

# Valley VOTE

4622 Ventura Blvd, #424 Sherman Oaks, California 91403

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VALLEY VOTE REPORT: September 18, 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 October 16, 2017*

## John Sherman, LAPD Deputy Chief, Valley Bureau

Deputy Chief Sherman has a long, distinguished career with LAPD which included Captain in three San Fernando Valley divisions. He was recently moved back into the Valley in March to oversee the seven SFV stations. He is a Reseda native and went to CSUN.

His domain is LAPD which protects the 1.5 million people of the SFV. Crime statics are used to measure LAPD success. Crime is down significantly both in the City as a whole and SFV since the all-time high of about 40,000 crimes in 2002. Citywide homicides were as high as 1400-1500 annually which is now under 300. Since 2014 crime is edging back up Citywide, but not in the SFV. All Valley crime has fallen over 30%. This year there has been an additional 1% reduction in crime. Homicides, street crime, robberies and other violent crimes are down the most. Most common are property crimes, but even burglaries are down. Only vehicle related crimes are up. He urged us to lock cars and keep valuables out of sight.

Two community issues are at the top of his list— homelessness and traffic. A program, HOPE (Homeless Outreach Prevention teams), is in place to outreach to homeless. The police prefer to provide help in finding social services, jobs and aid in housing as opposed to making arrests. LA Sanitation has organized rapid response teams for trash and property cleanups in support of reducing the impacts of homelessness on the City as a whole. Since LAPD enforces laws the approach is that all Senior lead officers are being trained in dealing with mental illness.

When asked about illegal street vending in communities that leaves trash, blocks sidewalks, and is generally noisy, the Chief said that it was a priority concern. He agreed to look into a situation himself after being told that several calls to the local police station had not solved the problem. He told us that officers are not allowed to arrest anyone for street vending any more. LAPD can, instead, issue an “alternative complaint” “A” citation. This citation is consistent with the directions of the City Council/Mayor approved street vending ordinance which decriminalized vending. 1000 of these citations have been issued by LAPD but the percentages paid or addressed is not known.

Chief Sherman noted that his officers work with LASA and VA personnel to help homeless veterans. Many of the officers are veterans themselves, and they are sympathetic. They work to get the homeless paired with service providers that can help improve their circumstances. The biggest challenge is how to help the homeless who are resistant to help. One big difficulty has been a shortage of transitional housing in the Valley. Local homeless people do not want to be moved away to another community.

When asked about the impact of CA becoming a sanctuary state, Chief Sherman said that although there is no specific definition of what a “sanctuary state” is, the practical impact of SB54 on LAPD will be small. Current protocol calls for LAPD not to be interested in immigration status, but instead have interest in crimes. Special order 40 wants officers not to intimidate victims asking about immigration status. LAPD

will, however, work with ICE in the processing of arrested criminals and participate in human trafficking crimes. Serious deported felons caught in drug trafficking are also turned over to ICE.

LAPD recently took over policing Metro buses and trains. About 57 officers are now under Commander Green to do this. These officers were pulled from all divisions and their positions are already back filled. Funding to do this policing is provided by MTA. LAPD officers use their days off to support this task and are paid overtime. This same model is used for the Hollywood Bowl, Dodger Stadium, and other venues. Chief Sherman assured us that the paid overtime is not included in police pension calculations.

## **Matt Pakucko, Pres. and Founder of Save Porter Ranch**

Most of the wells in Alyso Canyon are 60-70 years old. Last November the area was reopened after a major leak caused the evacuation of nearby Porter Ranch for months.

Mr. Pakucko told us that at least 13 well failures have already occurred subsequent to the recent reopening. Wells were not to be used, CA regulators insisted, until reviews and testing of wells were completed during the better part of a year. Local residents wanted more. They were insisting that the causes of well leak failure be determined and that actions be taken to ensure that these failures would not occur again. Instead, as soon as wells passed basic pressure tests an order was issued in July allowing restoration of 39 of the 114 wells to storage. The remainder of the 114 wells are out of compliance and cannot to be used yet.

Within two weeks 33% of the wells failed. New regulations put in place at the reopening of the wells require 24/7 pressure monitoring. CA put a positive spin on the high rate of well failure within the first two weeks by noting that each of the well failures were identified by monitoring. The regulators circumvented the bigger concern of why 1/3 of the "passed" wells failed in only two weeks. Each time carcinogens were released into the air for people to inhale and be made sick.

