

Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood Council Special General Board Meeting & Town Hall Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2025, 7pm
In Person, Elk's Lodge, Tujunga

DRAFT

1. Call to Order, Welcome - Lydia Grant, President, 7:07 pm
 - Lydia introduced herself and described how the meetings are conducted via zoom in general. Lydia acknowledged the concerns with the current truck-dumping situation in the community and expressed her own concerns as well.
 - Congratulations to the Verdugo High School Decathlon students. Certificates will be given at the next STNC meeting to acknowledge their efforts and success.
 - School Safety – there are issues that will be discussed in more depth in the future.
 - STNC Candidate Filing is Open til 3/31. Lydia invited people to join the Board or a Committee.
 - Report Non Functioning Street Lights <https://forms.gle/yGjnKBXDVoFDDYdEA> - There is a new website page on STNC.org where non-functioning street lights can be reported.
 - 311 Week is March 10-14 – Report to My311LA - <https://lacity.gov/myla311>. There is a Contest to see which community is using 311 the most; people are encouraged to use 311 to report problems/incidents.
 - Forming the STNC Emergency Preparedness Committee – This committee is now formed to address community needs for information in view of the recent fires where weaknesses existed in getting information out to the community
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**, led by Leny Freeman
3. **Roll Call, Voting Eligibility** - Karen Moran, Recording Secretary & Completion of City / DONE
Required trainings status for the STNC board & committees

Board Member	Roll Call	Funding Voting Eligibility	Board Appointment
Lydia Grant	Present	Yes	President

Board Member	Roll Call	Funding Voting Eligibility	Board Appointment
Armen Mardirousi	Absent	Yes	1st VP
Ross Herman	Present	Yes	2nd VP
Carol Hutchinson	Present	Yes	Treasurer
Cindy Cleghorn	Present	Yes	Correspondence Sec
Karen Moran	Present	Yes	Recording Sec
Leny Freeman	Present	Yes	Region 1 Rep
KT Travers	Absent	Yes	Region 1 Rep
Sherry McCoy	Present	Yes	Region 2 Rep
Vacant			Region 2 Rep
Mike Goglia	Present	Yes	Region 3 Rep
Peter Darakjian	Absent	Yes	Region 3 Rep
Jon von Gunten	Present	Yes	Region 3 Rep
Belinda Woodruff	Absent	No	Region 4 Rep
Trevor Schmidt	Absent	Yes	Region 4 Rep
Mark Seigel	Absent	Yes	Region 4 Rep
Deborah Ramirez	Present	Yes	Education Rep
Cheryl Schmidt	Present	Yes	Public Safety Rep
Nina Royal	Present	Yes	Senior Rep
Vartan Keshish	Present	Yes	Community Interest Rep
<p>Quorum: 13 present at roll call, 6 absent (19 total). Leny left the meeting at 9:20 pm. Leny and Mike were not present voting for the funding and non-funding items.)</p>			

4. Announce any Board member recusals or paid lobbyists in attendance. None.
5. Upcoming Community Events: Lydia announced
 - Our Lady of Lourdes - Fish Fry @ 5:30-7:30PM on 3/14, 21, 28, April 4, 11
 - American Legion - All Day Event 3/1
 - Elks Lodge - St. Patrick's Dinner 3/15
 - Joselito's - Tip a Cop event – Thursday (tomorrow), March 13th, 11am at Joselito's.

6. **Discussion/Motion: To approve updated STNC Letter to the County Grand Jury to encourage community liaison and engagement regarding Sunland-Tujunga Emergency Evacuation Routes**

- **Note: Members of the Community who attended this meeting are identified as “MC” throughout these minutes.**
- Lydia discussed that prior to the Paradise fire, a decision was made to investigate egress in the event of an emergency but the Grand Jury for Paradise decided they wouldn't follow up on the recommendation. When the fire occurred, egress was very difficult. We cannot let this happen to our community. We need to be prepared. Information is expected to come out of the newly established STNC Emergency Preparedness Committee with a similar Grand Jury to investigate egress. A motion was made by Carol and seconded by Nina to approve an updated letter.
- An MC at the meeting identified himself as having experiences on a Grand Jury that investigates complaints and advised that the only way to get it through is to go online and file a complaint; complaints are reviewed by the City daily and have to be responded to. If an investigation should be done, they will do so. His term is for one year. Investigations are done for complaints about City departments, e.g. Sheriff's, Police, etc., and if you go on-line and complain, you will get an answer.
- Lydia said the letter is addressed to the City and a copy is available for the public.
- The vote was taken and passed.

