



Meeting Report for June 15, 2009
By Richard Bort and Denny Schneider

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 reviews and press releases, we encourage you to go to the Valley VOTE website:

<http://www.ValleyVote.org>.

Valley VOTE Board members, community leaders, and concerned citizens convened on **June 15, 2009** at **Galpin Ford** to hear featured speakers **LAPD Deputy Chief Michel Moore** updating Valley VOTE on policing in the San Fernando Valley, and **Ana Campos** speaking about the "After-School All-Stars" program.

Chief Michel Moore

Deputy Chief Michel Moore is the Commanding Officer of Operations-Valley Bureau, and is the "top cop" in the San Fernando Valley.

Chief Moore called this the "best of times and the worst of times." On the positive side, he noted that if the San Fernando Valley were an independent city, it would be the second safest large city in the country. Violent crime is down 31 percent, arrests are up, and gang crime is down. The Chief noted that the average response time in the Valley is down to seven minutes for emergencies and about 30 minutes for routine matters. The Valley now has seven police stations, with the recent opening of the Topanga Station, and more than 2,000 police personnel serve in the Valley. "That's one-third of the 21 police stations in the city," he noted. In addition, the opening a year ago of the new Valley Traffic Division offices behind The Plant shopping center in Van Nuys has freed up much needed space in the Van Nuys Division, making operations in that area much improved. He said LAPD's working conditions, equipment, cars, and capital improvements throughout the Valley are the best that he has ever seen.

Chief Moore then changed hands to report on the worst of times. While there are many very safe areas in the San Fernando Valley, there are also numerous unsafe pockets. He anticipates that the Valley's crime rate this summer can potentially spike to new heights for two reasons: the economy isn't providing jobs like it should, and the cancellation of summer school by the LAUSD means that thousands of kids will have too much time on their hands. While the LAPD has several ongoing programs targeting at-risk youth, it touches only about 1,000 youth, which is a drop in the bucket. (*Editor's note: See following article about the "After-School All Stars" program.*)

Compounding the "worst of times" scenario is the city's well-known budgetary problem. Chief Moore noted that the LAPD presently has a freeze on promotions in the department, and that the Mayor's proposed budget cuts the amount for sworn LAPD officers by \$135 million. This means that the department will continue to hire to cover attrition (about 400 annually) but not to grow the size of the force. He noted that the LAPD's budget for civilian employees is being cut by an additional \$18 million annually by mandating 26 furlough days per year (every other Friday).

Moore raised some eyebrows when he addressed staffing. He noted that if Los Angeles were to staff its police force to the same per capita level as other large cities, we would need some 18,000 officers. In New York, for

example, a citizen doesn't have to wait very long before a squad car passes by on routine patrol throughout the city. But with the annual cost of one unit of approximately \$250,000, consisting of two officers and a fully equipped squad car, there is little hope that Los Angeles will ever approach that size of a police force.

Chief Moore took many questions from the audience, several of which involved the issue of proliferation of storefronts selling "medical marijuana." The number of such storefront outlets has mushroomed in the past year to more than 500, and the City Council recently placed a moratorium on any new outlets. Chief Moore explained that the vast majority of these are bogus fronts for the sale of marijuana to the general public. He said that these sham collectives take in tens of thousands of dollars monthly and they support "grow houses" that have popped up throughout the Valley, often in upscale neighborhoods in foreclosed and abandoned houses.

He explained that the voters approved an initiative (Proposition 209) several years ago that permits groups of people with medical conditions that can be eased through the use of marijuana to get together and form a "collective" to acquire and distribute marijuana for their medical needs. The law was loosely drafted, however, so that virtually anyone can enter a marijuana store, join the collective on the spot, and purchase marijuana. While state law requires a prescription signed by a qualified medical provider, this too has been diluted to the point where a "recommendation" rather than a prescription will be honored.

Chief Moore said, and several people in the audience agreed, that the problem could be solved if prescriptions from real doctors were required, and that the prescriptions could be filled only at licensed pharmacies, just as many other controlled substances are safely sold today.

In the meantime, the LAPD brought a test case to court and got a verdict that now allows the police to go after the sham operations. But, Moore said, he has only so many Narcotics officers to dedicate to this because the gang-related drug trade involves much more violence.

Michel Moore summarized by saying that he supports the idea of "medical marijuana" for its intended purpose, but he strongly opposes the abuse of narcotics.

Ana Campos After-School All-Stars

Ana Campos is the Executive Director of After-School All-Stars, Los Angeles, and she was invited to expose this program to Valley VOTE members.

After-School All-Stars (www.la-allstars.org) serves 70,000 youth annually through after school and summer programs in 13 cities across the country, including Los Angeles. California Governor Schwarzenegger is the Honorary Executive Chairman.

The program prepares middle school kids for high school, college, and life by providing comprehensive [after school programs](#) offering academic support, enrichment opportunities, and health and fitness activities. The objective is to keep the kids safe and help them achieve success in school and life, and for the kids to have fun, too. After-School All-Stars offers a proven alternative for these children by engaging them in activities and on-going relationships that increase confidence and encourage success in all areas of their lives – at home, in school and in the community.

Funding comes from a variety of sources including federal and state grants (under an initiative passed several years ago) and private donations. State funding gives priority to Title 1 schools, which are those that have high numbers or high percentages of poor children.

