

President's Message

Plan for our 2024 priorities

With the New Year upon us and New Year's resolutions made, it is time to be thinking about topics and issues the LWV Greater Peoria members are interested in focusing on for the 2024 year. Our Program Planning meeting will be held Saturday, Jan. 27, at Peoria North Branch Library, McKenzie Room, 10:30 – 11:45 a.m. (**Note this is a date change from prior announcements, due to a conflict in scheduling.**)

At this meeting, members can give input to develop a viable and exciting program that provides the tools to engage in public policy change at local and state levels. The response sheet on current positions of LWVIL will be completed and submitted to LWVIL Issues and Advocacy Committee. Items identified for new position may result in adoption of 2023-2025 LWVIL program at State Convention in June 2024. It is also an opportunity to identify potential studies our League would decide to take. Existing LWVIL positions are outlined in Positions in Brief and explained in Where We Stand. These tools may be found at: www.lwvil.org.

<https://www.lwvil.org/s/Positions-in-Brief-2021-23.pdf>

The positions are listed in the order found in the 2021-2023 edition of *Where We Stand*.

Recommendations: For each position we will identify to retain/revise or drop using consensus. If decision is to revise, we need to determine:

- 1) Whether all or part of the position needs to be changed;
- 2) The rationale for the recommendation;

3) Our League's commitment and available resources for doing this work over the next two years.

I hope you will join us to map out our program for the coming year!

Snacks provided!

———— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

Important Dates:

4 p.m., Mon., Jan. 8: LWVGP Executive Board via Zoom
5:30 p.m. social; 6-7 p.m. program, Wed., Jan. 17: Drinks and Dialogue at Lariat Steakhouse
10:30 – 11:45 a.m., Sat., Jan. 27: Program Planning Meeting, at Peoria North Branch Library, McKenzie Room (**Note date change**)

UPCOMING EVENTS: DRINKS & DIALOGUE

After an excellent program in November when Jane Genzel gave us an update on the local housing situation followed by our traditional D&D break in December, we are ready to kick off a new year.

With the upcoming elections, it is time to hear what is new in terms of voting procedures. To that end, we have confirmed John Ackerman, the Tazewell County Clerk, for D&D on Jan. 17. An invitation also has been extended to the Director of the Peoria County Election Commission, Elizabeth Gannon.

Voter participation and election integrity are central to all of the work we do, and the rules and procedures continue to evolve. The best and simplest way to be up to date is to hear from the people who are responsible for making a critical part of our representative democracy work.

We will again gather at the Lariat Steakhouse in Peoria on Jan. 17. As always, social hour begins at 5:30, the program starts at 6 and we plan to wrap things up by 7.

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VOTER SERVICES

Voter Services is in the process of setting up candidate forums for the March 19 primary. There are many uncontested primary races this election cycle.

The current, tentative schedule for these forums is as follows. Please check back on League calendar at www.lwvgp.org and watch for a mid-January email to confirm the dates, times and locations.

37th Illinois Senate Republicans (Li Arellano vs. Chris Bishop vs. Tim Yager) 10 a.m. Sat., Feb. 3, at the Dunlap Public Library.

Tazewell County Board District 2 Republicans (Karl Lutz vs. Jonathan Hopkins vs. Cathryn Stump vs. Eric Stahl) 6 p.m. Wed., Feb. 7, at the Morton Public Library.

53rd Illinois Senate Republicans (Jesse Faber vs. Mike Kirkton vs. Chris Balkema vs. Susan Wynn Bence) 9:30 a.m. Sat., Feb. 17, at the Chillicothe Public Library.

Tazewell County Board District 3 Republicans (William Atkins vs. Michael Harris vs. Eric Schmidgall vs. Tammy Rich-Stimson) 6 p.m. Wed., Feb. 21, at the Fondulac Public Library.

105th Illinois House Republicans (Dennis Tipsword, Jr. vs. Don Reints) 11 a.m. Sat., Feb. 24, at the Germantown Hills Public Library.

Stay tuned for more information. If you would like to help with these forums, please reach out to Rob Parks (robertamparks7513@gmail.com) or Eileen Steed (eileensteed@sbcglobal.net). No training needed!

———— Rob Parks and Eileen Steed, Voter Services Co-chairs

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is at 120 currently. Theresa Koehler has been working with Jan Deisler and Roberta Borino, LWVIL Membership Chair, to get access to Member Roster. Theresa will update the roster to ensure only current members are listed. The LWVUS will be sending out per member payment (PMP) invoices by the end of January. We want our member roster to be as current as possible.

The Transformation Plan for membership will be changing in the next fiscal year (beginning July 2024). Membership will be managed by the LWVUS. We will have more information on that process in the coming months.

We have heard from a few members that were not receiving the LWVGP newsletter; if you are aware of anyone that is not getting the newsletter, please email: cromanus1249@yahoo.com.