7. **Discussion/Possible Action: Truck Traffic with fires debris dropping in Seven Hills with LA County Public Works**

- **Note: Members of the Community who attended this meeting are identified as “MC” throughout these minutes.**
- **Note: A considerable amount of time was dedicated to discussing community concerns about recent and on-going trucks that are dumping dirt in the local hills at the LA County Zachau Sediment Placement Site in Tujunga. Concerns were voiced about the potential contamination of the dirt, and about the truck traffic itself which has impacted local residents. The US Army Corps of Engineers, Public Works, assisted the US Army Corps, identifies facilities that have the proper permits granted by state and local regulatory agencies to take in the debris. Laren Bunker from the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Stormwater Waste Division, came to the meeting to address the concerns of the community. Jonathan King, also from the Stormwater Waste Division, supported Laren (or “Larry”). Email contact info for Larry is lbunker@dwp.lacounty.gov and for Jon is jking@dwp.lacounty.gov.**
- Lydia provided background on the issue of concern. She has been working with the County already and stated that what is done cannot be undone. Lydia was not initially aware of the problem and encouraged community members to let the STNC know when there is a problem so that meetings, testing, etc. could have been done sooner. After working with County, the initial route for the trucks was changed and routes are no longer near the schools. The route currently is on Pennsylvania, Tujunga Canyon Blvd and Commerce. There are about 35 trucks, each taking 3 trips a day. The number of trips has been increased to 4 a day to try to reduce the impact period to the community. Lydia said they did soil testing and she has 5 copies of the test results and can provide additional (electronic) copies if requested. Lydia contacted network media people.

- Lydia wanted to thank NC leaders present at this meeting who are interested in topic and noted that they also have a meeting at the NC in Sun Valley the next evening. Lydia found out, by following trucks to Altadena, to see where the dirt is coming from. The dirt is from a debris basin, not on private property or burned out homes. One of Lydia's concerns is that they should have tested the soil before dumping. Lydia expressed a concern about the potential for Valley Fever if spores could be released in a wind-event.
- Larry Bunker, the representative from LA Country, is involved with the flood control system, flood protection and water distribution. There are a lot of facilities that are maintained including 14 major dams, flood control channels, the LA River, debris basins. Altadena is not under the jurisdiction of Los Angeles but with the Eaton fires, help from L.A. was requested. There are 19 debris basins Altadena is responsible for. When it rains, a trigger point is a rainfall of ½ inch/hour when dirt will come down without growth keeping it in place. Debris basins are a way for rocks and dirt to go to mini reservoirs before going into dams. Materials (rocks and debris) fill up basins and must be removed to protect the homes downstream. Fires were not expected in the January time-frame; debris basins were not cleaned so they already had material in them and immediate attention was needed with additional debris being added. Larry noted that they could have done a better job notifying the community about what was going on. As part of scramble to get the debris basins ready, and with limited personnel, Altadena asked Los Angeles to take on 2 debris basins (of the 19). With debris basins located above the homes, contamination was not expected other than ashes from the winds. L.A. got the 2 debris basins done pretty quickly but a rain put more material back in them and they started the process of hauling material out so the debris basins were empty for future rains. The on-going rains at this time expect 2-4 inches in the Foothills. The removal is almost finished but with more rains, the process will start again. It is important to get the debris basins cleared out to protect properties downstream; as vegetation grows back, the situation will be eased. The effort is expected to go on another 2-3 weeks but it depends on on-going and future rain accumulations.
- Lydia asked about access points to the Tujunga dump-area; Larry said two points of access/egress to the Tujunga debris fill area. The Initial plans were to come in one and go out the other, but the bottom of the trucks were bottoming out and there was no choice but to come into the Seven Hills Drive area until access roads could be improved. Larry estimated there were 20-25 trucks coming in (making 3-4 trips a day each). Larry noted that they haven't hauled into the area since the Station Fire in 2009. Jon King worked with the community to keep them informed.
- MC asked who is responsible for public notification. Larry said it would have come from their department in Public Works. The MC asked if all this testing is done by independent Labs. Larry said that the samples from both of the debris basins were taken and testing done by an independent lab. They were tested for metals (primarily lead), VOC, asbestos and hydrocarbons. The results showed that there was no Asbestos, metals, VOCs and hydrocarbons were either minimal or none. The MC asked if someone wanted to do their own testing, would that be possible. Larry was unsure – he had not been asked that question before.
- Lydia said the STNC is trying to work with the Country Health department.
- Another MC said he is dealing with two properties in Altadena and that he senses something is 'off' after being at the Altadena properties. Larry said he could provide a copy of the test results. The MC said the first time he heard of it was trucks coming up

to the Tujunga dump-area. Larry said they deal with debris basins all the time and the initial cleanout was before the first storm. Larry recognizes that some dumping in the Calabasas area from the Pacific Palisades fire might have alarmed people.

