



## **VIDEO CONFERENCING... COMING TO A NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR YOU**

**by Councilman Greig Smith**

**A**s your City Councilmember, I am often approached at various community events by people who have ideas to improve our City. These ideas range from public safety issues, to ideas for improving efficiency and eliminating waste, to ways to improve basic quality of life.

As a Valley representative, much of this input concerns “fair share” issues, including making City government more accessible to all its residents. This can be especially challenging because the Twelfth Council District is the farthest in proximity from the center of our City government, City Hall. For residents of my district to testify before the City Council on items of interest to them, they must drive over an hour, in dense traffic, park blocks away and wait through the Council agenda for their two minutes to speak.

This is a daunting routine and as a result, can deter Valley participation in the municipal process.

During my campaign for Council, I was approached by Richard Ricci, a resident of Chatsworth, with a great idea. He proposed the idea of “remote” testimony for City Council meetings. And so the idea for Video Conferencing was born. In October of 2003, I introduced a motion to allow community

members to testify via video conferencing on matters before the City Council.

The idea is to use each of the seven citywide neighborhood service centers as a location where community members can go to testify remotely before the entire City Council.

Video Conferencing will make it much more convenient for residents to give input on matters that affect them and their communities without the long drive downtown. By making these meetings more accessible, the Council is assured of being exposed to a broader point of view, from all areas of the City – which is great news for the Valley.



My motion has made its way through the committee process and the first video conferencing pilot will be located at the Van Nuys City Hall. After the successful completion of this pilot, you can expect video conferencing to be rolled out to at least five more neighborhood service centers. The motion is scheduled to come before the Council for final approval at the end of June.

To Mr. Ricci and other concerned community members, I offer my thanks and appreciation for your willingness to share your thoughts and ideas. I am always eager to hear input from all constituents and look forward to championing more of your causes.