

# Valley VOTE

4622 Ventura Blvd, #424 Sherman Oaks, California 91403  
[www.valleyvote.org](http://www.valleyvote.org) Contact: President, Joe Vitti (email: [javittisr@cs.com](mailto:javittisr@cs.com))

**VALLEY VOTE REPORT: June 19, 2017 MEETING**  
**Minutes accumulated by Denny Schneider, Secretary**

**Galpin Ford - 2nd Fl. Meeting Room, 15505 Roscoe Boulevard, North Hills, CA 91343**

***Valley Vote meetings are held to address critical public policy issues impacting the San Fernando Valley. The next meeting will be July 17, 2017***

## **Bob Blumenfield, LA Councilmember, CD 3**

Councilmember Blumenfield represents the SFV but remains an active advocate for all of the City. He heads the Innovation, Grants, Technology, Commerce and Trade Committee which oversees the airports and harbor, is vice-chair of Energy and Environment Committee, and is a member of the arts, parks, and river committee, the budget and finance committee, and the ad hoc committees for immigrant affairs and civil rights, as well as the ad hoc for the LA Summer Olympics games.

He is bullish on the City's prospects. \$12.5B is being spent to modernize LAX along with Measure M funds to improve the area around LAX and the City in general. He told us that here will be growing pains as the work is done, but it will be enormously beneficial in the long run.

He highlighted the importance of upcoming updates to our City General Plan and for the West Valley entities where Community Plans are currently being updated. 90% of all parcels in his District are single family homes and he told us that these must be protected. Warner Center growth is identified in the Warner Center 2035 Plan which must also be accommodated in the Community Plans. Although he didn't support Measure S, he acknowledges that the Measure S message that updating our plans is critical and overdue is an important one. The Council goal is now to update all of the plans within six years. These plans, he told us, will reflect where the growth is currently happening but also where it should not be happening.

The City passed a new \$9.2B budget last month which includes increases for LAPD and LAFD and includes a new Valley headquarters. Pension funding changes are also included, but that issues is not fully resolved. Street reconstruction is a priority in Bob's District as well.

Former CRA properties represent significant opportunities. In Reseda will be a new theatre and senior project. Prop K, the recent bond issue for parks included money for an ice skating rink in Reseda. Bob obtained sponsorship for the facility from the Kings to help in the area revitalization by creating a public-private partnership. The Rocketdyne property is the largest area where new development can occur. This area's plan is still on hold as cleanup continues but we can anticipate the future will be bright.

CA Prop 64 passage allowing for Marijuana sales is another impactor. There were two competing measures; Measure M passed giving the City authority to do taxing and regulation.

When asked about excessive pension obligations Bob acknowledged that we are now underfunded to meet commitments because we failed to save money when the City investments were performing well above average. Before he joined the Council the excess money was instead used to increase pension promises so that we are now behind a power curve. We are still giving a defined benefit pension. As the assumed rate of return is decreased each ¼% the City must put away an extra \$100M per year to meet the obligations. The defined contribution approach would reduce the obligations, but there's a huge up front cost to change orientation which the City can't fund.

## **Scott Schmerelson, LAUSD Boardmember**

Board District 3 includes much of the West Valley. LA Unified School District is the largest school district for which the board which is independently elected. Most are appointed by other entities.

Sunshine Canyon is an issue impacting LAUSD. The trash odors and gases impact the local schools. The Porter Ranch storage facility gas releases also impact LAUSD schools.

He is a supporter of public schools. The Board is are working for the changes to make it effective education. Part of education, he feels, is to learn to work with all kinds of people—something that happens in public schools. Charter Schools created at the community level, he said, are transparent and good. On the other hand, “corporate” charter schools which do not take all students by excluding highly needy special education, handicapped students are unacceptable to him.

Scott went over the positives of some of the conversion charter schools like El Camino which use LAUSD facilities. He noted that there used to be a serious lack of transparency in the management of El Camino Charter resulting poor use of funds including very expensive meetings at expensive restaurants. He noted in that Charter School was an achievement gap between minority students and other students. This has been addressed and is improving.

LAUSD is located in the Arts capital of the world but it is underfunded for arts in our schools. He has suggested that arts and sporting events should be taxed in LA to support the arts in our schools. Mayor Garcetti suggested a surcharge be enacted via a proposition; money from the City is unavailable. The LAUSD annual budget is being set right now and will be down to \$8B, still a huge number. He doesn't expect that raises will be large as has happened in the past. They will be held to 1-2% as a onetime event rather than large annual raises.

There are two new board members who he feels were the result of external money injected into the campaigns. Although not thrilled with the election results Scott will be working with them to make LAUSD better.

He is proud that the graduation percentage has increased to 77%. Questions were raised about the graduation of underperforming students who were passed with some grades of D. In response to a question about sexual harassment, Scott noted that there will be a special prosecutor to ensure that these people are punished and removed from teaching.

One example of a positive change was the reintroduction of chocolate milk in the cafeterias. Chocolate milk was perceived by a previous board as being unhealthy. The reality is that it had no more sugar than an apple. The new board has enacted changes allowing the chocolate milk and found the cafeteria funding dynamics changed. It used to be virtually reliant on grants and federal food programs funding students to eat in the cafeteria. Cafeterias now break even without the subsidies.