- Another MC said that she appreciated them coming to answer questions and asked how far are the debris basins from the burn-area. Larry described the water shed and debris basin locations. Additional testing not planned; testing to date shows clean debris. Upcoming storms are not expected to change the results. Ross asked if there could be a follow up testing to assure the community. Larry said first removal was not tested; tested material was done after the Feb 14th rain storm, noting that each subsequent storm should be even more clean (e.g. ash will be washed out and each storm). Larry said additional testing could be done.
- An MC that lives on Commerce said that the number of trucks is estimated at 280 daily (including multiple trips) and wanted to know how long it would continue. Larry said it is hard to predict what the weather will do; rains will add material to the debris basins. Initially they were running 35 trucks between the 2 facilities, 8 hour days, but it is down to 20 trucks now. Larry would they would rather have more trucks to expedite the entire effort. The MC said that 20 trucks resulted in 120 passes of the trucks.
- An MC asked if it would be possible to take debris someplace else. Larry said that there are long-designated facilities (since 1955) and that it would take considerable time to get permits and approvals for a new location with significant environmental evaluations needing to be done.
- And MC said about the Tujunga dump capacity and Larry said that when it reached capacity it would be permanently shut down. Larry noted that the Station Fire took up a lot of capacity. There is a final elevation limit and no views would be blocked for local homes.
- An MC questioned about concerns for homes built after the 1955 station was established. Larry said again that the debris samples were not contaminated.
- MC (Karen Von Gunten) said that she smelled burnt rubber at times and felt there is something there and additional testing was needed. A poll was taken of the audience and a number of people indicated that they, too, had smelled something at times that smelled like burnt rubber
- An MC (David Jenkins), who lives on Tujunga Canyon Blvd, said that a couple of days after the fire there was a bad stench. The MC asked who in the Department made the decision to use this dump-site and Larry said it was his decision as part of his job. The MC asked if Barger was notified and Barger's assistant, Diana Oganessian, who was at the meeting, said that they were notified, and apologized for the information for not being communicated with the community. Ross asked if it would be normal for the public to get information, Larry said yes, noting that operations were normally planned for late summer/early fall but with a late rain, there was a more urgent need to react.
- An MC expressed a concern about overgrowth clearances and asked if there were plans to clean out the Seven Hills area which hasn't been done for years. Larry said they tried but the Cal Dept Fish and Wildlife Services had restrictions to protect bird nesting area, etc. and their success was very limited. Larry said that you can't clear a debris basin until it is 24% full and their hands are tired for what they can do to clean out the area. The MC felt that these were excuses and that multiple agencies needed to communicate with each other. Lydia said this was another issue and we should complete the

discussion on debris dumping. Lydia suggested that the STNC go forward to (1) fix the entrance to the lower testing so they can get trucks in if they continue dumping, and (2) write a letter to district in regards to brush to get it cleared.

- An MC (Stacy Adams) asked if any studies were done after the Station Fire; Larry said he doesn't know of any but he came on-board after the Station Fire. The MC also asked about the impact to neighbors with new route and wondered if the area was designated in 1955 should a new environmental impact study be done. Larry repeated there will always be someone impacted by route, the storm season should end April 15th, and cleanup from current storms should be done in early April.
- MC, said we are barking at the wrong guy (i.e. Larry) and needed to direct concerns to Barger. The county departments answer to the Board of County Supervisors, so talking to Barger is the path forward.
- An MC, who identified himself as someone having 36 years of experience in Public Works, asked if approvals for the haul route were obtained from the LADOT. Larry said that building codes were tied to City and no permit was needed; it was not a grading operation. City requirements, as long as in compliance with road restrictions (e.g. weight limits) can legally travel on public roads. The MC said that the concern was identifying who pays for damaged roadways from the trucks. Larry said it was the City's responsibility to fix the roads.
- An MC who lives near corner of Commerce and Summitrose felt that this truck movement has caused him health issues and asked if route can be changed. Larry said suggestions are welcomed but noted that the route would always impact someone in the community. The MC said that Summitrose has no sidewalks, and is already dangerous for people to walk. Larry noted that they have talked to truck drivers about issues such as not stopping at stop signs and one driver was already dismissed; if anyone has knowledge of violations, please let him know.
- An MC questioned the capacity of the Zachau site; Larry said that visuals show there is not a lot of capacity left. Larry said they plan to change the drain for safety reasons to ensure that when facility is finally closed it will not represent any problem to the community. The goal is to drain back to the middle which is safer. The MC asked if there was any possibility of stopping and Larry again said that getting a new site is very challenging with environmental restrictions harder than ever. The existing sites are in critical need. Available capacity has to be used.
- An MC wanted to know if the public could see the site? Larry said he discouraged people from going on their own but he could coordinate a visit with Lydia for the public. The MC wanted to know if mudslides were a concern. Larry felt that wasn't the case with engineering/grading codes.
- An MC concern for more testing to be done (which Ross already requested and was agreed to by Larry).
- An MC wants more tests and to include the carcinogens and Valley fever testing. Lydia said this would be requested through the Country Health Dept. Larry felt what they already test for should encompass our concerns.
- An MC reiterated that the first testing should have shown the most contamination material.

