



## Meeting Report for May 16, 2011

Valley VOTE Board members, community leaders, and concerned citizens convened on May 16, 2011 at Galpin Ford to hear from our featured speaker **Los Angeles City Council member Paul Krekorian** and also from our **Valley VOTE Committee Chairs**.

### Paul Krekorian



Paul Krekorian was elected in 2009 to represent the second City Council district and has done an excellent job supporting the Valley's interests at City Hall. He began his presentation with comments regarding the city's budget next fiscal year which will be coming to the City Council for review on Wednesday May 18, 2011. He went on to state *"The City's budget is the worst shape it has ever been in since the city was centered on Olvera Street. It is absolutely real and beyond any comprehension that I had of what I wanted to be doing as a member of the City Council. We are talking about drastic cuts to fire and police services."* When he entered public service he had in mind to be doing positive things for the good of the people and not to do damage control of the economic conditions for the city. But as Paul states *"this is the hand we have been dealt"* He argues we have to start building our economy and getting people back to work and getting small businesses up and running again and expanding our revenue pool by getting opportunities for people and making sure businesses can succeed. He has been spending a lot of time as Vice Chair of the Jobs and Business Development Committee of the Council and has been working on precisely those goals.

#### ***L.A. Spends \$850million annually on Out of State Procurement***

One L.A. expenditure that came to Paul's attention is the **\$1.2 billion** dollars a year spent on Procurement i.e. buying stuff, and contracting with outside business. He learned the city *"does not draw any distinction between a business located in North Hollywood or one located in North Dakota"* If you are spending **\$1.2 billion** of the taxpayers money you would think it would be a good idea to spend as much of it as possible in Los Angeles. **70% of the \$1.2 billion is spent with entities located outside the city of Los Angeles!** Mr. Krekorian wrote an ordinance and got

it passed through the city council to create an **8% local preference** in the bidding process for businesses located in the city. The ordinance is in the city attorney's office and they are preparing the language of the new law. Hopefully this new ordinance will become law as soon as possible.

### **North Hollywood Valley Plaza and the CRA**

Paul has been working well with the CRA today but explained that he had made the following statement in the past concerning the CRA. *"I have spoken forcefully against the abuses of redevelopment when it is used to enrich the already rich developers."* Valley Plaza is a redevelopment zone within his district. He decided that instead of giving a great deal of money to one developer to build a large project he would like to use CRA funds to help existing small businesses. He came up with a couple of programs to do just that. He has developed a Facade Improvement Program and a Business Assistance Program. Both of which have been funded by the CRA. The Facade Improvement Program provides loans up to \$75 thousand to small business to improve the look of their business by doing sidewalk repair, tree trimming, and facade improvements on their building. The Business Assistance Program provides loans of up to \$250,000 for commercial property owners and \$75,000 for commercial tenants to do improvements that will allow them to hire additional people, expand their space, or do some build out.

Valley Plaza is in a sorry state according to the council member. It is the area in the triangle between Victory Blvd. on the north, Laurel Canyon Blvd. on the east, and the 170 freeway on the west. The CRA kicked out existing businesses with a plan to have a grandiose development project for the region. This never happened and instead of being a source of revitalization for the area, that was an important economic center decades ago, we have an "economic black hole" according to Paul. It is has not a help to the neighborhood. In fact the CRA has contributed to creating blight in the area. The previous developer lost control of the Valley Plaza property. It is now in the hands of the finance company and they are looking for a whole new plan and developer.

Mr. Krekorian says that the area is his single biggest economic development priority in his entire district. His goal is to get it up and running with a neighborhood friendly and useful retail space that will bring new revenues to the area and would also help the surrounding businesses in the community. There is also a city park which is drastically under utilized in Valley Plaza that he would like to integrate into the final plans for use by the local residents.

### **Future Business Tax Reform**

One of the tasks of the Jobs and Development committee is focussed on the business tax issue. The Business tax Advisory committee has been working on this issue. Most of the cities in California **do not have a gross receipts tax**. Paul argues *"Our Business Tax Environment makes us extremely uncompetitive"* Less expensive, more predictable, more fair elements of the Business tax plan are needed. These new proposals have been sent out for economic analysis to determine their effectiveness.

### **LA DWP and the Rate Payer Advocate**

The cost of doing business in LA also includes the DWP rates. Paul sits on the Energy and Environment Committee. He and his Committee directed last week the city attorney, the CLA, and the CAA, to prepare a report on the tools and resources necessary to establish the Rate Payer Advocate's office. This follows the voter approved charter amendment in March to provide oversight of the DWP.

