

**Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood Council
Special General Board Meeting
Minutes
March 20, 2025, 8:15 PM**

This meeting is being held by the Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council using teleconferencing pursuant to Government Code Section 54953.8(a)(2)(B).

- 1. Call to Order, Roll Call.** Ross Herman called the meeting to order at 8:21pm.

Board Member	Roll Call	Funding Voting Eligibility	Board Appointment
Lydia Grant	Present	Yes	President
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	Absent	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 Siegel	Present	Yes	Region 4 Rep
Deborah Ramirez	Absent	UNK	Education Rep
Cheryl Schmidt	Present	Yes	Public Safety Rep

Board Member	Roll Call	Funding Voting Eligibility	Board Appointment
Nina Royal	Absent	Yes	Senior Rep
Vartan Keshish	Present	Yes	Community Interest Rep
Susan Denning			Member of the Community
Lionel Mares			Member of the Community
10908 Sevenhills			Member of the Community
Imariza			Member of the Community
Karen VonGunten			Member of the Community
Gabriel			Member of the Community
Christina Souto (SoutoC)			Member of the Community
Jenik			Member of the Community
Quorum: 11 present at roll call, 8 absent (19 total).			

2. Discussion/Action: To approve communication and letter to City regarding community concerns involving County truck hauling of dirt sediment to the Zachau site in Seven Hills, Tujunga.

Note: Members of the Community who attended this meeting are identified as “MC” throughout these minutes if the name is unknown.

Note: 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 (Larry) Bunker from the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Stormwater Waste Division, came to the recent STNC General Board meeting (3-12-2025) to address the concerns of the community. Larry stated at this meeting that test results they took indicated the dirt was non-toxic.

- a. Lydia drafted a letter and wanted to make a motion to approve the letter. The letter might need tweaks. Ross made the motion and Carol seconded it. Per Lydia, the community was so upset about the recent and on-going dumping of dirt in the Zachau Canyon Catch Basin Placement Site that they had the soil tested and paid for it themselves. Unfortunately, the Lab results came back indicated it was toxic. The plan is now to ask the City to help us and Lydia’s letter will address it. Lydia read the letter,

knowing that some tweaks may be necessary. Comments from the community were solicited by Lydia.

- b. Leny asked, in view of the fact we cannot remove what has already been dumped there, if it was possible to put a bio-mass on top of the area and perhaps grow flowers which would attract bees and start to reclaim some of the soil (top level).
- c. Lionel Mares extended an invitation to work together with other neighboring NCs that could be impacted also to address the issue in tandem. He said that the San Fernando Valley Sun residents were angry that a Second Northeast Valley Landfill is Used for Fire Debris, Similar to Sunshine Canyon. Fire debris was taken to the Sun Valley Landfill without informing residents. (<https://sanfernandosun.com/2025/03/19/residents-angry-that-a-second-northeast-valley-landfill-is-used-for-fire-debris/> from Lionel in CHAT).
- d. Susan Denning wanted to know if anyone has talked to Ricardo Flores this week regarding re-routing the trucks. Lydia said that the Council office is very aware of what is going on and that the STNC we had the meeting recently (3-12-2025) with over 80 people showing up to voice their concerns. The City Dept of Public Works presented and heard the concern of the community (see note above).
- e. Christina Souto (Seven Hills MC) recommended getting legal representation with a demand letter from the community because the City will drag their feet and continue until this is done. There needs to be further testing and remediation minimally. Susan encouraged anyone with a respiratory illness to be tested for Valley Fever.
- f. Cindy commented that this morning she saw 8 trucks parked with engines running with the Lowell/Tujunga vicinity. Staging of the vehicles is another issue. Cindy sad that the Neighborhood Council is an advisory to the city and we need the community views to be on record.
- g. Gabriel (MC) said that he has been concerned about this issue and is trying to educate the neighborhood. His conversations with county workers has resulted in them saying that the soil is non-toxic. The trucks are very active. Gabriel is in the southern portion of Seven Hills and hears the trucks constantly. It is a physical danger to our people. It seems like the truck traffic has been ramped up even more. Gabriel feels we need to seek legal counsel and felt we were too passive, particularly with having the new lab results. Other communities have blocked their roads and involved the media.
- h. Lydia said that she needs to have a Board vote on the letter to continue to work the issue. Lydia asked the Board if there is anything missed in the letter, noting that she worked this letter all night with Jon, and into the day. Our expectation is that our Council member, Ricardo Flores, will take action, but Ricardo is waiting for STNC to tell him what we expect to be done. A vote taken to approve the draft letter with minor tweaks, including a statement about public safety that will be added. The motion passed.

