

President's Message

Activity at LWVIL Lobby Day

The LWV of Illinois and local League representatives attended Lobby Day in Springfield on Oct. 24. One focus of advocacy was allowing the “Invest in Kids” program to sunset. This program was initiated in 2017 and provides federal tax incentive for vouchers for private school funding without any ac-



countability for outcomes, as well as diverts funding from public schools. We were able to leave talking points with Rep. Sharon Chung, Dist. 91.

We visited with Samir Tanna, senior policy advisor to Gov. JB Pritzker, and Mika Baugher, executive assistant to House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch, to ask for support for bill that would require candidates for

public office to submit a monitored email address and/or valid phone contact where they can be reached when they file their candidacy paperwork for office. This information is difficult to access when civic and community groups try to reach out to candidates to participate in candidate forums. This can increase transparency and a willingness to interact with voters.

We also asked for support for Karina’s Bill which passed the House and awaits passage in Illinois Senate; this bill is about victims of domestic violence and will clarify and strengthen requirement for removal of firearms from

the home when survivor is granted an order of protection with firearm remedy.

About 30 members of Leagues throughout Illinois attended Lobby Day. Thank you to Becky Simon, president of LWV of Illinois; Roberta Borino; Barbara Lammens; and members of LWV of Springfield who organized this event. Jackie Orren and myself represented our League and we partnered with Lori Wollrab, McLean County League, for the day.

LWV of Illinois plans a spring Lobby Day in 2024; this is great way to reach out to all our state representatives and senators and develop relationships with them.

I also want to give a shout out to Irene Pritzker! Irene was interviewed by WCBU's Tim Shelley last week on her observations of the Oct. 16 Peoria Election Commission Board meeting. You can hear her comments on website: <https://omny.fm/shows/on-deck/on-deck-10-25-2023>. This aired on Oct. 25. We appreciate WCBU providing this opportunity to highlight some of the LWV of Greater Peoria Observer Corps observations of local government.

———— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

Important Dates:

4 p.m. Mon., Nov. 7: LWVGP Executive Board via Zoom.

12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Thurs., Nov. 9: Leadership training LWV: Preference, Tradition, or Requirement Training. Register for [12:30 here](#); register for [5:30 here](#). "But we've always done it that way!"

Use the Preference, Tradition or Requirement (PTR) evaluation tool to focus on what really matters and how to best accomplish your goals. Second in a series of trainings hosted by LWVIL, with presenters from LWVUS Organizing team

5:30 p.m. (social), 6-7 p.m. (program), Wed., Nov. 15: Drinks and Dialogue at Lariat Steakhouse

UPCOMING EVENTS: DRINKS & DIALOGUE

The members able to attend our Drinks and Dialogue meeting in October were treated to a terrific program. Rebecca Williams from FairVote educated us on "ranked choice voting." The following is from the FairVote website.

FairVote is a nonpartisan organization working for better elections for all. We research and advance voting reforms that make democracy more functional and representative for every American, with a focus on two key reforms: ranked choice voting and the Fair Representation Act.

Through our research and advocacy, we are making the case for reform at the federal, state, and local levels and empowering state and local allies with the resources they need to drive reform in their communities. Working together, we've already made ranked choice voting the fastest-growing nonpartisan voting reform in the nation.

Rebecca made the case that “ranked choice voting” promotes broader representation from elections, lessens political divisiveness and saves money by eliminating the need for run-off elections.

In November, local housing expert, Jane Genzel will be our presenter. Please try to join us at the Lariat Steakhouse on Nov. 15 beginning at 5:30 p.m.

———— Terry Kohlbus

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VOTER SERVICES

On Oct, 20, a team of LWVGP Deputy Registrars had the opportunity to register newly naturalized citizens to vote at a ceremony held at the Peoria Public Library in downtown Peoria. This was the final naturalization ceremony of the year. That day 90 people from 24 different countries became citizens of the United States and we were able to register 34 of them as new voters! It is an honor and a privilege to be able to do this.

Candidates will be filing to run for office in early December with the primary on March 19, 2024. Watch future Voters and check our website at www.lwvgp.org for information about candidate forums in contested races. If you want to help with these forums as a timer, a question collector or a more organizational role, please contact Rob Parks at robertamparks7513@gmail.com or Eileen Steed at eileensteed@sbcglobal.net.

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

MEMBERSHIP

We currently have 129 paid members!