- An MC asked about how the material was tested; Larry said it was a mix of material that was tested. Any sample should be representative because they are all mixed together. The MC wanted the top layer in the dump-area to be tested (i.e. what is exposed). Larry said it would be the same material.
- An MC wanted to challenge some of Larry's statements including that the fire-storm experienced was unusual, that the debris areas were not designed for toxic materials, the local drop off site, and driving through residential streets were shortened to save taxpayers money.
- An MC said that if locals are interested, to talk to him after the meeting to get legal action going, feeling it was the only way to get action.
- An MC questioned if testing done at Altadena would be the same as if tested here. The MC felt that testing the top here is a good idea.
- Lydia said that when she talked to Jonathan, another issue was identified. Plans are to remove sediment at the Tujunga and Sepulveda dams locations and dredging would be done around the areas. Lydia noted that because this is where the water comes from for fighting the fires, it was important to not do both areas at the same time or water might not be available for fire-fighting.

8. Discussion/Q&A with LAPD, LAFD, Elected Officials/Representatives, DONE, NC Budget Advocates, City Departments

- **Ricardo Flores**, Councilwoman Monica Rodriguez, CD7, provided a short status of what events are coming up, noted that we are in the middle of "311 week" and using 311 helped to justify continuance for the program. The Verdugo Hills High School swimming pool will open in the summer of 2025. Contractors or city employees need to be brought in to control brush concerns; the City Fire Department does put out brush clearance notices and gives citations. Call 311 if you see what could be a violation and to report problems with street lights and RV parking. An MC (with some inside information) said there is no funding for brush clearance and wanted to know what the recourse was (for private properties) because there is no follow up due to budget constraints. Ricardo will look into it.
- **Michelle Vergara**, East Valley Rep, Mayor Bass Office, provided a status of what was happening at this time; this week is "311" week. Work is being done at this time to make the 311 call in more user friendly. The Mayor welcomes the opportunity to partner with the NCs and bring Angelinos together. The Mayor launched a charter reform commission to review the City Charter; applications to join are now open and March 28th is the deadline to apply. Michelle can be contacted directly also.
- **Diana Oganessian**, Assistant Field Deputy, from County Supervisor Kathryn Barger's Office, 5th District. Diana gave a quick update of events going on.
- **Jose Galdamez**, Neighborhood Empowerment Advocate (NEA), provided a status of updates including a March 17 clean up event at the South Park Recreation Center, a March 17th event hosted by the L.A. Civil and Human Rights and Equity Department hosting a virtual panel discussion titled "Women in Government". Jose noted that approvals are needed for zoom licenses that are expiring. March is Women's History Month and stories may be submitted for posting on social media.

9. CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS (FUNDING) - MOTION: The STNC Board approves the funding consent calendar:

- A. Discussion/Action: Motion to approve February 2025 Monthly Expenditure Report and Balances. (MER)
- B. Discussion/Action: Motion to approve up to \$80 each date (total \$240) for refreshments at STAT tree watering dates March 22, April 26, May 24, 2025
- C. Outreach Committee Recommendation: Motion: That the Board approve up to \$10,000 [allocated in our annual budget] for STNC Board Selection expenses to include candidate and voters promotion banners, printing, postage, food with pointers regarding other languages.
- D. Discussion/Action: Motion to approve up to \$200 for Zoom renewal (May 2025 to Apr 2026)

Items A and C were withdrawn. B and D were voted on. The motion was made and passed to approve Funding items B and D.