We look forward to seeing you in January at Drinks & Dialogue and the Program Planning meeting.

———— Jan Deissler, Membership Chair

COMMITTEE OPPORTUNITIES

Our League currently has opening for Committee Chairpersons for Communications and for Climate/Environment.

Communications Chair coordinates and monitors website and Facebook postings with social media members. Ensures consistency of use LWV Logo in messaging to members and public. Communicates issues with Board of Directors.

Climate/Environment Chair works with League members on focus issues related to how local units of government address environment and climate and communicates to members. Reports to Board of Directors.

Contact cromanus1249@yahoo.com if you would be interested in learning more about these committees and being more involved with our League.

A book that was recently recommended regarding climate issues is Weathering Climate Change: A Fresh Approach by Hugh Ross. This work gives an overall view of climate change, which has become an emotionally charged issue. Ross, an astronomer, gives an overview of our current status, as well as how we evolved to the current state based on evidence.

If you are looking for a refreshing view on how to move forward amid all the controversy and emotion surrounding this topic, check out this interesting book.

———— Connie Romanus, LWVGP President

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PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: Dec. 14

The Peoria County Board held its final 2023 meeting with all members present except Brandy Bryant.

The board unanimously approved a plan to pay off the \$11 million owed on Hedgington Oaks bonds that are due in 2032. The plan annually shifts funds from the General Fund to the Long Term Care Service Fund by reducing surpluses in three

funds — IMRF, FICA and Risk — thus creating a pathway to pay off the bonds without increasing taxes. The board praised staff and Vice Chair Sharon Williams for devising the innovative plan.

The board also approved two employee-related resolutions that would bring the county into legal compliance with newly enacted state laws. Paid leave for non-union and temporary employees was approved unanimously. However changes to the employee health plan were more controversial and passed on a 11-6 vote with six Republicans (Brian Elsasser, Nathan Hoerr, Daniel Kelch, Matt Windish, Paul Rosenbohm, and Steve Rieker) opposing the state mandate to cover gender-affirming care, abortion, contraception and HIV-related medications.

Also in regular business, the board unanimously approved the replacement of sprinkler heads at the Juvenile Detention Center with tamper-proof ones following the destruction of six heads over the last two years.

Zoning requests were approved in Kickapoo, Medina, Hollis and Brimfield townships.

Unanimously approved consent agenda items included:

- The county’s strategic plan foundational elements.
- A final one-year extension with Sikich, LLP to provide the FY23 county audit.
- Two worker’s compensation cases totaling nearly \$111,000.
- Stop loss/excess health insurance and risk management insurance coverages.
- Road and bridge improvement projects on Bell School Road and Duncan Road, respectively.
- A cash-rent agreement for 2024 and 2025 for county-owned farmland at Maxwell and Plank roads.

Four Proclamations were read recognizing:

- H. Wayne Wilson on his retirement from WTVP’s “At Issue.”
- Peoria Heights VFW Post #2602 on their extensive community service.

- Peoria High football coach Tim Thornton as he completes his tenure and moves to Florida.
- County employee Karen O'Neill upon her retirement following 27 years of service to the county.

Board members were recognized for 25 (Brian Elsasser) and 5 years of service (Matt Windish and Rob Reneau), and Director of Planning and Zoning Kathi Urban was recognized for her 25 years of service.

Links to the meeting agenda and video are here: [Agenda](#) & [Video](#)

———— Jim Runyon, Observer

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION: Dec. 12

The Peoria County Election Commission held its monthly meeting on Dec. 12. Absent was Commissioner Matt Bartolo. There was no public comment.

After meeting with the Energy Management Agency, executive director Elizabeth Gannon asked the board to approve two purchases. The first was a backup Verity Count workstation to be kept off site in case one of the three current workstations should break down on election night. The second was some wire shelving to keep all voting equipment off of the floor in the storage room. Both purchases were approved.

The open houses for prospective judges led to the hiring of 55 new judges. There is still a shortfall, but Director Gannon is hopeful that more people will sign up before the election, especially student judges.

The Board approved early voting locations and times for the primary election. They will be the same as in the past. Dec. 20 was the first day to request a Vote By Mail ballot for the March 19 primary. Judges will be trained in January. Ballots will be sent out on Feb. 2 to overseas voters, with early voting beginning on Feb. 8. There have been no objections filed for the primary.

———— Irene Pritzker, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Nov. 28

Council met with members Denise Jackson and Kiran Velpula absent; quorum present. Consent agenda approved with one item removed for discussion, item 23-388 by Councilor John Kelly. Kelly moved to concur with appointment after commenting on process of receiving information on appointees; appointment approved.

