happens, properties at risk that were not retrofitted will be significantly damaged (besides injuries and fatalities suffered), causing loss of tax revenue from income tax and property tax. If tax credits are allowed based on amounts spent for adequate retrofits, loss of a lot of tax revenue would be prevented. Credits allowed in excess of state income tax incurred should be carried over to succeeding years.

Although total retrofit costs probably cannot be covered through pass through to tenants and tax credits, the pass through and tax credits are needed.

Air BnB: Public officials have recently been talking a lot about the need for what they call affordable housing. They are looking for means to finance it. They do not seem to have any concern over government policies that result in less affordable housing, particularly in the City of Los Angeles. They limit rent increases without regard to the cost of maintaining housing.

Now there is a new business that takes advantage of apartments whether or not they are rent controlled. Through Air BNB existing tenants rent out their own apartment homes on a short term basis, like one or a few more nights. Apartments subleased to the short term tenants, rent for market rate rents. When people stay for such brief times, there's more noise created than usual, detrimentally affecting the regular tenants.

While the free market is generally more beneficial to all, the existing regulations on apartments in Los Angeles allows Air BNB to profit from owners who have no opportunity to share in such activity. The City is looking to regulate short term rentals to collect money and protect rights of renters, tenants, and surrounding community members.

Victor N. Viereck For additional info: Victor N. Viereck, CPA 12702 Tiara Street, Valley Village, CA 91607 (818) 985-9174 vicviereck@sbcglobal.net

Ralph Kroy, Sunshine Canyon

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

The landfill continues to get more and more complaints and notices of violations from the SCAQMD's 10,500 square miles area, more than all the other fifteen landfills combined. It is the largest landfill in the United States, located virtually across the street from one of the largest water treatment plants in the United States. The dust and blown debris from the landfill blows into the treated water of the Van Norman reservoir that we drink—after some additional chlorine / chloramine treatment.

The landfill recently had a protest of its continued stench. The protest was by the public, the neighbors, students, and concerned citizens. The protest was noted, reported, on page three, in the Los Angeles Daily News, Sunday September 20, 2015 edition. The foul odors have been reported to the government agencies for some time, years, and little has been accomplished solving the problem. There have been weeks of continuous foul odors, with no let up recently, and that is one of the reasons for the public protest.

In some respects, the government is part of the problem. The City and County receive money, tipping fees, from the landfill. There is no hurry to shut down a government source of income. "Follow the Money" is ALWAYS a way of finding a problem when dealing with government or large organizations. The government has conducted one study after another to find the problem, and a solution that it could / would use. The obvious one is that there NEVER should be a landfill in a city. The landfill continues to add air recovery systems to the landfill, and this seems to be woefully too little to late. The stench continues.

Ralph Kroy REKroy@aol.com

Joe Vitti – Nuclear Power Applicability for our Power needs

President Obama was speaking on Wednesday Sept 16,2015 to the Business Roundtable Organization in Washington D.C. He was discussing the challenges of climate change and it's connection with energy policy. He discussed how wind and solar programs are playing a growing roll in meeting the negative environmental changes of the planet. He went on to say that nuclear power must remain in the the U.S. power supply program.. He pointed out the success of the Vogtle nuclear reactors in Georgia.

The following is from the web site of Southern Company that is building the 2 new nuclear reactors at the Vogtle site.

"Nuclear energy is a proven and innovative technology, with more than 50 years of safe and reliable operation in the U.S. It is a secure, dependable source of power that the nation can depend on which is not subject to unreliable weather or climate conditions. We continue to develop our nuclear power capacities with Plant Vogtle, the first new nuclear power generator to be built in the U.S. in 30 years as energy needs grow in the Southeast.

Southern Company intends to be on the forefront of exploring nuclear energy as an option for meeting rising electrical demand. The process to build two new reactors at Plant Vogtle is well underway, with plans to begin commercial operation of Unit 3 in 2016 and Unit 4 in 2017. Nuclear power is a safe, reliable, cost-effective power source that has a low impact on the environment. It is a prudent business decision to use nuclear energy as a means to meet our customers' needs."

Nuclear Power in Asia

Please find in the table below a summary of the Nuclear Power reactors planned for the Continent of Asia. China has 26 in operation , 24 under construction , and 44 planned. India has 21 in operation,6 under construction, and 22 planned. Japan has 43 in operation.3 under construction, and 9 planned. Considering all the negative publicity over Fukushima it is important to note that Japan has 4 power reactors under construction and are planning to build 9 more.

