

### President's Message

## Preparing for the 2024 primaries

Hope that all of you had time to gather with family and friends, share memories and enjoy your favorite holiday foods over Thanksgiving! Our thoughts and prayers for the many people who are homeless, refugees, or fighting for freedom from oppression.

We are fortunate to have the ability to vote for local and national issues. Over the next few months, the League of Women Voters throughout the country will be focused on voter registration activities, candidate forums, as well as free and fair elections.

We are grateful to have dedicated individuals and staff leading our election commission offices in Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford counties. Check out their websites to get information on registering for vote-by-mail, checking your voter registration info is accurate, making a plan to vote during early voting or on election day, March 19, as well as identifying your polling location. Being an educated voter is one of the most important factors in voting. Watch for dates of our candidate forums, so you can learn about candidates who will represent your views on issues. The League also recognizes Peoria County Election Commission Board who recently approved providing postage for vote-by-mail ballots for 2024.

————— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

### Important Dates:

**4 p.m., Mon., Dec. 11:** LWVGP Executive Board via Zoom  
**5:30 p.m. social; 6-7 p.m. program, Wed., Jan. 17, 2024:** Drinks and Dialogue at Lariat Steakhouse  
**10:30 a.m., Sat. Jan. 20, 2024:** Program Planning Meeting at Peoria North Branch Library

## **UPCOMING EVENTS: DRINKS & DIALOGUE**

Local housing expert Jane Genzel presented during November's Drinks and Dialogue meeting.

Per usual, we will be taking the month of December off, but will resume Drinks and Dialogue in the new year with the next event on Jan. 17, 2024. Watch this space next month for information about our speaker.

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## **VOTER SERVICES**

We have welcomed a new committee member, Susan Russell, who recently moved from the DeKalb area and was involved with the League there, including chairing their Voter Services Committee!

We have reviewed the races that we are currently aware of for the March primary, understanding that the final filing date isn't until Dec. 4. We have decided that we will try to do all forums in February as early voting starts Feb. 8 and the election is March 19. The contested races that we are aware of at the time of this writing are as follows:

- 17<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Republican
- 37<sup>th</sup> Senate Republican
- 53<sup>rd</sup> Senate Republican
- 105<sup>th</sup> House Republican

We anticipate several other races to be contested at the county level as well as state races, when all is said and done. But this is all we are aware of at this point.

We have plenty of roles we will need to fill to support the candidate forums. We hope you will consider joining us. This is your opportunity to engage with your fellow members and the candidates.

We would encourage any member who is interested in working on forums to consider taking the moderator training done by LWVIL tentatively scheduled for Jan. 13, 2024, at 10 a.m. or the forum organizing training on Jan. 20, 2024, at 10 a.m.

Both trainings are virtual and you can sign up at [www.LWVIL.org](http://www.LWVIL.org). We always need more moderators and forum organizers.

Finally, the PHA has approached the League about assisting with a resident council election at Sterling Towers. We have told them what we are willing to do (vet documents that they would send to residents regarding the election and candidates; check voters in; count ballots. Per our board policy, there is a charge for this service. We will wait until we hear from the PHA about scheduling such an election.

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

## **MEMBERSHIP**

LWVGP welcomes members of Rock Island Members Around the State (MAS) to our League. The following members transferred their membership late summer: Terese Ames, Jamie Andrews, Kathleen Bailey, Liz Blackwell, Franki Cunningham, Toni Lucas, Lori McCollum, Lisa Strafford, Alice Traylor, and Annisa Wanat. This group worked with members of LWVIL to determine best fit for them when they were looking for a League to affiliate with. Our demographic of being in larger urban area was a good fit in terms of issues and focus.

These members will be participating in some candidate forums in Rock Island area, as well as collaborating for 17<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in 2024 election season.

Welcome to Sue Russell and Robert Zerwekh, who transferred from the DeKalb League this summer. New members include Monica Freaner, Stephanie Voltz, Kathleen Murray, Michele Kaergard, Katie Koors, and Kristin Faulkner. Thanks to members who have sent in renewals.