Item 3(h). Motion to approve the draft letter, to the City, with minor changes including adding a statement about public safety.					
Motion: Herman, Second: Hutchinson					
Yes	No	Abstain	Ineligible	Recuse	Absent
Grant, Herman, Hutchinson, Cleghorn, Moran, McCoy, Freeman, von Gunten, C Schmidt, Siegel, Keshish 11 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain, 0 ineligible, 8 absent, 19 total					Mardirousi, Woodruff, Goglio, Ramirez, Darakjian, T Schmidt, Royal, Travers

The meeting continued after approving the draft letter, with further discussions and another vote for action.

- i. Leny said that he didn't hear, as part of the report, anything to do with spores or Valley fever and felt that should be added.
- j. Lydia said many people contacted STNC and didn't get responses. The County decided to use this site to dump the dirt from the Altadena and made many bad decisions including not to test the soil initially, not contacting the school district, not holding a community meeting or giving notice to the community, not putting door hangers notifying residents of what was going on; they decided to treat the source like a regular area and not a burn area. Other dump sites from Altadena are being taken to lime landfills in bags to protect the community, but for us the County just dumped the dirt in Zachau. Indeed, there is a second area to put 40K yards more dirt. The members of the community are alarmed. At the 3-12-25 town hall meeting at the Elks Club, the vast majority of the public who attended raised their hands when asked if they smelled a burnt rubber smell; the workers in the county said they never smelled anything. Lydia went to the Sun Valley meeting the next evening that discussed the dumping. Now the Army Core of Engineers has designated the Vulcan pits, next to Shadow Hills, as the site to put the debris from Palisades and Eaton fires, using the 210 with the route unknown from there. Lydia went to City Hall and had 2-3 council members asking if they could help. One said she could write a motion about it to get it addressed. The second council member said she would support it. Our Council member was not there. Lydia went to City Attorney's Office and said that a restraining order has to come from their office (e.g. the City Attorney's Office). Lydia asked if they could address our issue. Karen Von Gunten (MC) asked about it and was told it was a closed case.
- k. Lydia said she could hold a press conference if the community wants her to do it. It is better if a community member did it because Lydia is President of the STNC. The STNC is in an advisory role to stop the dumping and to test the soil, including air borne results (spores/Valley Fever).
- l. Lydia said that the County sent a letter to the board saying they would do another test if anyone wanted to watch them take the sample. Lydia noted that while this could be

done, there was no visibility for where the sample would go next and how it would be tested, making witnessing taking the sample somewhat futile. Lydia did follow the trucks one time from Altadena.