After the blowout SB380 was passed because severe health issues had already occurred and the Porter Ranch had to be evacuated. SB380 was passed to establish test and safety requirements The County then sued to ensure that all of the bill requirements were met before reopening the site. A letter by a former manager of the facility was uncovered by the lawsuit. The letter noted that all of the wells are within an active fault line and that one earthquake could sheer and release more gas than the first blow out. The letter, we were told, went on to state that this would result in significant loss of life. However, CA regulators ignored the SB380 bill's requirements when authorizing the reuse of wells. One item still not done is a seismic study. No EIR was done either. The County suit to address this was dismissed in CA courts. Last week the CA Supreme Court said it didn't have jurisdiction to hear the case! Finally, last August the facility was shut down until all wells could be tested.

There is a credibility gap. So Cal Gas estimated that it would take 6-7 years to inspect all of the 114 wells in response to voiced concerns prior to the blowout. At that time the blowout was only a "risk. But when So Cal Gas wanted their storage facility reopened they completed the inspections in only six months.

The LA County health department acknowledged the crisis when the uncontrolled gas releases occurred. There are still people experiencing sickness. County Health stated in a white paper three months ago that people within a 12 mile radius have been effected by the gas blowout.

During the blowout occurrence UCLA did some air sampling on their own volition. Their findings were then provided to LA County Health. County Health took control of all data and responsibility away from UCLA and said they would complete the study. Nothing has been released, not even preliminary findings. To date no health study has been conducted by them either.

The local homeowners are working to protect themselves. They had a “fence line” gas monitoring system installed along four acres of the gas field. This data is available to all on the web. We were told that the homeowner system shows several big jumps above the 2.3 ppm background gas levels found throughout Los Angeles. There was a court order for So Cal Gas to conduct monitoring of its site as well. Their site readings were to be done 24/7 and available on the web. We were told that the Gas company readings were consistent readings of 2.0 ppm (below the known background), at other times readings went flat line 0 and other times the website is down. The residents have noticed that when their independent system readings spike the So.Cal. Gas system tends to have a website failure. Gov. Brown has been silent about this monitoring. Is it a coincidence that Gov. Brown’s sister is on the Board of Directors of Sempra which owns So.Cal. Gas?

Fliers were distributed about a meeting to provide “North Valley Contamination Health Study: Toxic Findings Report” on Saturday, October 14, 2017 from 1-4 PM at the Hilton Woodland Hills, 6360 Canoga Ave. For more information about this topic see [SavePorterRanch.org](http://SavePorterRanch.org) and [foodandwaterwatch.org](http://foodandwaterwatch.org).

## **Valley VOTE Member Reports**

### **Victor N. Viereck - LA Exclusive Franchise Trash**

Based on the media and what we all see in the community, not enough housing is being built or preserved. As a result the cost of homes and apartments has been escalating.

In trying to shield themselves from blame for the problem, public officials are supposedly looking for and promoting programs they think will solve the problem. Unfortunately they do not understand economics. As buildings age, they deteriorate if not adequately maintained. When capital improvements are needed, if an apartment building in the City of Los Angeles was built before 1978, they are subject to the city’s Rent Stabilization Ordinance (Rent Control). For capital improvements the RSO limits the pass through of costs to the tenants to no more than half of the cost (which do not even include finance costs, such as interest) over a five year period. The pass through is further limited to \$55.00 a month. Such a limitation results in demolition of buildings that the owners cannot afford to maintain. Now, developers who would like to replace the older, rent controlled apartments with new apartments face other limitations due to linkage fees. The cost of such a fee either discourages new development or increases the cost of housing.

In spite of the foregoing problems, the City Council and Mayor have imposed an even more discouraging program on housing. The new Zero Waste L.A. Exclusive Franchise System imposes much higher costs on multifamily housing and commercial property and ELIMINATES the American free market system of being able to change vendors .The program is imposing drastic (such as triple or more), unaffordable price increases on property owners for trash hauling. If commercial property owners can pass along the cost increase, customers will be stuck with the cost, and lose the ability to buy other products and services. Owners of rent controlled apartments will be hit especially hard due to not being able to cover the cost. The cost of operating non rent controlled apartments will certainly increase housing costs for tenants and owners. That can certainly discourage new apartment construction.

