

President's Message

Get involved: 2025 Election forums, program planning coming in new year

I hope you had the opportunity to share Thanksgiving with family and friends this past week, as well as share the little things in life we are thankful for. I am thankful for all the efforts of our members to make our League visible and stand up for Democracy!

The League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria continues to look forward to planning events for the spring election for local governments in the tri-county area, prepare for the transformation of membership and get feedback from members on topics for programming as well as identify a potential position to study. Check out the coming events and see how you can get involved and help make a difference in our communities. With holidays just around the corner, Drinks and Dialogue will be taking a break. Watch for updates on ChapterSpot, the new membership portal that will be coming Feb. 1, 2025.

————— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

Important Dates:

- 6 p.m., Thurs., Dec. 5:** LWVIL virtual meeting. Topic: **What is Going on with Higher Education in Illinois, with speaker Ralph Martire**, Professor of Public Policy at Roosevelt University and Executive Director of Center for Tax and Budget Accountability.
To register, check LWVIL update 11/20/2024 for link.
- 4 p.m. Mon., Dec. 9:** LWVGP Board Meeting via Zoom
- 1 p.m. – 2 p.m., Tues., Dec. 10:** LWVIL Observer Corps Training, virtual (members only)
NO DRINKS & DIALOGUE UNTIL FEBRUARY 2025
- 7 p.m. – 8 p.m., Tues., Jan. 7:** LWVIL Observer Corps Training, virtual (members only)
- 10:30 – 11:45 a.m., Sat., Jan. 11:** LWVGP Annual Program Planning meeting,
Peoria North Branch Library, McKenzie Room
- Sat., Feb. 8:** LWVIL Issues Briefing Meeting (in-person and virtual), details TBA (members only)

DRINKS & DIALOGUE

With the upcoming holidays, followed by 2025 Municipal Primary Elections forums, Drinks and Dialogue will be taking a brief hiatus.

Watch the February newsletter for an update on upcoming programming!

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MEMBERSHIP

If you have not had a chance to renew your membership, please do so online at <https://www.lwvgp.org/store/p3/join.html>

If you would prefer to mail your membership renewal, you can print the form from the same site and mail it to the address provided. We also accept membership renewals at our monthly events.

Please see the bottom of this newsletter for additional information on the League's upcoming changeover to ChapterSpot for memberships.

We also acknowledge this month a member registered at an endowed level:

Eleanor Roosevelt level: Tonya Allen

———— Theresa Koehler, Chairperson

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OBSERVER CORPS (LOGO) COMMITTEE

If anyone is interested in becoming an observer, please contact Jim Runyon at jimrunyon54@gmail.com. We could really use 5-6 more observers to cover the list below. Please direct anyone to me and I'll be happy to discuss it with her/him.

New mandatory trainings for new observers via LWVIL have been announced and one can register at this link— [Trainings Calendar](#) :

- a. Tues, Dec. 10th, 1-2pm
- b. Tues, Jan. 7th, 7-8pm
- c. Tues, Feb. 11th, 1-2pm
- d. Tues, Mar. 11th, 7-8pm
- e. Tues, Apr. 8th, 1-2pm

Current Trained Observers and Assignments:

Connie Romanus – Peoria City Council – every two weeks on Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Jim Runyon – Peoria County Board – 2nd Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

Chris Kaergard – Tazewell County Board – 4th Wednesday (except Nov-Dec)

Monica Carnall-Freaner – ICC Board of Trustees – 3rd Thursday

Irene Pritzker – Peoria County Election Commission – 2nd Tuesday

Dottie Strickler – Dunlap School Board – 3rd week of month, the day varies

Joyce Blumenshine – Peoria City/County Landfill Committee

Hind Abi-Akar – Greater Peoria Sanitary District – 3rd Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.

Joan Wojcikewych – Springdale Cemetery – 3rd Monday at 4 p.m.