The Membership Committee will be meeting Dec. 1 at Jan Deissler's. Current membership is at 134.

————— Jan Deissler, Membership Chair

## **CO2 PIPELINE UPDATE (provided via Citizens Against Predatory Pipelines)**

Happy to share some good news. Wolf has filed with the ICC to withdraw its disastrous proposal. From the filing and its press release, Wolf clearly intends to file a

new application in early 2024 and address the deficiencies in the current application. The filing specifically mentions addressing the improper notification corridor and the lack of signed agreements with CO2 producers. Wolf won't be able to refile until the ICC rules on its application to dismiss. We hope the ICC takes its own sweet time on that but will remain vigilant for the near future.

Wolf's ICC application to withdraw is [here](#).

We know that one of the games these companies play is to try and exhaust citizen resources. We were already planning a fundraising push to pay for the legal bills and expert witness expenses required by the evidentiary hearings. With the application withdrawn, we'll instead get ready to confront a tighter Wolf application next time around. We all need to keep upping our game by learning more, educating our communities more, getting more counties and townships on record as opposing and continuing to raise funds so we are well-prepared for the next round. Let's work together to meet that challenge.

You can follow Citizens Against Predatory Pipelines (CAPP): [www.info@capp-il-linois.org](mailto:www.info@capp-il-linois.org)

———— Provided by Tracy Fox, CAPP

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### **PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: Nov. 9**

The Peoria County Board held its Nov. 9th regular meeting with all members present except Member Nathan Hoerr.

In regular business, the board unanimously approved three zoning requests including a 28-acre solar farm in Radnor Township. Also approved were a 45 mph speed limit on Voorhees Road in Kickapoo Township and a collective bargaining agreement with the four county employees represented by AFSCME Council 31/Local 3473. Similar to the agreement approved last month with AFSCME-PCEA Local 3586, covered employees will see 3% annual increases over each of the next five years.

Unanimously approved consent agenda items included:

- A three-year commitment to invest in the Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at \$25,000 annually.

- Demolition of eight structures within unincorporated Peoria County at a cost not to exceed \$239,000.
- An appropriation of \$1.515 million from the County Bridge Fund for construction work on the Maxwell Road Bridge.
- A new posted speed limit of 40 mph on a 2.6-mile section of Mossville Road.
- An appropriation of \$3 million from the Motor Fuel Tax for county highway maintenance.
- A contract not to exceed \$275,000 with CGL Management Group, LLC to create a Jail Master Plan to address necessary capital improvements.

Three proclamations were read recognizing:

- The 2023 Peoria City/County Civic Leadership Academy Graduates.
- The 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Village of Peoria Heights.
- November 25<sup>th</sup> as Small Business Saturday.

County Administrator Scott Sorrel received a 30-year anniversary pin recognizing his tenure with Peoria County.

Three citizens' remarks were received focused on a continuing call for the county board to endorse a CO<sub>2</sub> pipeline moratorium.

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

———— Jim Runyon, Observer

## **PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION: Nov. 16**

The Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners met for its monthly meeting on Nov. 16. During public comments, a letter was presented to the board once again asking the board to reinstate return postage for vote-by-mail. It was signed by several local organizations including the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria and the ACLU.

The board approved the bid to modify the front counter to make it safer for workers. It also approved a bid for an additional 400 tabletop voting booths. This should allow lines of voters to move more quickly, especially during the 2024 general election.

A discussion was held regarding pros and cons of funding return postage for vote-by-mail. It was estimated that the cost would be approximately \$6,600 for the primary, with a greater cost in the general election. The commission approved the cost with a 3 to 2 vote. Commissioners James Manning and Jeanne Williamson were the two nay votes.

Executive Director Elizabeth Gannon reported that an open house will be held Dec. 2 at 9:00 a.m., aimed at recruiting election judges, with training to be held in January. There is a great need for more judges, especially in the 30-60 age group. The Chamber of Commerce will also send out requests for more judges.

Because fentanyl has been delivered to some election offices throughout the country, it was decided procedures need to be in place to handle mail and Narcan available in case of an incident with the mail, as well as procedures for what to do in the event of an active shooter, and other incidents during voting.