Although Sanitation Department representatives have said the department has been contacting and informing customers of the new program, NONE of them have contacted me, and other owners have not been contacted. Only as a member of business organizations did I learn of the imposition. While recycling can have some benefits, our industries need a free market system if the people are to benefit.

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

### **David DeVoss – LA’s New Landlords Is Los Angeles the Next Shanghai?**

There are more than 225,000 Koreans living in and around Los Angeles and this week they have a new symbol of accomplishment, a glass-sheathed hotel, office and retail tower topped by an enormous, sailshaped LED screen that nightly beams the Korean Airlines logo across hundreds of neighborhoods

sprawling 336-meters below. 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. Cho fell in love with LA while a student at the University of Southern California. "LA is my second home and I've long dreamed of giving back to this beautiful city," he said at the ribbon cutting. Korean consul Lee Key-cheol was even more effusive: "The largest bird of Korea has built the most beautiful nest in the City of Angels." At 73-stories the Wilshire Grand Center is the largest building west of the Mississippi River, but its size is relatively modest when compared to Dubai's 823-meter Burj Khalifa. But LA loves it. "This successful partnership demonstrates our willingness for collaboration with our friends and neighbors across the world," says Kevin de Leon, a California State Senator from Los Angeles. It's too soon to say, of course, if gangnam style will become LA's new meme. But 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. "All this construction reminds me of Beijing and Shanghai," says Greenland Chief Technical Officer Winston Yan. "And now it's happening here."

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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.

Beijing-based Oceanwide Holdings says its concept is outdoor living in an urban environment, but what makes Oceanwide Plaza a sure winner is its location across the street from Staples Center where the Los Angeles Lakers play basketball and next to the LA Convention Center. "The draw power of our location is tremendous," smiles Thomas Feng, chief of Oceanwide's U.S. subsidiary, adding that his structural designs don't simply replicate what's being built in China. "In Chinese apartments, bedrooms are typically clustered in one section of the apartment," he says. "But in the U.S. privacy is important. So in our two-bedroom units, the bedrooms are on either side of the family room, allowing a more open, airy feel. Up until the start of this decade downtown Los Angeles was a financial district that largely emptied at night. Even today less than 50,000 of the 500,000 people working downtown actually live there. Most

Californians, if they have the money, prefer to live in detached suburban homes surrounded by grass and palm trees with a swimming pool in back. Recently, this residential preference has started to change because of gridlocked traffic and higher water cost resulting from a changing climate.

**California politicians also 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.

"When Greenland first arrived in LA they found that nobody was living in the heart of America's second largest city," remembers architect Robert Jernigan, the Gensler managing principal working on the Metropolis project. "So it bought the last 6.33 acres of undeveloped land downtown and began to fix a problem we created."

Any reluctance to approve so many large projects simultaneously evaporated when every Asian developer agreed to include a luxury hotel in their design. Says Jernigan: "Los Angeles loves the 15.5% hotel occupancy tax because it's a major source of revenue local citizens don't have to pay."

Movement from the suburbs back to the city will grow as the post war Baby Boom generation begins to retire. Certainly all of the Asian-financed developments in LA are striving to create a live-work-play atmosphere. The fact that a substantial percentage of the new living units will belong to absentee owners is a small source of concern. But LA's city planners know the exciting urban environments now being created will promote higher property values, continued economic expansion and further integration with the dynamic cultures of East Asia.

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

## **Ernie Hilger - Veterans Affairs update**

Female Veterans Elected as National Commanders of The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) membership 1.3 million and the American Legion (AL) membership 1.4 million in recognition of the historically relevant role of women veterans in the service of our country -

West LA VA - Federal Legislation and California State Legislation

Congress been very busy this summer enhancing and expanding bipartisan – bicameral legislation to protect veterans. The Veterans administration is proactively managing and administering it's responsibilities for the benefit and care of veterans. There has been over 1800 whistle blower complaints issued by VA Staff regarding unsafe practices at VA facilities across the country. The VA now has the administrative authority to terminate unsatisfactory employees.