The Council approved a redevelopment agreement with Shreem Pere Historic LLC, Shreem Non-Historic, LLC and Shreem Garage, LLC for the recently purchased Hotel Pere Marquette and Marriott properties:

- Clause from original 2011 redevelopment agreement was incorporated into new agreement so that property taxes were not contested as that revenue would pay annual debt service.
- City and Shreem will each contribute \$800,000 for improvements including parking deck, hotel and commercial space under deck, including restaurant.
- City Manager Patrick Urich presented information on allocation of property tax revenues and refinancing of original bonds issued for this property, which were extended for additional 12 years through 2043.

Other business items:

- Approved resolution adopting Debt Hardship Program to improve fee collection process with one-time opportunity for debt forgiveness. Fees owed for services such as weed removal, mowing and demolition would not qualify. Corporation Counsel Patrick Hayes reported notices were being sent to those owing debt to the city. The state operates the Local Debt Recovery Program.
- Deferred request to adopt Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Resolution for area bounded by S.W. Washington Street, Sanger Street, Illinois River and MacArthur Highway to Dec. 12, 2023, meeting.
- Approved resolution to accept grant from Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) for Homeowner Assistance Repair Program in amount of \$1,400,000.
- Approved \$63,000 for additional work on Downtown Parking Study with Terra Engineering.

- Planned policy session to discuss future of brick street maintenance.

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Dec. 12

All members of Council were present for meeting; minutes of Nov. 28, 2023, City Council meeting were approved. Council members approved Consent Agenda with exception of item 23-399, requested by Councilor Denise Jackson, who requested more information on item regarding storm sewer cleaning and inspection for District 1. Item deferred to Jan. 9.

The following items were discussed at the meeting:

- Approved agreement with Peoria Citizens Community for Economic Opportunity (PCCEO) for \$150,000 in South Village TIF Funds for rehabilitation of owner-occupied homes in South Village TIF area (District 1).
- Adopted an ordinance approving Redevelopment Agreement with Titan Fitness, LLC, for proposed project of Medina Plains Corporate Park section one, within Medina Plains-Allen Road Business Park TIF Redevelopment District. Project will cost \$3.57 million and generate \$1.7 million in TIF revenue.
- Received and filed month ending Oct. 31 unaudited financial report presented by Finance Director Kyle Cratty, who noted trends remain consistent and on track with budget.
- Adopted an inducement agreement resolution for potential tax increment financing (TIF) district bound by SW Washington St., Sanger St., Illinois River and MacArthur Highway. An overview was presented by Corporation Counsel Patrick Hayes. This project has been labeled The Distillery TIF, referring to the history of distilleries along riverfront.
- Deferred item 23-395 regarding short-term rentals to Jan. 9. Councilors had much discussion on proposed changes, such as reduction of permits, reducing number rentals in defined neighborhood from 3% to 1%, re-application of permit with change in ownership and setback from adjacent properties. There was also concern about un-permitted short-term rental properties and allowing staff to handle permits vs having council approve. Councilors Denis Cyr, Zach Oyler and Tim Riggerbach voted nay.

- Item 23-409 pertains to a policy session on Violence Prevention Funding. Policy session was opened at 7:40 p.m. and ended at 8:38 p.m.
- No members of the public requested to speak to the Council.

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for 6 p.m. Jan. 9. You can view the meetings: <https://peoriagov.civicweb.net/Portal/>, cable access channel 22 or listen at WCBU 89.9. Agenda and minutes available on website.

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

DUNLAP DISTRICT 323 SCHOOL BOARD: Dec. 21

The regular school board meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. on Dec. 21. All seven members were present.

The superintendent's report included:

- Congratulations to the girls' basketball team for their state title.
- Explanation of tax levy, which will be over a 5% increase.
- News of a new "app" to access information about the district.
- Use of the "Angel Fund" to help students who have difficulty with the cost of lunches.
- Announcement of several FOIA requests

An information/discussion item presented was about refurbishing the nine tennis courts. There was a consensus to go with a bid by McConnell & Associates from St. Louis since the school had successfully worked with them in the past. The cost of the project is expected to be \$91,615 for nine courts.

Payment of bills, treasurer's report, District Investment Report, and Bank statements were all approved. There was a suggestion to study cost of mileage which had been \$125,000 over the last four years.

There was some discussion about a new proposed social studies course, United States History through Sports. A board member quoted the proposed course syllabus citing the textbook to be used: A People's History of the United States by How-

ard Zinn. Comments addressed some controversy the book might cause, what is appropriate curriculum for all high school students, and the respect the board has for the committee and teachers who create courses. The school board president emphasized the importance of board approval of curriculum. She suggested the interested parties get together and talk through the issues they have with the proposed course.

The board approved Additional Parking Option 3.

Other approved business: Resolution to abate taxes on the general obligation school bonds, resolution providing for the issues and sale of up to \$2,000,000 of working cash fund bonds and for the levy of taxes to repay the bonds, and of the 2023 tax levy.

The open meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Closed session followed.

———— Dottie Strickler, Observer



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

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**League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria Board of Directors
2023-2024**

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