

**Valley VOTE**  
**Valley Voters Organized Toward Empowerment**  
**July 18, 2016 Meeting Report**  
by  
**David DeVoss**

**Keeping Valley Residents Safe**



Valley VOTE's Vic Viereck with retiring LAFD Deputy Chief Bureau Commander Daryl Arbuthnott and his replacement new Valley Fire Chief Trevor Richmond

The Los Angeles Fire Department is divided into four bureaus, one of which covers the 240-sq. miles of the San Fernando Valley. The 1.8 million people living in the Valley are protected by 38 fire stations that responded to 139,444 calls for assistance in 2015. The Valley also has five Emergency Medical Services teams that respond to medical crises and transport the sick and injured to hospital, if necessary.

Daryl Arbuthnott, a 35-year veteran of the LAFD, is being replaced Trevor Richmond. Arbuthnott had made it a priority to increase the FD's profile on Facebook, Twitter and the LAFD website.

The LAFD took a big hit back in 2009 when it was forced to cut \$90 million, or 20%, from its budget. "We still haven't made it back to the 2009 level," says

Richmond, “despite a 1% annual increase in workload.” One percent, that is, until 2015 when the number of fire and EMT calls jumped 15%. “The difference is the affordable care act,” says Arbuthnott. “People not registered for Affordable Care wouldn’t call 911 before because they were afraid of the bill. Now insurance will pay for transport and the emergency care bill.”

The total LAFD budget is \$600 million.

Being taken to the hospital is not cheap. LAFD charges between \$800 to \$1,500 per trip depending on the seriousness of the call. About 30% of the people taken to the hospital refuse to pay. Admits Richmond: “We write off a lot of it. We don’t break legs.”

## **Neighborhood Integrity Initiative Sparks Community Debate**

Citizens should decide the size, height and density of their neighborhoods and decades ago communities throughout Los Angeles adopted specific development plans and local zoning. Recently, however, these plans have been supplanted by “spot zoning” allowed by city council politicians. Spot zoning - which allows taller buildings, less parking and little traffic mitigation – often is accompanied by political contributions by developers, their relatives and groups that will benefit from the new construction.

Case in point is North Hollywood West, a development between Laurel Canyon and the 170 freeway that will have 740 residential units and 800,000-sq. ft. of office and commercial space. The development team has given \$14,000 in political contributions and spent \$415,000 on City Hall lobbyists, who generously allowed their benefactors to avoid all traffic mitigation.

There’s a reason “celebrity developer” is a recognized term. Developer Rick Caruso raised \$14.6 million (\$100,000 from his own pocket) for Eric Garcetti’s “Mayor’s Fund for Los Angeles,” a charitable foundation to fund Garcetti’s pet projects. Between 2000 and the start of this year, Caruso gave an additional \$66,000 to city politicians. Caruso wants to build a 20-story luxury condominium tower on La Cienega near the Beverly Center. Perish the thought that a quid pro quo is involved.

Scheduled for the March 2017 ballot, the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative would institute a two-year delay in massive developments so that new zoning regulations could be decided by the people whose neighborhoods are being impacted. A counter initiative call Build Better LA will negate the neighborhood proposal and continue to let the City Council decide the fate of specific parcels of land on a case-by-case basis.

## **Valley Vote Committee Reports**

### **Ernie Hilger – Veterans Activities**

A Master Plan for the West Los Angeles Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) campus

was submitted to Congress for passage in May 2016 and for signature by the president by May 30, 2016. It was pulled at the last minute when one senator

objected that the funds to pay for construction were coming from rounding down on veteran's disability benefits. *The [legislation](#)* authorizes \$866 million worth of construction at several VA medical facilities in California. The legislation will be resubmitted to Congress attached to a Military Spending Bill in a bipartisan bicameral format. Once passed, the bill will codify changes in the WLA VA Master Plan and the supportive housing scheduled for construction on the campus.

The Los Angeles Regional Community Veterans Engagement Board (LAR-CVEB) when approved will maintain communication links among veterans of all eras, their families, and all service providers for the purpose of facilitating an improved quality of life for veterans. You can find the minutes of the meetings on the VA's CVEB website: <http://www.losangeles.va.gov/CVEB/>

The Veterans Service Organizations Coalition requests the continued support of Valley VOTE for the following:

1. The CVEB board when elected remains apolitical and a non-aligned fiduciary that protects veterans' interests.
2. The CVEB remains a conduit to supply information between providers of veterans' services and veterans. The CVEB is not a decision body.
3. No public money is used for the West LA VA supportive housing construction that brings non-discrimination clauses with it.

### ***Sound Off! Public Comment:***

Michelle Dornfest and Ernie Hilger presented brief tributes to the recent victims of violence in Dallas and elsewhere. "We wish that the officers and the individuals whose lives were taken senselessly will rest in peace and that we all can join together in unity," she said.

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Valley VOTE meets the third Monday of every month in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl. Meeting room of Galpin Ford at 15555 Roscoe Blvd. at Orion Blvd. There will not be an August meeting of Valley VOTE. Please join us for the next regularly scheduled meeting on September 19, 2016.

Valley VOTE Inc. is a bipartisan, non-profit entity that is organized and operated exclusively for social welfare purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code.