



**March 16, 2009 Meeting Report**  
by  
**David DeVoss**

**Neighborhood Councils Stand Up**

**Jack Humphreville**



It's not easy fighting City Hall. But last month the neighborhoods finally scored a victory against entrenched power when a solar power initiative called Measure B was defeated.

The issue was not solar power, whose expansion is widely supported, explained **Jack Humphreville**, the Target Media Partners executive who helped lead the grassroots No on Measure B campaign. Opposition arose from the fact the measure was written by a union close to the mayor that would be the sole beneficiary of all the millions of dollars spent. Also, Measure B reached the ballot without any discussion or review by Neighborhood Councils.

There were some interesting voting patterns involving Measure B, Humphreville noted in his March 16 Valley VOTE presentation. The five council districts that compose the Valley and the Westside (Smith, Zine, Greuel, Weiss & Rosendahl) voted 61.4% NO (22% more than the citywide average) and supplied 62% of the 110,505 NO votes, despite the fact that these districts represent about 33% of the population, 45% of the registered voters, and 50% of those that actually voted.

The NO on Measure B was helped by three significant events:

- o The disclosure by the Los Angeles Times of the covered up PA Consulting report that was very critical of the solar Program envisioned by Measure B,
- o The Laura Chick "stinks" comment, and
- o The endorsement by both the Daily News and the Los Angeles Times.

This allowed the opponents of Measure B to make excellent factual presentations to the Neighborhood Councils (about 40 voted to oppose Measure B) and other groups, such as Valley VOTE, Chambers of Commerce, and other interested groups. The NO campaign also was aided considerably by unions representing carpenters, who donated about \$65,000 worth of services. The supporters of the measure spent millions of dollars to promote their position.

"What's next, Asks Humphreville? "DWP, with input from Rate Payers, Neighborhood Councils, the DWP Committee, and other interested parties, needs to develop a comprehensive in-basin solar program that encompasses private party contractors, the building trade unions, private landlords and recognizes the need for feed in tariffs that will encourage businesses and residences to install solar facilities.

“Finally, we are calling for an independent Rate Payers Advocate, a body with knowledge about utilities and the management of large organizations, to review and analyze the operations, finances, and management of DWP on a timely basis. Importantly, the RPA would not have the right to make management decisions or set rates. The RPA will benefit not only the voters, Neighborhood Councils, and the Rate Payers, but also the DWP Board of Commissioners and the City Council by supplying unbiased timely information.

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### ***Out of Defeat, A Victory***

**George Truesdell**



Measure B was perhaps the best thing to ever happen to Neighborhood Councils (NCs), **George Truesdell** reported in an accompanying presentation. It was the impetus that drove Neighborhood Councils to join together to defeat this measure, which was railroaded through the city council. Prior to the introduction of Measure B, NCs were primarily concerned with items in their respective backyards or driven by how they felt they could spend their \$50,000 stipend. It was only in a very few instances that they came together for the common good of the entire electorate.

Looking forward, NCs need to band together in the manner of the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC), which is a loose confederation of valley based NCs. That organization and Valley VOTE (VV) are shining examples of volunteer organizations, which have learned that to be effective, they must be data driven on the major issues. We can no longer expect to be effective with rhetoric alone. One example of the growing strength of organizations like VV and VANC is the recent request to VANC by representatives of the Harbor Area Neighborhood Councils to assist them in setting up an organization which mirrors the valley group. One additional and very important result of the Measure B fight is that city hall should be coming to the realization that NCs are not going to be allow themselves to be misled by city representatives.

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### ***LAX Redux***

**Denny Schneider**



**Denny Schneider** presented a review of the situation at LAX. In 2004 LAX Master Plan, Alternative D, was approved by the City of Los Angeles to expand LAX capacity. This Plan included closure of the Central Terminal Area, a new set of northside terminals, a modified South airfield runway complex, and a new check in facility expanded into the area near the 405 freeway with an automated people mover and tunnel complex to move people into LAX. A RAND Corporation evaluation called for numerous short-term security and safety improvements.

Additionally, the then existing airfield configuration and the approved Master Plan both failed to meet FAA separation standards for any of the runways or taxiways. In their 2004 Record of Decision, the FAA approved

the Alternative D Airport Layout Plan, with all of these deficiencies, including those in the Runway Safety Areas and Runway Protection Zones.