Joyce Rosenberger – Peoria Airport Authority

Ramez Abi Akar – medical leave

Toni Moretto – TBD

Observers Needed for:

Peoria Public Schools

East Peoria City Council – 6 p.m. on 3rd Tuesday.

Peoria Park District – 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

Peoria Housing Authority – 4:30 p.m., date varies

Woodford County Board – 6:30 p.m. on 3rd Tuesday.

Peoria City-County Health Dept. Board – 3rd Monday at 6 p.m.

Substitute to fill-in when a regular observer is away

———— Jim Runyon, Chairperson

PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: Nov. 14

The Peoria County Board held its Nov. 14 meeting with all members present.

On a 16-2 vote, the board approved the FY2025 Budget of \$157.8M with Members Brian Elsasser and Nate Hoerr voting “no” due to their belief that more should have been done to reduce the county’s workforce.

All other regular business passed unanimously including the overall property tax levy of 82.41 cents per \$100 assessed valuation, a zoning request in Timber Township, amendments to the county’s financial policies, and FY25 tax abatement of general obligation bonds.

The Board received an update from Carle Health representatives on the Trillium Place Young Minds Center located in the former Heddington Oaks facility. The center has now opened and is serving children and adolescents aged 4-17 with mental health and behavioral health concerns.

The following were highlights of the approved consent agenda:

- Continued assignment of a deputy sheriff to the DCFS Peoria Field Office Child Protection Division.
- Purchase of five Taser units for the Sheriff’s Department.
- Demolition expenses for three unsafe structures in unincorporated areas of the county.
- Fee schedule for the County Recorder/Clerk’s Office.
- Collective Bargaining agreement between the county and Teamsters Local 627 PCAPS Unit.
- Construction funding for improvements on Maxwell and Middle Roads, Blue Ridge Road, and Pfeiffer Road, and replacement of damaged guardrails on county highways.
- Transfer of Glen Avenue from University Street to Sheridan Road from the county to the City of Peoria.

- An award of \$162K to Aupperle & Sons, Inc. to replace the Main Street steps at the Peoria County Courthouse.

Three citizens' remarks were received concerning possible wind energy towers in western Peoria County near Brimfield, Laura and Princeville. No action on the towers was on the agenda since detailed proposals have not yet been presented to or addressed by the Zoning Board or the County Land Use Committee.

Proclamations were read recognizing Lippmann Furniture's 75th anniversary; Nov. 30 as Small Business Saturday; and Dyana Penigar Smith, Hall of Fame baseball pitcher Lee Smith's spouse. District 8 member Nathan Hoerr was recognized for his two years of service on the board since he was defeated in the most recent election by Marcia McCann.

Link to the meeting agenda and packet is [here](#) and the video is [here](#).

———— Jim Runyon, Observer

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION: Nov. 12

The Peoria County Election Commission met on Tuesday, Nov. 12, with Commissioner Rosa Kemper absent. In a recap of the Nov. 5 election, Executive Director Elizabeth Gannon said the county had an almost 70% turnout among registered voters. Of that, 18% used Vote by Mail, 20.1% early voting, and 30.8% voting on election day. There were 86.8% of Vote by Mail returned. The Board asked the Director to look into moving the drop box from the Civic Center to possibly the Lincoln Branch Library since so few people used that box.

The city of Peoria will have a primary election since there are four people running for mayor (one candidate has since dropped out), three people running for District 2 councilman, and two Republicans running for township assessor. (There are three candidates running for city treasurer, but that was not mentioned at the meeting.)

After some discussion, the winning designs were chosen for the "I Voted" sticker design contest. Since there were only three entries in the adult division – and two of them were from the same person – it was decided that the winner of the youth contest would have their design on the printed stickers and the runner-up design would

be digital for mail in ballots. The contest was held to mark two significant milestones: the Peoria County Election Commission's 10th anniversary and the Bicentennial of Peoria County.