Mr. Krekorian indicated that sometimes the LADWP acts like it is not part of the city. He spoke

briefly about last years behavior of the DWP management when they put a financial gun to the city's head stating that would not get the transfer of funds from the DWP to the city if we did approve the rate increase. However, he did add the following very positive comment regarding the new DWP General manager. *"I am cautiously optimistic that the DWP may be turning a corner and getting on the right path. We have a new General Manager and so far I have been tremendously impressed with him. Every time any issue has come up with the DWP he is calling me ahead of time. Not waiting for me to find out about it. That alone is a "C" Change at the DWP. It has been remarkably different since he has taken over."* (the new DWP manager is Ron Nichols )

We thank Council member Krekorian for taking time out of his very busy schedule for visiting with us and bringing us up to date on these very important issues.

### **Friends of Griffith Park**

### **Bernadette Soter**

Friends of Griffith Park is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) that promotes the enlightened stewardship of Griffith Park. While some attractions in the Park have organized groups supporting their missions, Friends of Griffith Park is the only organization that works to preserve and sustain the whole of the Park—its irreplaceable environment and the history it enfolds.

At issue is the controversial plan to introduce commercial advertising in L.A. parks and rec centers in exchange for tax-deductible donations to the privately operated L.A. Parks Foundation. Developed outside the city's public RFP and concession processes, this initiative violates municipal sign ordinances. Although the City Attorney has advised the Recreation & Parks Commission of its illegality, the L.A. Parks Foundation continues to work with the law firm of Latham & Watkins to develop a new advertising classification entitled "Government Speech" which, they contend, would be exempt from regulation. In addition to park advocates' concerns about sign blight and the exploitation of children, the plan is drawing fire from activists who oppose the proliferation of billboards and off-site advertising in our city.

Contact me if you have any questions or comments at [bsoter@earthlink.net](mailto:bsoter@earthlink.net)

### **Proposed Zoning Code Simplification**

### **Maria Fisk**

In 1946 the city's first ever comprehensive zoning ordinance went into effect. And in the 65 years since then, the City's ordinance has been amended so many times that it has grown from 84 to over a 600-page document. In 2008, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning launched an initiative to streamline, update and simplify the zoning code. The Code Studies Unit, under the auspices of the Planning Department has identified a few selected 9 components to be revised and updated. Two of the proposed ordinances to amend the Los Angeles Municipal Code are now undergoing review: **(1)Core Findings** – Generally address the relationship of a proposed project to the general Plan and the public welfare and convenience. Core findings are a set of standards used to analyze the merits of a proposed development. This proposed ordinance included suggested revisions that clarify ambiguous language, delete redundant findings and consolidate findings that would result in clearer and shorter staff reports. The City Planning Commission (CPC) approved the ordinance and recommended adoption by the City Council. A Planning and Land Use Management

Committee public hearing to review this proposed ordinance is scheduled for May 17, 2011.

**(2)Multiple Approvals** – Developers of complex projects may request multiple entitlements with dissimilar expiration deadlines. These variable expiration dates are problematic and may disable a project. The proposed ordinance included methods to better synchronize the expiration dates for these types of development. A CPC hearing may be scheduled for early June 2011.

It is evident that our City's zoning code requires updating. However, after reviewing the details within the above mentioned proposed ordinances, their relationship to each other, and additional city protocols, many citywide Neighborhood Councils and Organizations have raised the following concerns:

1. A more pressing priority is the revision of the General Plan (GP). This State mandated "constitution for development" has a 2010 horizon year. It is now 2011 and where are the plans to update the outdated GP?
2. An outdated GP compromises the consistency and integrity of the zoning code. Zoning code revisions must be legally consistent with the GP.
3. Why wasn't the entire zoning code updated during times of financial stability?
4. Aggressive streamlining can result in less oversight, compromise the public review process and allow for poorly planned development to move forward.
5. Rather than a piecemeal presentation of so many separate ordinances, these must be presented to the public as an integrated package. And this entire package must also be subjected to a comprehensive CEQA analysis of their cumulative environmental impacts.