Everyone acknowledges that it is necessary to fix LAX, since over 25 years have gone by without any major repairs or refurbishment and that the current passenger experience is questionable. Several security, safety, and environmental issues went unresolved after Alternative D approval so a group of the Cities surrounding LAX, LA County, and a community group, Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion (ARSAC) each reluctantly sued to require changes.

In February 2005 a settlement was reached to facilitate LAX renovation while the most controversial items were to be redesigned with the cooperation of all parties. Several items were "green lighted" to shorten project approval times including: a new midfield terminal complex behind Tom Bradley International Terminal (TBIT), major upgrades to TBIT that add gates to accommodate the newer, larger aircraft, addition of two cross field taxiways west of the terminals to allow rapid movement between the north and south complexes, a Consolidated Rental Car facility to remove bus traffic in the Central Terminal Area (CTA), an intermodal transportation center with people movers to the CTA, and the South Airfield Improvement Project (SAIP) for safety redesign which was to start immediately.

Passenger counts and cargo tonnage have since plummeted worldwide and even more in the US since the settlement. LAX traffic last month was down to about 1360 operations per day from a high of over 2200 in 2001 (from about 68 million annual passengers to a rate of about 55 MAP). Expect further reductions for at least two more years.

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### ***Finding Diamonds in a Depression***

**Vic Viereck**



After triggering an economic disaster through pushing lenders to make imprudent loans, the government is here to help, again, says Valley VOTE treasurer **Vic Viereck**. For housing alone there are at least two big programs to reverse the problem it created.

Loan modifications are being pushed for homeowners who have serious problems with their home loans. Some lenders, but not all, require borrowers to be delinquent on their mortgage before they will consider a loan modification. To qualify under the Streamlined Modification Plan for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac loans, a borrower must be at least 90 days delinquent on the existing mortgage loan. On the other hand, mortgage delinquency can negatively impact a borrower's credit and start the mortgage process.

While the economy has become a nightmare for many, it has created opportunity for others. Through two consecutive Homebuyer Tax Credit programs, and lower housing prices, many people have a new opportunity to buy a home.

For first time homebuyers who buy a principal residence from April 9, 2008 through December 31, 2008 get a 10% tax credit, not to exceed \$7,500. The credit phases out if an individual's modified adjusted gross income exceeds \$75,000 (\$150,000 for joint filers). The credit phases out completely if the homebuyers income exceeds \$95,000 (or \$170,000 for joint filers). The \$7,500 credit is really like an interest free loan, which has to be paid off \$500 a year with the income tax return, or in full upon sale of the home.

If the principal residence is bought between January 1, 2009 and November 30, 2009, the credit is \$8,000. For buyers who stay in the property for at least 36 months, the credit does not need to be repaid.

In spite of the possible loan modifications encouraging irresponsible financial habits, the foregoing credits appear to reward people who still are prudent with their own money.

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## ***Standing Up for Property Rights***

**Pauline Tallent**



In 2004 it was called "Inclusionary Zoning," says **Pauline Tallent**. Developers would be mandated to include, in every project, housing for the "disadvantaged." It was defeated. In 2008 it was called "Fair Share Program." Developers would be mandated to include low income housing in every project. To compensate, the developers would get incentives such as reduced processing time and limited parking. It looked as if it wasn't getting enough support, so in 2009, the term "mandate" was removed, and shifted to the communities. This time the term used was "be required." Each community would be required to find suitable land for low-income housing, within the community. My "nay" vote on every occasion on which I was asked to vote, has been because this "mandate" or "be required" infringes on property rights.

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## ***Transportation Moving Forward Slowly***

**Bart Reed**



In his monthly report on transportation issues, Transit Coalition director **Bart Reed** told Valley VOTE that LA Metro soon will introduce electronic TAP cards in which value stored against the future use of transport can be used simply by tapping the special card on the turnstile. As in the past, seniors and disabled individuals can ride all day for \$1.25. What's new is that the new electronic cards will have a photo of the card's owner integrated into the card.

In the past, "Anywhere but California" appeared to be the funding mantra in Washington whenever appropriations were discussed, says Reed. But this year California finally should receive its share. More money for street paving and high-speed inner city rail is on the way. These funds will be supplemented by money resulting from Measure R, which passed last November with 68% of the vote. Most of the money will be used for freeway sound walls and lane expansion on Highway 175.

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The next meeting of Valley VOTE will be held on Monday, April 20, 2009 at Galpin Ford.

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### ***Valley VOTE Mission Statement***

*Valley VOTE, a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley residents, business people, educators, community activists, and organizations, is 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.*

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