———— Irene Pritzker, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Oct. 22

Council approved consent agenda without discussion. The following proclamations were approved: National Preparedness Month, Respiratory Care Week, Peoria Historical Society Henri de Tonti Award and Brachial Plexus Injury Awareness Week.

Under regular business, Councilors approved:

- pre-annexation agreement for property at 1033 E. Mossville Rd. and Route 29 that is non-contiguous with city for term of 20 years.
- Ordinance (concurring with Planning and Zoning Commission) for demolition of former Salvation Army building using state grant funding for construction of new building to replace existing shelter for the homeless on property located 400 block of NE Jefferson and 401- 419 NE Adams St.

Council requested report back on several items during discussion of 2025 revised budget. Some of the items listed are breakdown of HRA tax for hotel, restaurant and amusement, \$21.8 M outstanding liability related to credit rating, principle and interest debt, food insecurity, ARPA spenddown detail, and violence prevention.

Mayor Rita Ali recognized May Peterson and Tim Bertschy for their leadership on the Joint Commission on Racial Equity and Justice since 2021. She also recognized the appointment of Tom Peigler and Angela Bolden as Co-Chairs of the Commission Steering Committee.

The next meeting of the Peoria City Council is scheduled for Nov. 12.

———— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Nov. 12

Minutes of meetings of Oct. 15 Special City Council and Town Board Proceedings, Oct. 22 City Council Proceedings and Oct. 29, 2024 Special City Council Proceedings were approved.

Consent agenda was passed with items 24-324 and 24-343 removed for discussion. Councilor Kiran Velpula abstained from 24-324 due to conflict of interest and Councilor Mike Vespa abstained from 24-343. All items passed.

First reading presented on Ordinance amending stormwater utility with recommendation from Finance Director Kyle Cratty to keep rate the same in 2025.

Council approved the following:

- \$445,000 in Home Investment Partnership, Community Housing Development Organization Funds to Habitat for Humanity for new single-family homes in 61605 and \$500,000 in Community Project Funds through HUD for Habitat single family homes in 61605.
- Communication from City Manager and Finance Director/Comptroller to discussed process to abate tax levies associated debt with exception of \$2M allocated for city wide road improvements.
- Resolution adopting 2025 revised budget for City of Peoria
- Special-use outdoor recreation at property at 9910 Orange Prairie Rd and IL Route 91. Councilor Andre Allen requested privilege of the floor for five individuals living adjacent to this property to speak.
- Resolution approving annexation agreement for property at 9910 Orange Prairie Rd and N. IL Route 91.

One concerned citizen addressed the council. Meeting adjourned at 9:07 P.M.

Agendas, video and minutes available on city website, www.peoriagov/org.

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

DUNLAP DISTRICT 323 SCHOOL BOARD: Nov. 20

The regular school board meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. on Nov. 20 with seven members present.

Michelle McDonald received the Eagle “Tallon” Award for outstanding service.

Superintendent Dr. Scott Dearman reported that there would be several administration retirements, emphasizing the need to fill those positions. He said that the district continues to be in negotiations with the construction companies involved with future district projects.

He announced Dunlap was named one of the Best U. S. High Schools in US News.

A few board members questioned the 2025-26 itemized Student Fee Schedule. Among other fees, the high school textbook fee will be \$100. The board requested an itemized report of all activity fees, which will be done soon.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Dr. Matt Andrews presented an overview of the District's 2024 SY Illinois School Report card. Highlights include: 93% graduation rate, exemplary rank for high school and commendable rank for grade schools. Also, composite SAT score is 1096 compared to state score of 953. AP performance was 94%. Report shows evidence of increased proficiency in several areas. As mentioned at the last board meeting, the report shows that chronic absenteeism was a problem for 2024 SY.

