



Valley VOTE
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Meeting Report
by
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Dennis P. Zine

Straight Talk From A Straight Shooter

Dennis Zine strode purposefully through the door, checked the room for perps and immediately began looking for clues. "I see you have doughnuts," he remarked with a smile. "It's probably because I'm a cop."

Actually, Dennis Zine has been a city councilman representing the West Valley since 2001. But the former policeman, who still joy rides as an LAPD reserve officer, still acts like a cop. When it comes to speeches, Zine is no Barack Obama. He talks in bullet points, spitting out information as if he were briefing the coroner at a crime scene. Among his thoughts (several of which are facetious):

1. On clean money in public campaigns: "If it's green, it's clean."
2. On the downfall of New York's Gov. Eliot Spitzer: "I can tell you I'm not Client No. 10."
3. On Measure S (which reimposed and expanded an illegal telephone tax): "If we didn't have that \$270 million we'd be deeper in the hole. It takes money to run a city."
4. On LA's looming budget crisis: "The City Administrative Officer says LA has a budget deficit of \$37 million. That just about equals the \$38.2 million salary increase recently given to city employees. We've been asked to pull money out of different accounts and put it into the general fund, but we're not going to get \$37 million. Why don't we have the money? Because real estate's not selling. The value of the dollar is down. Prices are up because the dollar buys less. I see lay

offs. When you don't have money you don't go out and buy a new car. The City of Los Angeles doesn't have the money, but it's still eating prime rib at Lawrys."

5. "Over the past three years, trash fees have been increased from \$11 to \$26. The real cost to get trash picked up is \$38 a month. We need to increase the trash collection fee to pay for police officers. When we increased it before, we made a commitment to spend the money on police. That's what it has to go for."

6. On protecting the San Fernando Valley lifestyle: "Single family homes are becoming a thing of the past. Home ownership now means apartments or condos."

7. So where does the money go? Seventy percent of budget goes for police and fire. The remaining 30% pays for everything else."

8. Should the DWP get more money? The City is 227 years old. It has a (utility) system that's 100 years old but hasn't been maintained. We have to invest or continue to have power outages when the heat comes. But if you ask for an additional 3% to replace your infrastructure, you better fix your infrastructure.

9. Whither Las Lomas? "Greig Smith says Las Lomas would be twice the size of (the rejected) Ahamanson development on a quarter of the land. And scraping 950-ft. of the hilltops doesn't make sense. The farce of Las Lomas is that the developer says it will be affordable. Sure, affordable if you have an inheritance or know how to rob banks. Greig Smith and I will lay down in the street to stop this project."

10. On the LAPD's future: We need 10,000 cops and we have 9,000. The LAPD also is short 650 civilian positions. We need to hire (more civilians) but we haven't because there's only so much money in the pot, and if the choice is between hiring police officers and civilians, the city will hire police."

Road Warriors

Drivers in Los Angeles have to have a little bit of Mad Max in them to survive the city's rough roads. Angelenos pay on average \$778 a year for vehicle damage directly related to the poor condition of city streets. According to a transportation research group called TRIP, 65% of the city's roads are in need of repair.

It would have been nice if **Commissioner Ernesto Cardenas of LA's Board of Public Works**, could have brought a message of hope to Valley VOTE members. Unfortunately, Cardenas, a Cal Poly MBA who spent 21 years with AT&T before joining the city, could not. "Los Angeles has 6,500 miles of streets, and on any given day 1,000 miles are in a failed condition," he admits. "On a good day our streets rate a C-."

"Last year, the Department of Street Services filled 300,000 pot holes," Cardenas says. "The mayor wants to fill 350,000 a year. Imagine a road from LA to New York. Now make it five lanes in each direction. That's the amount of roads we have. Filling pot holes is never ending process."

A process, Cardenas concedes, that is more difficult since city budgets are being cut. Before the budget cuts, Cardenas says his department was making some progress repairing sidewalks damaged by city trees. In 2002, the city repaired 48 miles of sidewalks. By 2003 about 68 miles of sidewalks were being fixed. Since at that rate it would take more than 80 years to repair all the broken sidewalks, LA started a 50/50 program under which home owners with broken sidewalks could jump to the head of the list of they agreed to share half the repair cost. But due to the city's budget crisis the 50/50 program will be curtailed once the backlog of promised repairs is complete.

Don't despair completely, says Cardenas. "Nobody's going to prevent you from fixing your own sidewalk. Same with trimming street trees. You get a certified arborist to trim a tree you can get a

no fee permit.”

Will Split Rolls Be Served On City Ballot Buffet?

