

LOCAL REGIONAL & STATE

SUN VALLEY

Landfill manager wins vote

Dump foes claim irregularities in Neighborhood Council election

By James Nash
Staff Writer

The manager of the controversial Bradley Landfill has won a seat on the Sun Valley Neighborhood Council, raising concerns in the community that he would use his influence on the advisory panel to push for the expansion of the dump.

Landfill opponents say Waste Management Inc., which manages the facility, encouraged dozens of employees to vote for landfill manager Doug Corcoran and other candidates sympathetic to the company's expansion plans.

Corcoran won more votes than any of his rivals in the Oct. 4 neighborhood council election. Corcoran said he was merely fulfilling his civic responsibility by running.

A few of the landfill's most strident critics, meanwhile, also

won seats on the council — setting the stage for either more confrontation or, perhaps, creating a forum for resolving differences.

For now, at least, many of the landfill opponents are angry.

"We're upset that not only have they trashed the place (Sun Valley), but they're trying to keep control of the neighborhood council," said Jerry Piro, a Sun Valley activist who won a seat on the panel.

Corcoran, who does not live in Sun Valley, won 141 votes, 47 more than the second-highest vote-getter.

"We have a responsibility — all the businesses have a responsibility to get involved beyond our limited scope of interests," he said. "We just thought we should have a voice in the community."

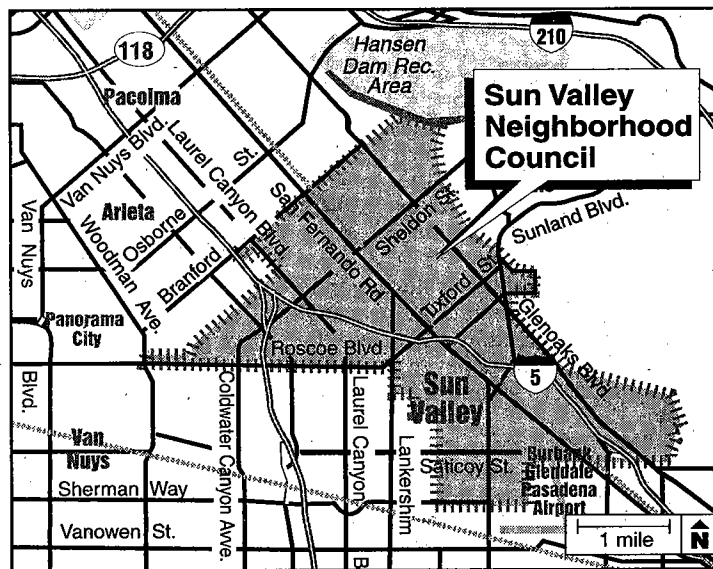
Under the city of Los Angeles' rules governing neighborhood

councils, the advisory panels are to include homeowners, renters, employees and property owners in a community. About 100 neighborhood councils are expected to represent all parts of Los Angeles, including 26 in the San Fernando Valley.

In other areas of the city, neighborhood activists also have alleged that local special interests have attempted to dominate neighborhood councils by packing the polls.

The Hollywood Neighborhood Council was dogged by complaints that the Church of Scientology flooded the polls with its adherents, and in San Pedro, activists said the union representing dock workers did the same.

The Sun Valley Neighborhood Council will not have the authority to decide whether Waste Management can expand the Bradley Landfill by 10



percent and raise its height by 43 feet. Waste Management has proposed the expansion, calling it necessary to preserve jobs as it moves to close the landfill in

April 2007.

Although the neighborhood council has no decision-making

Council winner calls post 'responsibility'

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authority over the landfill, opponents of the expansion say Waste Management's show of force in the neighborhood council election is another sign of the company's aggressive tactics.

"We're calling it a Tammany Hall," said landfill opponent Carol Ziehler. "Waste Management was busing in people from their facility to vote."

East Valley Coalition member Ellen Mackey, who voted but did not run in the neighborhood council election, said many of the winners are outspoken Bradley Landfill supporters.

"The people who won are mostly Chamber of Commerce members, and the chamber is mostly pro-dump," Mackey said.

Corcoran said about 60 percent of his more than 200 employees normally work Saturdays, and Waste Management arranged for car pools from the landfill to the polling site.

Corcoran said Bradley Landfill workers are civic-minded members of the Sun Valley community and were not told to vote for any particular candidates or slate. Corcoran said he did not know of any Waste Management employees, other than himself, who ran for seats.

Corcoran said he understands concerns about his dual roles as landfill manager and elected representative of the Sun Valley community. He said he would avoid any actions that could create a conflict of interest.

Corcoran will be one of 27 members of the Sun Valley Neighborhood Council. Piro,

Ziehler and other landfill opponents say the panel is liberally stocked with leaders of the Sun Valley business community who are more sympathetic to Waste Management than most residents.

Ziehler singled out Arthur Sweet, a Sherman Oaks-based developer and Sun Valley Chamber of Commerce director who, she said, has voiced support for Bradley Landfill in his chamber role.

Sweet was elected to the neighborhood council with 79 votes.

Sweet said Bradley Landfill is an important employer in Sun Valley and that he doesn't want to chase the business out of town. At the same time, he said, he understands residents' concerns about dust, truck noise, odor and pollution.

"Fundamentally, I don't want to see the employment in one of the major industries throughout the northeast San Fernando Valley disappear," Sweet said.

Not all of the newly elected Sun Valley Neighborhood Council members are preoccupied with Bradley Landfill. The panel also is expected to take up routine neighborhood issues such as development, public safety, traffic control and city services.

"We need to get everyone together and work together," said Maria del Carmen Perez, a newly elected neighborhood council member. "We need to help the neighborhood and keep the kids off the streets."

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