CFO Mike McKenzie offered a tax levy presentation as follows:

Total for all operating fund categories:

Proposed levy for 2024-\$47,349,478

Proposed Tax Rate: (increase of 7.5%) 4.436130%

School Board approval for tax levy must be done by Dec. 18. McKenzie will talk with county assessor to determine EAV predictions. Open meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

———— Dottie Strickler, Observer

ILLINOIS CENTRAL COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Nov. 21

Before the regular meeting, the Tax Levy Hearing was called to order. Since the levy request exceeds 5% from the prior year request, the College is required to publish notice and hold a public hearing at the beginning of the November meeting.

No citizens were present to comment. The hearing adjourned at 5:07.

Trustees in attendance for regular meeting: Thetford, Brown, Byrd, Belmont, Budzinski, Lamb, Daniels.

Overview of the 2023-2024 Audit report was presented. The audit was clean and completed without issue.

Highlights from Reports and Informational Items:

- The president highlighted the success of Janessa who was inspired by her band director at East Peoria High to become a Band Director. She continues her educational journey at ICC with the support of Dr. Julie Clemens. She plans to attend the University of Illinois after ICC.
- The women's volleyball team competed in the Elite 8.
- ICC is a finalist in the 2025 Bellwether Award for instructional programming- Pekin Prison project and workforce development – workforce equity initiative.
- 2024-2025 Faculty Seniority – First Reading for Board of Trustees. ICC's Faculty Forum Senate will review the list for accuracy and a vote to approve this list will be taken prior to Board action in December.
- The College seeks approval to discontinue the Graphic Communications Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree program, including the five sub-certificates in the program as well as the Personal Fitness/Trainer Certificate program.
- The College seeks approval to add the following programs: Automotive Maintenance Specialist Certificate; Automotive Repair Specialist Certificate; Automotive Technology Specialist Certificate; Automotive- Electric Vehicle Specialist Certificate. There is an increased need for short duration certificates to get individuals into the industry quickly, as well as provide apprenticeships and career pathways for this profession. These certificates will allow individuals to receive gainful employment after completion of a certificate ranging from one to four semesters and stack into the Automotive Technology AAS degree.
- The College seeks approval to add IT Essentials – A+ Prep Certificate and Cybersecurity Professional Certificate. There is an existing need for short-duration IT certificates that get individuals into IT careers. There are in excess of 1,000 IT jobs for computer support and cybersecurity in the Peoria MSA. Between these two certificate programs, completers are eligible to sit for four different IT certifications that are nationally recognized by the industry.

Action Items

There was significant discussion around the clarity of the information presented in October about the tax levy. Discussion specifically focused on the need for a levy hearing and adjustments due to county rate changes.

The process of approving the levy requires three actions: (2024-12, 2024-13, and 2024-14), which provides support for the College's operations and to pay scheduled debt obligations.

- Resolution No. 2024-12: ICCB Special Tax Levy Pursuant to 110 ILCS 805/3-14.3 Set the levy at a combined educational and operations and maintenance purposes tax rate of 28.79 cents per \$100 of equalized assessed valuation.
- Resolution No. 2024-13: 2024-2025 Protection, Health & Safety Projects, and Energy Conservation Projects Identified a list of 7 items that total \$4,515,619. The resolution notes that the condition of the facilities, pose a hazard to individuals, such determination having been made on the basis of a study performed by a licensed architect/engineer.
- Resolution No. 2024-14: The budget and appropriation resolutions show that for the fiscal year this Board will require for educational purposes the sum of \$53,595,225 and for operations and maintenance purposes the sum of \$8,590,523.

Resolution 2024-15: Releasing Minutes of Closed Session. Twice a year, the Board is required to review Closed Session minutes to determine if they are to remain "closed" or be "opened." The Board approved opening the following dates of Closed Session meeting minutes: Feb. 17, 2024, and April 18, 2024

Authorization for Destruction of Closed Session Verbatim Recordings. Verbatim recordings of the Closed Session meetings may be destroyed after 18 months providing the Board approves the destruction of the recordings. The board approved destruction of the verbatim recordings from November 2022 to April 2023.