Nuclear Power in Asia, and Involvement with the Nuclear Fuel Cycle

| | Power Reactors operable or in Operation | Power Reactors Under Construction | Power Reactors Planned | Research Reactors | Other Stages of the Fuel Cycle |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Australia | | | | 1 | UM |
| Bangladesh | | | 2 | 1 | |
| China | 26 | 24 | 44 | 16 | UM, C, E, FF |
| India | 21 | 6 | 22 | 4 | UM, FF, R, WM |
| Indonesia | | | 1 | 3 | FF |
| Japan | 43 | 3 | 9 | 14 | C, E, FF, R, WM |
| S. Korea | 24 | 4 | 8 | 2 | C, FF |
| N.Korea | | | 0 | 1 | C?,FF?,R |
| Malaysia | | | 0 | 1 | |
| Pakistan | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | UM, E, FF |

| | Power Reactors operable or in Operation | Power Reactors Under Construction | Power Reactors Planned | Research Reactors | Other Stages of the Fuel Cycle |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Philippines | | | 0 | 1 | |
| Thailand | | | 0 | 1+1 | |
| Vietnam | | | 4 | 1 | |
| ** Total | 123 | 41 | 93 | 49* | |

* 48 research reactors operable, 1 under construction ** The total includes six reactors in operation, plus two under construction, on Taiwan. It also has one research reactor. Taiwan has no other stages of the fuel cycle.

Key: UM Uranium Mining, C Conversion, E Enrichment, FF Fuel Fabrication, R Reprocessing, WM Waste Management facilities for used fuel away from reactors. Sources: WNA Reactor table, WNA country papers, OECD/IEA World Energy Outlook

David DeVoss – The Housing Crisis

According to the Los Angeles Department of Housing and Community Development, the city needs to build 1,500 new housing units a year to keep pace with the worsening homeless crisis. Unfortunately, it only adds 300 new units each year. The gap between the need and the supply, says a Housing official, results from inefficiencies in the LA Department of Building and Safety, which must approve all plans and monitor the construction process. Instead of lobbying from within the municipal government to improve the Building & Safety's procedures confronting all citizens, the Department's solution is to exempt itself from Building & Safety oversight.

Prior to the recession of 2008, construction plans were approved expeditiously. When the economy declined thousands of commercial and residential projects were postponed. With less construction going on, cities throughout Southern California decided to save money by laying off building inspectors. Unfortunately, few of the inspectors laid off have been rehired. Permit approvals in Los Angeles can now take months, even longer in Pasadena, which laid off 50% of its building inspectors.

Eventually, new inspectors will be hired, but in the meantime be advised that the backyard granny flat you envision will probably take close to a year to be permitted, monitored and finally approved.

David DeVoss eastwestnewsserv@aol.com

Denny Schneider - Airport Report

As part of the FAA's NextGen efforts to modernize and upgrade to satellite based GPS style controls the FAA has embarked on an airspace redesign that has the capacity to impact all of the Southern California Metroplex area which ranges from Santa Barbara to the Mexican border and east beyond Palm Springs.

The prime FAA objective is to reduce aircraft movement complexity and to simplify controller intervention. Instead of pinballing aircraft from one radar control point to another they will be directed in straight lines using GPS controls. In general the FAA is making only "tweaks" of existing flight patterns because they incurred substantial grief from Northeastern US residents who were newly or more heavily impacted by the changes.

FAA changes will enhance the ability to move aircraft from one airport to another but will not generally enhance the number of aircraft able to take off or land. The FAA evaluation is based on current operational levels. It fails to anticipated future increases into account.

All information and data about this process is available at http://www.metroplexenvironmental.com/socal_metroplex/socal_outreach.html

Although FAA local efforts started almost three years ago, the public has only become involved within the past several months. Formal comments regarding FAA proposals has been extended

twice and are now due before October 10. Email your comments to: 9-ANM-SoCalOAPM@faa.gov or Mail to: SoCal Metroplex EA, FAA, Western Service Center - Operations Support Group, 1601 Lind Avenue SW, Renton, WA 98057

A warm welcome to two (of the seven) new LA City Board of Airport Commission members Jeff Daar and Nolan Rollins. Jeff Daar practices law in Woodland Hills and grew up in the shadow of Van Nuys Airport. Nolan Rollins is the director of the Urban League headquartered in the Crenshaw Area.

For more info: Denny Schneider, President Alliance for A Regional Solution to Airport Congestion Denny@WeLiveFree.com 310 641-4199 land 213 675-1817 mobile

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.