For members who have not yet renewed their membership, expect a phone call from a committee member. Reminder: You can renew online at www.lwvgp.org. or via mail to LWV Greater Peoria, P.O. Box 9786, Peoria, IL 61612-9786.

The membership committee continues to provide greeters for Drinks & Dialogue monthly events and is open to having representatives at other community events. Please contact Jan Deissler or Beth Jensen with any potential opportunities to recruit new members.

————— Jan Deissler, Membership Chair

REMEMBER: LEAGUE IS NONPARTISAN

That means if we have a speaker, panelist, or featured guest at a League event, they cannot be a current candidate. This includes anyone who has declared themselves as a candidate, including incumbents currently serving who are seeking re-election.

As we approach upcoming 2024 elections, we want to ensure we are clear in how we share information on our social media sites and avoid responding to posts regarding candidates or persons running for re-election.

This applies to Board and Committee members; but is also good for members to understand why we might remove some items from website or Facebook page. We appreciate your help in monitoring our social media sites for compliance.

————— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

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PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: Oct. 12

The Peoria County Board held its Oct. 12 regular meeting with all members present except member Brian Elsasser.

Following a presentation and discussion the board unanimously approved the annual tax levy and its 2024 budget. Highlights include:

- A balanced budget of \$155.2 million.
- A 6.7% increase in the EAV (Equalized Assessed Value) that resulted in an additional \$1.97 million in revenue. It's the highest EAV increase in many years.
- Maintained the \$0.8241 rate per \$100 property assessed valuation that has been in place for several years.
- 5.85 FTE's for new county employee positions, primarily in animal control and facilities/grounds.

Several members indicated that they want the budget to be a “living document” open to amendment as the new year progresses. Members indicated that they would like to see reserves grow since a long-term projection shows the reserve fund being depleted in 2032. Paying off the Heddington Oaks bonds by 2032 remained a high priority for the board. Some members indicated that they would like more time to review the budget prior to approval; and Chairman James Dillon indicated that the 2025 budget would likely be approved in November rather than October.

The board also unanimously approved a new five-year collective bargaining agreement with AFSCME-PCEA Local 3586. Covered employees will see 3% annual increases over the five years with an additional 2% economic adjustment in Year 1 and a \$1,000 signing bonus. The overall impact on the 2023 budget is \$154,221.

Other regular business items unanimously approved included:

- Zoning requests in Kickapoo and Logan Townships. The Kickapoo site will be a commercial solar energy facility located on 36 acres.
- Participation in the IDOT 2024 County Engineer's Salary program.
- A premium increase in the county employee's health plan with an accompanying premium subsidy for employees and eligible retirees.

Two citizens' remarks were received focused on a continuing call for a CO2 pipeline moratorium. One speaker presented 416 signature cards from county residents supporting the moratorium. With cards previously presented the total stands at 533.

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

———— Jim Runyon, Observer

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION: Oct. 16

The monthly meeting of the Peoria County Board of Elections was held on Oct. 16, with all commissioners present. Only one member of the public spoke, representing the NAACP. She stated that the NAACP was against requiring people who vote by mail to pay their own postage, unlike what has been done in the past. She said her organization would be advising voters to leave the postage off because the Board of Elections would have to pay the postage anyway when the ballot arrives by mail at the office.

Bills that could not be approved last month because of a lack of quorum were approved along with an update on the safety recommendations given by the Peoria County Sheriff and the Peoria Police Department. Window covers are installed; Heart Technologies will install a badge system, panic buttons, and a parking lot security camera; and front counter modifications are out for bid.

The voter registration card mass mailing is complete, and staff is in the process of a second mailing to those whose polling places have changed.

Petitions are out for offices that will be voted on in the spring election. Peoria Public Schools District 150 School Board filings are due between Oct. 30 and Nov. 6. Political party filings are due between Nov. 27 and Dec. 4.

———— Irene Pritzker, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: OCT. 10

Town of City of Peoria Trustees approved proposed tax levy of \$1,338,046.00; estimated tax rate not to exceed 0.038108 for township. This rate is the same as 2022 budget. Despite an increase in application for assistance, Supervisor LaTrina Leary reported staff had been able to work with local agencies and organizations to meet needs of seniors and disabled without reducing services.

City Council highlights:

- Asst. Director of Public Works Sie Maroon presented snow removal plan for upcoming winter season.