- m. Lydia said that there are a few groups, including the school district, who can expedite getting attention from the City/County. Lydia tried contacting local schools with limited success so she went personally to Verdugo Hills High School and talked with the principal directly. Lydia said she contacted the Dept of Environmental Services but needed complaints from the community. The VHS principal was concerned about the proximity to the school (about a mile) and the results of the test and said he would contact other school principals himself to have them file a complaint.
- n. Jon thanked Lydia for putting it together and wanted to make 3 points. (1) The litany of violations are based on county and city laws so if a company did these things, our county would be prosecuting them; (2) depths of sampling noting that today the County of Public Health took samples from 2 locations that were only 4-6 inches deep. Had they bored down (4-5 feet), the soil would be expected to be more toxic. Sampling is not going to be representative of the worst results; (3) do we need to make a motion? No, per Lydia, the vote we took allows her to discuss the issue. Lydia encouraged people to contact her directly and she will keep in touch with them (stncpresidentgrant@gmail.com). Lydia noted that STNC, as part of the city, cannot sue. We are only advisory and cannot obtain legal representation as Board members. Our community citizens can get together, however, and perhaps chose a single lawyer or have a class action suit; Lydia cannot advise what to do. Lydia noted that once the media gets ahold of the story, we are no longer in control of the story. Again, Lydia could do a press conference, but needs to know if the community wants it. Our job is to listen to the community. Lydia said that even for this meeting, we had 24 hours (for a "Special" Board meeting) and this wasn't enough time to get more of the community involved.
- o. Lydia said when she originally contacted the County, she was given mis-information. Lydia told them they violated their own policies, they said they could do it because it was declared an emergency. Lydia said she routinely helps communities across the city deal with problems. Our Council member seems unwilling to work with us. While not trying to publicly embarrass the County Office, our process and communications need to be formal because if there is a law suit, a paper trail is needed.
- p. Jon V asked what Lydia needed from the community for her to set up a press release. Lydia said that as long as the Board feels it is an emergent situation, we can vote to approve, so Lydia can move forward with the press conference. Lydia feels that if we don't go to the media, the County has no pressure to change what they are doing.
- q. Ross said that the project is scheduled to go on for 5 years, and after each rainfall more dirt will be brought into the community. We need to act immediately but also need to anticipate longer term efforts.
- r. Christina Souto, a Seven Hills Member of the Community (MC) said it is time to be more aggressive about the issue and that perhaps we should have blocked the gate and contacted the media as other NCs have done. We need a demand stop order. Lydia asked for her contact information and encouraged her to express what she feels needs to be done. Lydia said she posted pictures on where the dirt is coming from; it is in a

catch basin surrounded by burnt homes. When it rains, it brings toxic dirt from the homes. Lydia said we, the STNC, have to be professional as we are elected officials or we are subject to an ethics violation. Lydia noted that there would have to be enough community members needed to block any trucks and it would have to be in the daytime when people hold jobs.

- s. Lydia suggested that we make an emergency motion to work with the Seven Hills and other communities to put together a press conference to talk about the issue. Carol made the motion and Ross seconded it.
- t. Cindy suggested we might be outside of the motion but Lydia felt that this was a common practice in other NCs. Lionel Mares (MC) said to go for it.
- u. MC (10908 Seven Hills) said that even going to the media might not help; others have been over-ridden. Lydia agrees this could happen also.
 - In CHAT, 10908 noted <https://sanfernandosun.com/2025/03/12/granada-hills-residents-feel-betrayed-as-sunshine-canyon-accepts-fire-debris/> and <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/epa-debris-site-eaton-fire-protest-duarte/3628328/>
 - In CHAT, 10908 noted *"I would like to add that on certain days when looking toward the site, i have noticed the clouds immediately over that site are much darker compared to the rest of the sky."*
 - In CHAT, 10908 noted: *"I can provide video of trucks coming and going all day long if necessary."* (as did Lionel).
 - In CHAT, 10908 noted: *"On Feb 17, when residents of Sylmar protested and blocked trucks from entering, that's when we began to see a huge increase in trucks coming up the hill daily."*
 - In CHAT, 10908 provided a website for complaints in CHAT: <https://www.aqmd.gov/home/air-quality/complaints>
 - In CHAT, 10908 noted: <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/epa-debris-site-eaton-fire-protest-duarte/3628328/>
 - In CHAT, 10908 noted: <https://sanfernandosun.com/2025/02/26/la-supervisors-vote-clears-way-for-sunshine-canyon-in-sylmar-to-accept-fire-debris/>
- v. Jon said, in CHAT, said that to file an AQMD (Air Quality) complaint, go to: www.AQMD.gov/Complaints OR call 1-800-288-7664
- w. Lydia said that we need more people to be aware of the magnitude of what is going on. Lydia reminded again that people need to contact her. A vote was taken, and passed, to approve an emergency motion for STNC to work with the Seven Hills and other communities and to put together a press conference to discuss the concerns. Carol made the motion and Ross seconded it.

Item 3(w). Motion to approve an emergency motion for STNC to work with the Seven Hills and other communities and to put together a press conference to discuss the concerns.

Motion: Hutchinson, Second: Herman

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

3. **ADJOURN**, 9:26pm