There was no reduction in force notices this year! These occur when the estimates of teachers needed is inconsistent with the number of students registered in various schools. On the other hand more staff is now in the schools instead of LAUSD headquarters on Beaudry Street. Beaudry has had a 30% reduction of staff.

All of the transfers to the schools is based on seniority and there were challenges. One school with a 20% Armenian population saw every secretary that spoke Armenian bumped from their school where these secretaries speaking the language were needed. Similar issues occurred at schools with a high percentage of Spanish speaking students.

Trade schools teaching manual arts are also considered important. Expansion of these programs is progressing to the point where graduates are expected to be both college ready, but also life ready.

# Valley VOTE Member Reports

## **Victor N. Viereck - Political Housing Policy Consequences**

In spite of the critical need for more housing, politicians create negative consequences. In 1986 the 1986 Tax Reform Act change of depreciation on apartment buildings from 19 years to 27 ½ years removed an effective tax shelter that inspired investment in apartments. That change did not take away any depreciation. It spread the same amount over 8 ½ additional years. As apartments age, major repairs (capital improvements) are needed to keep them pleasantly habitable. But the Capital Improvement part of the City of Los Angeles Rent Stabilization Ordinance (Rent Control) prevents apartment owners from recovering at least half of the improvement costs. Interest (and other finance costs) is not even part of the pass through cost. Effective as of July 1, 2017, in the City of Los Angeles, there will be eleven trash hauling districts and only seven franchised trash haulers in the city. Each franchised hauler will be required to pay the city a fee for the privilege of hauling trash for apartments and commercial property. Such fees will be creating large fee increases on apartment owners. Increases of 100-200% have been heard.

Annual RSO rent increases have been limited to only 3% since 1994.

Considering the current status of costs and the Los Angeles RSO it would be interesting to have a survey of current owners of Los Angeles apartments regarding whether they would risk owning more apartments in Los Angeles.

*Victor N. Viereck [818-985-9174](tel:818-985-9174)*

## **Ernie Hilger - Veterans Housing and Health Care update**

The West Los Angeles VA was campus was originally deeded to be a home for Veterans in the original land grant in 1888. Over time, the VA made decisions to lease out parts of the VA campus issuing 23 enhanced use leases to organizations that had no affiliation or positive impact on Veterans. There is a concerted push to return the land to use for veterans.

### **▪ Medical Care Goals and Priorities**

#### **▪ Master Plan to Revitalize West LA Campus EIS/EIR Studies Started Public Scoping June 7-8**

**Five (5) Priorities for a more defined VA per Dr. Shelton, Secretary of VA were announced at the quarterly VSO and elected officials communications meeting on May 31, 2017 are:**

- 1. Improve access to care using the Choice Program and extend 40 mile rule. Human Resources (HR) is broken at the. The VA to hire professionals for staffing requirements.**
- 2. Modernize IT programs nationwide to fix scheduling for appointments.**
- 3. Integrate DOD (Department of Defense Medical) electronic records with VA for a seamless electronic transfer of information to follow the veteran during his life.**
- 4. Utilize the VA's resources more effectively to Improve timeliness of care.**
- 5. Delivery and Accountability to authorize emergency mental health treatment for other than honorable discharges for 60 days. Focus on reducing the 20/day suicide rate. Note the veteran suicides statistics can be broken down as follows 14/day no care in VA and 6/day care in VA.**

**Environmental Impact Studies (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) hearings have started for the Master Plan with scheduled community and veteran input.**

**The bids for construction and management of services buildings 205 and 208 closed on May 31, 2017. When completed, these buildings will house approximately 100 more veterans in permanent housing.**

**There was a ribbon cutting for Building 209 on Friday, June 16, 2017 9:30 -10:30 AM to commemorate the housing of 54 disabled veterans. Under Secretary of the VA, Mr. Scott R. Blackburn himself a disabled veteran officiated at the ceremony. Officials from US Department of Veterans Affairs, The Veterans Housing Partnership and Step UP and HACLA were present to mark this significant occasion in the effort to eliminate veterans homelessness in the city of Los Angeles.**

**The Community Veterans Engagement Board (CVEB) held a Town Hall Meeting at 11:00-12:30 PM on June 16, 2017 directly after the Ribbon Cutting for building 209.**

**Next Stage in revitalization West LA VA is to let a bid for 150 more permanent veterans housing units for Mc Arthur Park Field area on the VA grounds. It is anticipated this bid will close shortly.**

**The veterans' community at large wishes to thank Valley Vote for their continued support to make ending veterans homelessness a reality in Los Angeles and the Nation. We further request that Valley Vote members and the citizens at large be ever vigilant and cognizant as to how this project is progressing to ensure that it doesn't stagnate. Please exert your political influences to assist when required to make this project a success for all veterans and their families in the 21 century.**  
Ernie Hilger [818 926 6892](tel:8189266892)

### **Ralph Kroy Sunshine Canyon**

The landfill is located at 14747 San Fernando Road, West of 1-5 and 14 Freeway intersection. It is also one of the most cited landfills for odors in the State, if not the country. It is operated by Browning-Ferris Industries of California (BFIC), a Republic Services wholly owned subsidiary.