- Approved ordinance for Maui Jim, Inc. redevelopment agreement as part of Medina Plains Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Maui Jim has been acquired by Ker- ing Eyewear, a European luxury eyewear company. The agreement states 15% of tax revenue will go to Dunlap School District.
- Deferred adoption of 2023 Strategic Plan to Oct. 24.
- Approved Civic Center Budget.
- Woodard and Curran representatives presented update on initial assessment related to Illinois American Water Company. Morgan Roper, Project Manager, re- viewed rate analysis and potential purchase price, as well as debt service, operating expenses, and water rate comparison with other communities. In 2005, appraisal was \$220 million; today that would be \$345 million. Council members asked for additional information on rate structure and use of grant funds for lead line replace- ment that may be available to city government entities. City Manager Patrick Urich reminded council of deadline to respond is Nov. 3. Ms. Roper gave estimate of \$2 million to \$4 million for due diligence. Note: 1889 franchise agreement gives the city an opportunity every five years to purchase and operate the water company.
- You can view the report, meeting minutes and discussion at: <https://peoria- gov.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingInformation.aspx?Org=Cal&Id=163>

Peoria City Council meets 2nd and 4th Tuesdays. You can listen on WCBU radio, watch in person at City Hall, on cable channel 22 or view recorded meeting online.

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: OCT. 17 & OCT. 24

On Oct. 17, the City Council discussed the 2024-25 Biennial Budget at a special meeting. Finance Director Kyle Cratty gave presentation on economic outlook for the city. Staff have built in projection for recession. Recent estimated tax levy for property tax resulted in 7% increase to tax extension despite no change in rate of taxation. The proposed budget for upcoming biennium is \$322.8 million; this is an increase of 5.8% over current term. Some of items discussed were capital projects, pension obligations, allocation of American Rescue Plan Funds, anticipated tax revenue, and Combined Sewer Overflow (CFO) expenses. Special meetings on budget will continue with approval scheduled in November. The Council will meet on Oct. 31 and Nov. 7 to finalize Biennial Budget.

The regular meeting of the council was held on Oct. 24. The highlight of the agenda was a resolution to approve the purchase of the waterworks. This item was rejected by vote of seven to four, with Councilors Denis Cyr, Zach Oyler, Kiran Velpula and Mike Vespa in favor of the purchase. Points of discussion included current and future rates for water service, lead line replacement to homes, cost of due diligence to examine Illinois American Water Company (IAWC) records and other financial obligations of the city, such as public safety pensions, CSO and Peoria Civic Center debt service payments.

The next regular meeting of the Council is Nov. 14 at 6:00 p.m. You can find agendas, minutes and video of Council meetings at <https://peoriagov.civicweb.net/portal/meetinginformation>

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

DUNLAP DISTRICT 323 SCHOOL BOARD: Oct. 19

The regular school board meeting was held Oct. 19 at 6:00 p.m. Board President Dr. Abby Humbles read a statement of appreciation to Peoria City Council member Denis Cyr for his support of Medina Plains Tax Increment Financing (TIF) allocating 15% tax revenue to Dunlap School District from Kering Eyewear expansion (Maui Jim). The board thanked Cyr for his commitment to the school and community. The additional revenue will enhance programs for Dunlap district.

During public comments portion of meeting, a person in charge of press box at football games, related some criticism of activity at home games. He reported that social media comments he is aware of are unfounded. He assured the board that the activities for the public and students at games are family friendly. Board members expressed support and appreciation for all involved in sporting events.

Superintendent Scott Dearman reported on FOIA requests, a successful marching band competition held recently, and an elementary education service award. He also reported a committee is being formed to plan construction of a new building for Wilder-Waite Elementary School.

In regards to the budget, it was reported that funds could be moved from the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) and Social Security funds in amount of \$2 million for capital projects such as roof repairs, parking lot improvement and other needed improvements. A resolution will be presented at November meeting, with a vote in December.

Action items approved included payment of bills, spring softball training trip, and out-of-state culinary activities. A board member training session will be coming up soon. Meeting adjourned for closed session at 7:00 p.m. The next board meeting will be Nov. 15.

———— Dottie Strickler, Observer



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

P.O. Box 9786, Peoria, IL 61612-9786

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

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president@lwgp.org

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Newsletter
Chris Kaergard
ckaergard@gmail.com