After-School All-Stars has programs for ages 10 to 18 with lower than normal class size staff to student ratios in several local senior and junior high schools. ASAS recognized the importance of early intervention, so they created a model after-school program for middle-school kids (ages 10 to 14) that can be replicated anywhere across the country. In Los Angeles, the LAUSD provides the facilities and After-School All-Stars provides the programs. In the San Fernando Valley, the program operates at four middle schools: Mt. Gleason MS (Sunland), Mulholland MS (Lake Balboa), Porter MS (Granada Hills), and Vista MS (Panorama City/North Hills).

The Valley programs seek to instill leadership by getting the kids involved in community events and service. Campos said that by building leadership skills and self esteem, the kids will be less likely to turn to gangs because they are kept busy and insulated from the streets after school. Also, they are more likely to stay in school instead of dropping out if they can get through the 9th grade, she said.

Ms. Campos is particularly concerned about the programs during this summer because LAUSD has canceled summer school and will close all campuses. This will hit hardest the poorer part of the population, especially where parents work for low wages and cannot afford to pay for programs that might otherwise be available. Aside from losing the use of these facilities for the duration, apparently LAUSD will have to return certain grant funds that were obtained for these programs if the programs are not held at the schools.

Valley VOTE Committee Reports and Announcements

Housing

Vic Viereck reported that the recommendation that the City Council approve the Point of Sale Sidewalk Repair Program has reared its ugly head once again. If adopted by the City Council, the seller of a home would be responsible for repairing any buckling or other damage to the sidewalk before the close of escrow.

Airports

Denny Schneider reported that the sharp decline in aircraft traffic at LAX is being felt financially. Airport revenues are down sharply from collection of fewer landing fees, less parking and concession revenues, fewer passengers on whom to levy boarding charges, etc., which is hurting LAWA's ability to maintain and upgrade the airport's facilities.

Nevertheless, the Runway Status Lights pilot program went live this month. This is an electronic system of traffic lights embedded in runways and taxiways to control aircraft when crossing active runways to avoid incursions.

Meanwhile, Burbank Airport's request to the FAA to approve shifting nighttime flights to Van Nuys Airport is expected to be answered by the FAA in September. Some sources expect the FAA to turn down this request. *(See the June 12,2008 Press Release on the Valley VOTE website opposing the Part 161 Study)*

Finance

Richard Bort discussed the structure of DWP's seemingly ever increasing electric rates, following on last month's discussion of DWP's water rates. Contact Bort for copies of the informative handouts at: rbort@earthlink.net

Membership

Richard Leyner announced that Valley VOTE's annual fundraiser will follow the successful pattern established over the past several years. This will be an opportunity for Valley VOTE members to mingle and network with local politicians and each other, and will be held on Saturday evening, August 29, at Richard's home featuring a buffet dinner.

Department of Water and Power Update

Jack Humphreville discussed the DWP's budget, which calls for power rates to go up by 16 percent and water rates to increase by 28percent. DWP's credit rating has begun to slip as its debt ratio has risen from 50 percent to 60 percent, due in large part to sizable increases in funds transfers from the DWP to the city's General Fund, which has put pressure on the DWP to raise rates. Jack noted that of the three elements that comprise the electric rates, the Energy Cost Adjustment Factor (ECAAF) will be going up at the rate of 2 percent per quarter instead of ¼ percent per quarter as in the past. The energy charge component, of course, represents about 60percent of the all-in charge per kilowatt hour, so this change will have a dramatic impact on our electricity costs.

Jack has been appealing for the DWP to establish a Rate Payers Advocate. He noted that the DWP's Board of Water and Power Commissioners last October turned down the recommendation of its then-president, Nick Patsouras, to establish a Rate Payers Advocate. Since then, we have had the Measure B fiasco, Shortage Year

Water Rates, and the proposed elimination of the caps on the Energy Cost Adjustment Factor. Also, the City unilaterally increased the power transfer fee to the city's General Fund without any objection from the Board of Commissioners and DWP is absorbing more tasks for the City without reimbursement and it is being charged outrageous amounts for City-rendered services. DWP is still a dumping ground for City Hall-favored politicians who are now being given operating responsibilities for which they are not the most qualified. Each of these has a significant impact on our rates. Moreover, DWP has not developed a Solar Plan or a Community Outreach Strategy as requested by the City Council in the aftermath of the Measure B defeat last March, nor has DWP reviewed the Charter-mandated independent survey, which was critical of management, with the Neighborhood Councils or the MOU Oversight Committee.

Jack estimated that a Rate Payers Advocate, including staff and offices, would cost rate payers only about \$1 per year each. He noted that even if the City agrees to have a Rate Payers Advocate, the real question will be how to select one. Will the individual or firm be truly independent of the DWP, City Hall, and the unions, and be driven only by the interests of the rate payers?

California Clean Money

Robin Gilbert announced that the first fully funded pilot election will be the election of the California Secretary of State in the November 2010 general election. The funding will come from lobbyists registered with the state.

Transportation

Bart Reed, Executive Director of the Transit Coalition, noted an example of where the MTA could act for minor cost to greatly improve service. He noted that the Santa Clarita bus line is scheduled to be shut down, but for a minor additional cost it could greatly increase its ridership. The line comes within a mile of Olive View Hospital, but that gap requires hospital workers, outpatients, and visitors from Santa Clarita to pass the hospital and double back on another bus. He pointed out that MTA could easily alter its route by swinging over to the hospital, thereby making the line much more attractive to the public and generating enough revenue to keep the line working.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Valley VOTE will be held on Monday, July 20, 2009 at Galpin Ford, 2nd Floor meeting room, 15555 Roscoe Blvd. at the 405 Freeway in North Hills.

Valley VOTE Mission Statement

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