The landfill is now, finally, seriously trying to improve their operation, with a Vice President and team now overseeing the operations for improvement. They have provided a table of the items, and goal times, deadlines, that they will achieve their targets.

This includes:

- Install more than 250 pumps in gas wells to remove leachate. August 31, 2017
- Install 21 acres of closure turf. August 31, 2017
- Apply 37 acres spray-on cover in new temporary waste fill areas August 31, 2017
- Establish vegetative cover over 57 acres to prevent soil erosion. Dec. 31, 2017
- Increase organics diversion Ongoing
- Apply environmentally safe neutralizer onto waste July 1, 2017
- Implement transfer station neutralizer. October 1, 2017
- Install gabion cubes in new waste cells. October 31, 2017

This is a major improvement - planning things to reduce problems, rather than continuously fighting every step, and not solving problems.

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

## David DeVoss -- “Vertical Urbanism”

Seated in the center of downtown Los Angeles, the \$1.35 billion Wilshire Grand Center is the creation of Cho Yang-ho, 68, the CEO of Korean Airlines and the airline’s corporate parent Hanjin International. There’s no denying the city’s embrace of Asian property developers, who poured over \$1.5 billion into downtown Los Angeles construction in 2015, and their stated goal of turning America’s second largest city into a destination resembling Seoul and Shanghai.

A two blocks south of the Wilshire Grand another \$1 billion development called Metropolis is being erected by China’s Greenland Group on 2.57-hectares next to a roaring freeway. Scheduled for 2018 completion, the mixed-use development will have a luxury hotel plus 1,500 residences, close to half of which already have been sold to Mainland Chinese. Shenzhen Hazens Real Estate Group already has a major project underway, Shanghai’s Shenglong Group recently obtained permits to spend \$1 billion building three downtown residential towers and China Communications Construction Group is expected to start construction on a \$1 billion development next year.

The biggest development on the horizon, however, is Oceanwide Plaza, a 140,000-sq. meter project containing office towers, luxury condominiums, 15,425-sq. meters of retail space, a Park Hyatt hotel and a two-acre outdoor amenity deck. Everything is built atop a seven-story podium that is banded by a LED scroll more than a block long designed to mimic the environment of New York’s Times Square. Oceanwide is scheduled for completion in 2019.

California politicians are pushing for higher, denser cities. Builders now are regularly excused from height restrictions and existing zoning codes that mandate ample parking and traffic mitigation. Building allowances and financial incentives are especially generous along transportation corridors and subway hubs that at present don’t even exist. Commuting will become even more painful in November when California’s gasoline taxes soar to more than 58-cents a gallon. By making driving more painful, Los Angeles hopes to force people to embrace “vertical urbanism” of the sort existing in every major Asian capital.

Motivated by China’s softening economy and Beijing’s seeming inability to halt the outflow of investment capital, Chinese property developers were quick to take advantage of California’s new urban sensibilities and today are poised to enjoy generous returns on their investments.

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

## Airport Report – Denny Schneider

Another busy month at LAX. If you’ve used LAX recently you no doubt have been delayed in your aircraft as taxiing time and distances are increased when arriving and departing from gates. This is because all of the building construction has reduced the available taxiways. Improved taxiways was necessary before, but now construction exacerbates it. There’s a plan in place to improve these taxiways that will be accomplished over the next three years. More buildings are being constructed to the west of Tom Bradley International and as these are completed the new, improved taxiways will then be implemented. All of this will not necessarily increase capacity, but will make it safer and more convenient for all air traffic.

Ground traffic also continues to increase as the passenger number increase. Over the next few years the LAWA Landside Access Modernization Program (LAMP) is supposed to address the landside traffic. Despite the Alliance for a Regional Solution (ARSAC) August 2016 Memorandum of Understanding which limits growth of gates there will continue to be passenger growth because the size of aircraft serving LAX has increased and the passenger load factor per aircraft can result in a 35% growth. LAWA must do the LAMP as quickly as possible just to keep up with the passenger growth. ARSAC continues to push for improvements at LAX, but also at the other airports so that less “out of area” passengers from other parts of So Cal can be accommodated in their local airports.

Denny Schneider, Pres. Alliance for A Regional Solution to Airport Congestion (ARSAC) [Denny@WeLiveFree.com](mailto:Denny@WeLiveFree.com) 213 675-1817

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**Valley VOTE is a 501c4 nonprofit with NO PAID STAFF. Your ANNUAL dues helps us to continue to meet our goals. Member \$25; Board Member - \$50. Thanks!!! Mail your check to Valley VOTE - 14622 Ventura Blvd. #424 Sherman Oaks CA. 91403 We thank you for your support.**

### **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 our web site - [Valleyvote.org](http://Valleyvote.org). The press and public are invited to attend our meetings. Our next meeting will be Monday evening, June 19, 2017**