The veterans Choice Program has received additional funding and veterans are using it when medical service is not available at the VA.

WEST LOS ANGELES VA MASTER PLAN Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/ Environmental Impact Report (EIR)are now in process please refer to the link below for further details:

<https://www.losangeles.va.gov/masterplan/documents/ScopingMeetingPresentationJune2017.pdf>  
The public comment period concluded on Tuesday, June 30, 2017

## DEALING WITH LESS THAN HONORABLE (LTH) DISCHARGES – VETERANS BENEFIT ADMINISTRATION (VBA)-FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

VBA (Veterans Benefits Admin) is applying the rules in the handout - a Veteran with an Less Than Honorable Discharge is eligible for VA healthcare for service-connected injuries.

VBA takes a close look at records of (LTH) Less Than Honorable (LTH) discharged Vets, where those Vets have multiple enlistments and good service during prior enlistments. In other words, if VBA sees good conduct during a period where the Vet has a service-connected injury then, even though the Vet is given a LTH discharge during later enlistment, they will work to get the Vet VA healthcare for those injuries incurred during times of good service. For further details go to:

<https://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/resources/publications/IB10-448...>Title: IB 10-448 Other Than Honorable Discharges; Impact on Eligibility for VA Health Care Benefits Author: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Subject

## CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATION SB 725- APPROVED BY GOVERNOR AUGUST 2017

SB 725 regarding Veterans: pretrial diversion: driving privileges, approved by Gov. on 07-Aug-2017.

Text of the bill: [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180SB725](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB725)

This recently passed legislation at the CA state level, SB 725, clarifies the alternative sentencing PC 1001.80, military diversion which is a mandatory requirement that courts inform veterans their first court date of the veteran statutes PC 858, to include, but not limited to DUI's. This is statewide uniform legislation to intervene on behalf of veterans to prevent direct incarceration and thus prevent the creation of felons during incarceration. This diversionary statute SB 725 applies to all courts.

Ernie Hilger 818 926 6892

## Ralph Kroy Sunshine Canyon

The landfill is located at 14747 San Fernando Road, West of 1-5 and 14 Freeway intersection.

The landfill is now, finally, improving their operation after intense work directed by the Vice President of Republic and his team.

This is normally the low complaint period in the year. The complaints are fewer than last year: 14 in July compared to 52 complaints in July of last year, 30 in August compared to 85 complaints last year.

No notices of violation issued during this period.

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

## Airport Report – Denny Schneider

Noise complaints are up considerably all over the region and USA. The lofty NextGen goals of more efficiency, more capacity, and more safety are being limited by the reality called implementation “SoCal MetroPlex.” NextGen has its benefits: tighter controls allows aircraft to fly closer together while maintaining safety, it very much adds airspace capacity by reducing the distances between aircraft, and further, it positively impacts the air traffic control (ATC) staffing requirements.

Elected officials, the FAA, and the LAX-Community Noise Roundtable are getting heavily increased noise complaints and pressure from people as far as 40 miles from LAX who are raising issues of more aircraft flights lower to the ground and making more noise.

The FAA in other regions are experiencing the same increased issues. One area, Phoenix, sued the FAA and won retraction of changes. The Bay Area in Northern California didn't sue, but the Congressional delegation there pressed the FAA hard enough to reverse a few items there too. In the Bay Area it isn't quite a total win for those on the ground as much more is needed to reduce impacts to livable levels.

Here's the website to see if you want to understand how flight procedures are controlled and changes are documented and approved. [https://www.faa.gov/air\\_traffic/flight\\_info/aeronav/procedures/](https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/procedures/). I urge everyone to look up where their homes are so that they can anticipate changes.

LAX continues to grow and is almost 85 Million Annual Passengers. Several of the major carriers are spending a few \$billion to upgrade the airport in order to make it pleasurable for all. The Wall Street Journal just had a major article about this. Tomorrow evening the airport is hosting a major meeting about finalization of the land access issues. They will be spending \$\$Billions to improve things with a train stopping along Aviation/Century with a people mover to bring people to the terminal. Check [www.LAWA.org](http://www.LAWA.org) to learn about construction details and not be stuck around the airport.

Denny Schneider, Pres. Alliance for A Regional Solution to Airport Congestion (ARSAC)

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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, October 16, 2017**