Move to closed session.

Link to the full meeting packet: <https://icc.edu/about/board-trustees/meeting-materials/>

————— Monica Freaner, Observer

TAZEWELL COUNTY BOARD: Oct. 30, monthly & budget meetings

It was a "two for the price of one" experience for the Tazewell County Board in October. Members met for just over 30 minutes for business in their monthly meeting, then reconvened to review and approve their annual budget for Fiscal 2025.

During the regular meeting, members approved a memorandum of understanding that if Carle Health leaves its rented space in the satellite Health Department building at 1800 Broadway in Pekin, the County Board will have a say in what new tenant can lease the space rather than just the Board of Health making a determination.

Members assented to a series of routine contractual agreements with local businesses and agencies for inspection and development services in the consent agenda.

The regular meeting adjourned at 6:34 and the budget meeting commenced at 6:44.

Over the next 75 minutes, members individually reviewed and voted to approve each fund within the budget, as well as the overall tax levy. It was the fifth opportunity for members to weigh in publicly, following three budget subcommittee meetings and an early October special budget-review meeting.

Several members including Mark Goddard and Maxwell Schneider opposed the levies, arguing increased EAV meant they amounted to tax increases on residents.

The budget accounts for \$137.7 million in spending with \$96.1 million in revenue and the spend-down of ARPA / COVID-relief funds on projects including construction of the courthouse annex. Per reporting by WCBU, the overall tax levy is expected to rise to just under \$17.5 million from just over \$16.7 million but the overall rate per \$100 assessed valuation will decline from 53 cents to 51 cents.

———— Chris Kaergard, Observer

CHAPTERSPOT UPDATE FOR LOCAL LEAGUE MEMBERS

Why change? Changing way members join will promote an increase in membership, promote diversity and strengthen operations to deliver our mission work and build League power.

ChapterSpot is an online portal developed for joining or renewing the League of Women Voters at local, state and US levels. Renewals will be rolling from the last

date the member joined. So, if you joined on August 3 of this year, your membership will be due on August 3 of 2025. Current members will receive an email closer to implementation to log into ChapterSpot and verify their information and complete a survey. A verification code will be sent to members for this; passwords will not be used. Members will be able to select automatic renewal or will receive a reminder 60 and 30 days prior to renewal date.

We know some members may not have an email or monitor email often. Membership Committee will contact those members and remind them of renewal date, as well as encouraging them to have an email.

Membership levels: Individual \$75, \$150, \$250, and \$500. Minimum level is \$20 for pay as you can option. There will not be student or household categories with the new system which will go into effect February 1, 2025. Members who have used the household category will be able to select an amount for each member. Example: select the \$75 category for first member and a lesser \$ amount for second member.

Membership payment will be through a Stripe account that will break out the dues payment to local league (20%), state (47%) and US (33 %) as of February 1, 2025. Currently, local leagues receive 12% of dues, so we will receive a bit more. Preferred methods to pay dues are ACH (electronic payment) directly from checking account or with a credit card. Payment will show on bank or credit card statements as three separate payments to local, state and US Leagues based on the split shown above. Fees for credit cards will be split out as well. This process is secure and protected.

A paper form to join or renew will be available on ChapterSpot site for those who prefer to pay by check. Checks should be made to LWVUS and will be split out. There will be an address to send to LWVGP P.O. Box; checks will be forwarded to a designated lock box for LWVUS.

There will also be a button to donate to our local league that is a separate transaction from membership and will go directly to our local league and not be split out to state or US. LWVGP will have additional Stripe account for donations in February 2025.

The Board of Directors of our local league will be setting up our Stripe account, as well as ChapterSpot site during December and January. Watch for more information in newsletters, as well as checkout LWV website:

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/membership/chapterspot-resources>



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

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**League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria Board of Directors
2024-25**

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