

**LA's Board of Public Works Not Working**

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Jack Humphreville



LA WATCHDOG - What are Angelenos getting for the over \$1 million a year that it costs to support the five members of the Villaraigosa-appointed Board of Public Works?

Not much, unless you consider that crumbling sidewalks, lunar cratered streets, and flickering or burned out street lights are your idea of a good time. Or maybe you appreciate the prospect of a 40% increase in the Sewer Service Charge or the more than a tripling of the Villaraigosa trash tax to finance the inefficient collection of our trash?

Our Department of Public Works, charged with overseeing the City's infrastructure, is the City's third largest department with over 5,000 employees and an annual budget approaching \$2 billion. This sprawling Department consists of five bureaus: Sanitation (trash, sewers, and storm water), Street Services

(streets, potholes, sidewalks, and trees), Street Lighting, Engineering, and Contract Administration.

But overseeing this multibillion dollar organization are the five politically appointed, well paid Commissioners of the Board of Public Works, none of whom have the necessary experience or qualifications to manage such a large, complex organization that is charged with providing essential core services to Angelenos.

None of the commissioners have any relevant experience in managing or administrating a large, engineering oriented organization with thousands of employees. Nor do they have the necessary backgrounds that are required to plan and oversee expenditures of billions and billions of capital expenditures.

Nor are any of the commissioners trained as engineers or have the technical background that is necessary to understand the complex logistics and operations of the Department of Public Works.

Nor do any of the Commissioners have the financial or systems experience or expertise to review and analyze the operational efficiency of this Department or to develop the necessary management information systems that are key to the sound financial management of the Department of Public Works.

Rather, these five Commissioners, none of whom have had any meaningful private sector experience, are very good at following the orders of Mayor Villaraigosa, including his directives that drastically underfund the maintenance and repair of the City's streets, sidewalks, street lights, sewers, storm drainage system, trees, and other key sectors of the City's infrastructure.

But deferring maintenance and repair is very expensive as future repairs will be geometrically more expensive as minor repairs turn into major reconstruction projects. Just look at our lunar cratered streets and crumbling sidewalks that need billions upon billions in repairs.

Why have these well paid Commissioners failed to protect our infrastructure, a core mission of the City? And why have these Villaraigosa stooges not developed both short term and long term operational and financial plans to address the repair and maintenance of our infrastructure, including investigating viable alternatives such as the hiring of more efficient private contractors? And why have these Commissioners, four of which are public sector lawyers, not looked out for the best short term and long term interests of Angelenos?

The Department of Public Works and its five Bureaus must become more transparent and accountable. We need a thorough understanding of their operations and finances, including why special revenue

funds are "reimbursing" the City's General Fund over \$160 million.

Unfortunately, Mayor Villaraigosa has a pattern of appointing unqualified political hacks to the key Commissions as was discussed in a November 27, 2009 CityWatch article, "No Experience Necessary". And more than likely, he will continue to appoint sycophants as Commissioners, regardless of the repercussions to the City and Angelenos.

But the voters and property owners do have leverage at the ballot box. The City will need the approval of voters or property owners to increase fees or taxes pursuant to Proposition 218, the recently passed Proposition 26, or the general provisions of the City Charter.

The March 2013 City elections will also be a free for all, with several our Elected Elite running for City wide offices and a number of Council seats opening up because of term limits. There is also the special election in the Harbor to replace Janice Hahn in Council District 15.

As it is, the Bureau of Sanitation is working with the County to finance the City's \$8 billion Storm Water project, in large part because its proposed \$100 parcel tax was killed by the City Council shortly after voters rejected Measure B, the Mayor's Solar Initiative that was a payoff to campaign funding IBEW Union Bo\$\$ Brian d'Arcy.

If there is a tax or fee authorizing vote, this will be the opportunity to express our dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs.

Our Elected Elite know that even liberal Angelenos are in a foul mood. So the Ratepayers and voters must demand that the Department of Public Works be more transparent and accountable and that any future Commissioners have relevant experience and expertise.

And if Our Dear 11% Termed Out Mayor, our lap dog Controller, our Elected Elite on the City Council, and the current Commissioners do not get the message, maybe it is time for an independent Public Works Advocate to expose the gross mismanagement of the Department of Public Works and protect hard working Angelenos from continuing fraud, waste, and abuse.

*(Jack Humphreville writes LA Watchdog for CityWatch He is the President of the DWP Advocacy Committee and the Ratepayer Advocate for the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council. Humphreville is the publisher of the Recycler -- [www.recycler.com](http://www.recycler.com). He can be reached at: [lajack@gmail.com](mailto:lajack@gmail.com)) -cw*

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