

Mayor's Regional Budget Day Report

by Bill Skiles, STNC's representative

At the Mayor's Regional Budget Day representatives broke up into regional groups to discuss each region's survey responses. This was when we had the opportunity to ask questions, and discuss the methodology used in the survey, and how the city will turn the survey results into City-wide programs that will appear in the Mayor's 2007-08 budget. The STNC was one of 14 NCs included in the north valley region. Only five people (including me) showed up from these 14 NCs, the others being Fidel Ramirez from the Sylmar NC, Vas Singh from the Porter Ranch NC, Kim Thompson from the Granada Hills North NC, and Jeff Gold. We selected Vas Singh and Fidel Ramirez to represent the North Valley NCs in a meeting with the Mayor on February 24, 2007 when they will have the opportunity to convey to the Mayor the North Valley's "budget message".

The survey results were composed of a number of bar charts showing how various "priorities" ranked against one another. The graphs were broken down into 9 major areas: (1) economic development, (2) energy and environment, (3) emergency preparedness, (4) housing, (5) infrastructure, (6) public safety, (7) recreational services and arts, (8) transportation, and (9) youth programs. If you examine the charts you will see that each of these nine categories breaks down into more specific elements. Transportation ranked as the number one budget priority city wide, while the north valley chose infrastructure as its number one priority. Economic development came in last City-wide while the north valley saw housing as its lowest budget priority.

We spent two hours looking at these results but no decisions were made or conclusions drawn regarding how the north valley would report to the mayor. Vas Singh and Fidel Ramirez are in the process of gathering input from the north valley NCs and preparing to meet with the Mayor on February 24. So it is fairly important that we communicate to them whatever we decide what our budget priorities are before February 21, when they finalize their presentation.

I should add that the gist of what I learned on Saturday is that while this budget exercise does not provide Sunland-Tujunga with the opportunity to get more building inspectors, or police officers or watershed enhancements or anything else specific to Sunland-Tujunga, it will provide us with a means of translating our community concerns into the budget language the City is using today to create its budget. These survey results will be very useful in initiating this discussion. The immediate question for us to answer is this: are our community's budget priorities accurately depicted in these bar charts, or does our community disagree with the aggregate opinion of the north valley? If we disagree then we should re-align the priorities and report that re-alignment to Vas and Fidel.

Vas and Fidel are very open to getting our input while they prepare to meet with the Mayor on February 24. But they will be presenting a north valley budget agenda rather than a NC by NC agenda. So, as I see it our needs would best be expressed to them in this new budget language. Do we agree with the survey results, and if not, how not?