Contact- [mbfisk@verizon.net](mailto:mbfisk@verizon.net)

Old Granada Hills Residents' Group, Board of Directors, member  
OGHRG, Zoning and Density Committee, chair

Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council, Land Use Committee, member/stakeholder

## **State Redistricting Commission Schedule    Joe Vitti**

April 30,2011 meeting

I did attend the Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC) Public Hearing held at the City Hall Chambers of the city of San Fernando on Saturday, April 30,2011. About 160 members of the public provided public comment including myself and we were limited to only 2 minutes per speaker. The Commission started their day at about 10am discussing redistricting matters. The public hearing commenced at 2pm. The CRC did remain to hear from all the members of the public that showed up. All of the testimony given is supposed to be posted on line at the Commission's web site

## **May 26,2011 California State University Northridge(CSUN)**

The meeting at CSUN **will not** be hearing from individual members of the public. Only organized groups that have made arrangements beforehand will be making presentations. This is a change from early reports that there would be a Public Comment period for individuals. However residents can submit public comments to the CRC by email directly using simple forms provided on line by the Commission. Go to [wedrawthelines.ca.gov](http://wedrawthelines.ca.gov). You can also call the CRC toll free at [1-866-356-5217](tel:1-866-356-5217) for more info.

## **Public Comment guidance**

When preparing a public comment it would be useful to understand the definition of a “community of interest” as defined by the California Constitution. It reads, in part, as follows; *A community of interest is a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation. Examples of shared interests are those common to an urban area, a rural area, an industrial area, or an agricultural area..... Communities of interest shall not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates.*

## **CRC Public Hearings – Full Schedule to August 2011**

**April -May 2011:** -Pre map input hearings

**June 10,2011:** Proposed date for the Commission to post first draft maps

**June 2011:** Draft Map Input hearings

**July 1,2011:** Proposed date for the Commission to post the second draft maps

**July 2011:** Second Draft Map Hearings

**July 26,2011** Proposed date for the Commission to post final maps

**August 15,2011:** Deadline for the Commission to approve the final maps.

*(The proposed dates may change. Go to the CRC web site for the most up to date schedules and other info.)*

## **LAWA Report                      Denny Schneider**

While airport operations at LAX continue to recover toward the passengers counts last seen during the period prior to Sept 11, 2001, recovery of outlying airports such as LA/Ontario (LA/ONT) remains stalled. Recent news reported plots against LAX as a prime terrorist target. 75% of all air commerce in the entire region remains at LAX. Imagine the impact to our economy if something happens at LAX with the backup capacity to temporarily absorb a catastrophe. Sadly, local special interest businesses downtown continue to push for expansion at LAX instead. Southern California Association of Governments recently added their voice to the call for more airports and the need for local control. We need more airports to meet future demand and this is the only way it will happen! Pressure is mounting on Los Angeles World Airports, LAWA, owner of the LA/ONT to divest to local control. Recently San Bernardino and Riverside Counties joined the City of Ontario to demand control of their airport. They feel the airport is critical to regional economic recovery and that LAWA has ignored the LA/ONT in favor of its flagship, LAX. ARSAC, Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion, continues its call for local control and growth of outlying airports and regional capacity growth. When 50,000 people missed their flights a due to an accident on the 405 something is wrong! People should have a local airport so that the gridlock is reduced. However, few people dispute that much work IS still needed at LAX to restore the poorly maintained flagship of the region. “Bigger is not better, but functional is critical!” Instead of concentrating on these fixes, LAWA wants to spend \$billions to expand its north runways. They should be fixing the terminals and ground traffic flow. LAWA commitment to expansion was again reported in a progress report of the ongoing Environmental Impact Review of a Master Plan change.

## **Transportation**

**Bart Reed**

### **Passenger Service Improvements**

A recent motion by the Metro Board was passed to explore ways to increase and improve service on the Metrolink Antelope Valley line, which connects Los Angeles with the eastern San Fernando Valley, Santa Clarita and Palmdale. The 76-mile train line takes 2 hours to travel from end to end, averaging 40 MPH, largely due to numerous curves and single-track segments. Also, at least 63 grade crossings exist along the line, which create a potential safety hazard. Metro Boardmember Mike Antonovich has pushed for a study like this, in hopes that passenger rail service in northern Los Angeles County can be better. The results of the study should be available later this year.

### **Ship to Rail Freight Movement**

The GRID ([San] Gabriel River Infrastructure Development) Project, is a proposed superdock facility where vessels can unload their containers directly onto trains, as opposed to having them transported via truck to distribution facilities. This improvement alone can potentially reduce the offload time from 36 hours to 3, greatly increasing the efficiency and performance potential of the underutilized Alameda Corridor. More importantly, with trucks out of the equation, air pollution can be vastly reduced in the area and freeways such as the 710 and the 605 can operate for their designed volume of traffic.–

The Transit Coalition Bart Reed, Executive Director

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The next regular monthly meeting of Valley VOTE will be on **Monday, June 20, 2011** at Galpin Ford.