Item 9. Motion to approve Funding Calendar items B and D.						
Motion: Cleghorn, Second: C. Schmidt						
Yes	No	Abstain	Ineligible	Recuse	Absent	
Grant, Herman, Hutchinson, Cleghorn, Moran, McCoy, von Gunten, Ramirez, C Schmidt, Royal, Keshish 11 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain, 0 ineligible, 8 absent, 19 total					Mardirousi, Freeman, Woodruff, Goglio, Darakjian, T Schmidt, Siegel, Travers	

10. CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS (NON-FUNDING) - MOTION: The STNC Board approves the non-funding consent calendar:

- A. Discussion/Motion: To approve February 2025 board meeting minutes.
- B. Discussion/Motion: To approve Ross Herman on the Budget & Finance Committee
- C. Discussion/Action: to recommend LA City Council support AB 467 (Fong): <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?billid=202520260AB467> - Extends NC virtual meetings through 2030.

A motion was made and passed to approve items a, b and c for non-funding calendar items.

Item 9. Motion to approve Non-Funding Calendar items A through C					
Motion: Cleghorn, Second: Ramirez					
Yes	No	Abstain	Ineligible	Recuse	Absent

Grant, Herman, Hutchinson, Cleghorn, Moran, McCoy, von Gunten, Ramirez, C Schmidt, Royal, Keshish					Mardirousi, Freeman, Woodruff, Goglio, Darakjian, T Schmidt, Siegel, Travers
11 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain, 0 ineligible, 8 absent, 19 total					

10. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- Norma Chavez, president, Sun Valley Area Neighborhood Council (SVANC), invited all to a meeting to be held tomorrow night at 6:30pm that would discuss Sun Valley “post fire debris issues” in local land fills. Norma said that they were experiencing similar challenges. Lydia said she planned to support the meeting. (more info at <https://svanc.com/>)
- Lydia said the STAT committee approved funds for tree watering and mentioned the “Adopt a tree” program. Cheryl provided information about how easy it is to adopt a tree.
- Nina encouraged people to join the Elk’s; she can be contacted for additional information.
- Lydia noted that LAPD always attend our monthly meetings and were present earlier.
- Lydia said that there may be no July 4 Parade this year which has been hosted by the Rotary and tradition in ST for over 50 years. STNC will meet with the Rotary Club and other local groups to explore how we can hold a 4th of July parade. Insurance for the event has gone through the Rotary Club. LAPD is willing to support the event but needs paperwork to do so. Lydia noted that Parks has stated that they can deal with the water balloon activity. An MC said you need a plan in place for the water balloons issues.

11. Committee & Liaison Reports - by committee chairs present

- A. Land Use Committee - Early Notification: Demolitions, New Applications, Zoning Admin hearing. Cindy noted there is a zoning hearing on April 3. The STNC website and calendar has more information.
- B. Beautification: 3/20 @ 6PM - in person @ ST Library
- C. Outreach Meeting - 3/20 @ 7PM - virtual Zoom. Ross noted that STNC has events in conjunction with Sunland Park, McGroarty Arts Center, and Bolton Hall. The Eggstravaganza event at Sunland Park in April and a Small Business Bazaar in the April/ May time-frame are currently planned. The Small Business Bazaar is planned to promote small business in the area; if there are any business that might benefit, please let the business owner know. More information is available in the STNC website or from Ross.
- D. STAT - 3/24 - Special Meeting @ 6PM - virtual Zoom. Jon said that there has been two (2) fatalities recently (a-2 fatalities recently (a person crossing the road not in a cross walk and an elderly person who died in a car accident). Jon also noted that trees are mapped out for Tujunga with addresses provided for ‘Adopt a Tree” volunteers. There was a recent tree watering event in February.

- E. STARC: 3/25 @ 7:30PM - in person. Cindy noted that an arborist would be featured at the next meeting.
- F. Youth & Adult Education: - This is still in development at this time.
- G. Budget & Finance: 3/26 @ 6pm
- H. Community Improvement & Government Affairs - 3/26 @ 6:30PM
- I. Executive: 3/26 @7:00pm
- J. Other

12. **PRESENTATION & TRAINING on the Neighborhood Council (NC) System.**

- A. Bylaws, Standing Rules, BONC Policies, Brown Act (Meeting Agenda Posting, ENS)
- B. NC Meetings: Agenda Items, Presenters, Meeting Agendas, Making Motions, Community Impact Statements
- C. NC Alliances (Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils - VANC meets 2nd Thursday on Zoom; LANCC meets 1st Saturday at 10am; PlanCheckNC meets 2nd Saturday at 10am, STNC Community Events/Meetings, Other Training Opportunities

These items were not discussed in the interest of time.

13. **FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS** – Lydia reminded people that Elections are coming up and encouraged people to consider joining the Board.

14. **ADJOURN**, 10:05 pm