Some people connected with Mayor Villaraigosa quietly are suggesting a ballot initiative to make commercial and industrial property more taxable, even if the parcels still are protected by Prop. 13, reports **Valley VOTE Treasurer Vic Viereck** . Passed in 1978, Proposition 13 treats residential, commercial and industrial property the same. But since homes change ownership more often, thereby losing their Prop. 13 protections, residential homeowners increasingly pay a greater percentage of Los Angeles property taxes.

“Split-roll” assessment would mean changing the way taxable assessed values are increased on the commercial and industrial property relative to single-family homes. The definition of commercial property, under the proposed revision, could vary for multi-residential property. Depending on who is pushing split-roll, multi residential units may or may not be included as commercial.

Says Viereck: “The City of Los Angeles has an anti-business image, which has resulted in much better sales tax growth in its neighboring cities. If the taxes become too onerous for the business, compared to the revenue they can get to cover the taxes, businesses will close and other businesses will never set up shop here. If attempting to pass along increased property or other taxes to customers makes the business overpriced, customers will go elsewhere.”

If apartment buildings, particularly those under rent control, lose their Proposition 13 status, split-roll changes foreclosures will occur and affordable housing will become even more scarce.

Clean vs. Green

Robin Gilbert, the San Fernando Valley's representative to the California Clean Money Campaign, says the organization lobbying for public funding of municipal political campaigns is scheduling a series of Neighborhood Council workshops to study full public funding for city campaigns. For additional information or to become involved go to www.CACLEAN.org

Neighborhood Councils News

George Truesdell reports several councils in the West Valley (south) have formed a mini-alliance to create a unified stance. Given this action, Northridge East and West are exploring creating their own alliance with other councils in the North Valley. “We believe that presenting this unified front will assist in our efforts to exert influence on our respective council members,” notes Truesdell.

The other main item with which councils have to contend is the upcoming migration from DONE conducting NC elections, to the City Clerk. To that end, representatives of the city clerk's office have been attending and speaking at each of the councils to ensure all requirements are met prior to the date of the election. Neighborhood councils in the North Valley will conduct their elections during the week of June 23 through 29, with a specific date to be selected at a meeting of all concerned councils on March 29. The main priority for councils right now is the amending of bylaws to conform to the procedures being set up by the clerk's office.

Airport Update

A request for proposal has been released for a facilitator for a new VNY-Community Noise Roundtable, says **Valley VOTE executive committee member Denny Schneider**. It will give local residents and businesses a new voice and insight into the operation of VNY. Also, the Board of Airport Commissioners approved extension of the contract for upgrading the noise monitoring

system at VNY. The new system is anticipated to be on line by the end of the year.

Hoping to reduce the expense of sound proofing surrounding residences, Bob Hope Airport officials in Burbank last week agreed to consider a 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. curfew. Residents of Van Nuys, Sherman Oaks and North Hollywood who live beneath the flight path used by aircraft have wanted the curfew for years. The FAA dislikes curfews because cargo flights are impacted, but the Burbank airport says it no longer can afford to insulate schools and home adversely impacted by the noise.

In other airport news, LAX released a new 2006 survey that noted users find it is still lacking in services. The survey can be found at <http://www.lawa.org/lax/pdf/2006LAXPassengerSurveyFinal.pdf>. If you would like your voice heard about the operation or service at any of the Los Angeles owned airports, go to http://www.surveymk.com/s.aspx?sm=GJDC1UcUyyD04GKFW2oPLA_3d_3d. The new survey is being done for the LA City Controller office and is to identify issues with airport operations.

On a more positive note about LAX, additional international air traffic has been secured from Dubai, and Italy in the past month. Although overall air travel numbers are up in the region compared with that of 9/11/2001, LAX passenger numbers remain lower but improved.

For more information go to www.regionalsolution.org or call Denny Schneider 310 641-4199

Save the Date!!!

On **Monday, May 12, 2008** the Mayor will address Valley VOTE. The special meeting, which will come a week earlier than our normal meeting, accommodates the mayor's schedule while giving Valley VOTE members an opportunity to both hear and question Los Angeles' top official.

The next Valley VOTE meeting will be on **Monday, April 21, 2008**. Our featured speaker will be **L.A. County Supervisor Mike Antonovich**.

Valley VOTE Mission Statement

Valley VOTE, a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley business people, educators, community activists, and organizations, is committed to exploring and implementing programs that empower the people of the San Fernando Valley and the city of Los Angeles including opportunities to improve local governance, education and public participation on policy matters.

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