————— Joan Wojcikewych, Observer

## **PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Nov. 7**

Special meeting of the Council held regarding 2024-2025 Biennial Budget and Public hearing regarding Proposed Property Tax Levy.

No citizens were present to speak at hearing on Proposed Property Tax Levy. A Truth in Taxation Hearing is required by law if amount of taxes levied is more than 5% than prior levy. Amount proposed is \$29,949,599 or 7% increase over 2022 tax year or 2023 budget year. This increase in taxes will be used to fund the City's police and fire pension obligations. Proposal passed.

The Council heard several reports from City staff regarding items related to 2024-2025 Biennial Budget. The final budget will be adopted Nov. 14. Much of the discussion was related to funding Peoria Fire Department including Rescue Squad services. Fire Chief Shawn Sollberger reviewed breakout of medical calls and response time to fire related calls, as well as overtime. In 2018, the department lost Rescue Squad One and Engine Two with budget cuts. Councilors asked what it

would take to fund Rescue Squad One, relieve stress related to overtime and operate at full capacity. Finance Director Kyle Cratty estimated the expense in personnel would decrease financial reserves in general fund below 25% of total expenses.

The next regular meeting of the City Council is Nov. 14 at 6:00 p.m. at Peoria City Hall. You can access agenda, packet and meeting minutes at <https://www.peoria.gov.org/562/Agendas-Minutes-Video>.

Meetings can be viewed on cable access channel 22, on city website and in person at City Hall, and listen at WCBU radio 89.9.

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

### **PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Nov. 14**

Public hearing was held at Peoria City Hall regarding 2024-25 Biennial Budget. There were no public comments and meeting was closed.

Township officials approved ordinance levying and assessing taxes for general fund and Illinois Municipal Retirement fund of Town of City of Peoria in amount of \$333,966, April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024. In addition, funding of \$1,004,080 was approved for the General Assistance Fund fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

Consent agenda approved with exception of item 23-364 regarding brick-maintained streets being deferred to Nov. 28, 2023, meeting.

Presentation was made by Peoria Police Chief Eric Echavarria on Public Transparency Dashboard, “Know More No More.” The goal of this program is to involve residents in problem solving and being engaged with law enforcement to solve shootings and other crimes. Jacob Moushon, Police Management Analyst, gave an overview of dashboard, which was live as of Nov. 14. Members of public can do online survey at the dashboard at, <https://police-transparency-1-peoria-il.hub.arcgis.com/>. Suggestions were made to include maps showing activity near schools and neighborhoods, as well as statistics over 10 years and comparisons to national averages on crime.

The council approved continued suspension of storm water utility tax increases until 2025.

Minutes, agendas and video of meetings are available at: <https://peoriagov.civicweb.net/Portal/>.

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

## **DUNLAP DISTRICT 323 SCHOOL BOARD: Nov. 15**

The regular school board meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. Nov. 15. All seven members were present.

The first order of business was a public hearing concerning the intent of the board to issue up to \$2 million of working cash fund bonds. Documentation of BINA Proceedings and Resolution of Intent were shown to explain this order of business. President Dr. Abby Humbles asked for public comments, and there were none.

During the public participation portion of business the superintendent gave a brief report. There was presentation of the Patriot Award and recognition of the Lady Eagles Tennis Team.

There was no public discussion during presentation of school activity account reports and Right At School Summer Daycare Program contracts.

The school report card for year 2022-23 was explained.

Presenter highlighted details of published district school report card which can be accessed at: [illinoisreportcard.com](http://illinoisreportcard.com). A snapshot view shows the high school and middle school have a summative designation as exemplary and the six elementary schools as commendable.

Some highlights: During explanation, presenter mentioned that 91% of students in AP courses had passed the tests. Also, SAT composite scores are above the state average. Overall, it was stressed that the district is concentrating on growth and improvement in all areas.

A member of the audience questioned numbers of absentees.

Presenter said that absenteeism is a problem statewide and nationally and that school administrators and teachers are aware of this problem and are working to improve student attendance.



School Calendar for 2024-25: One audience member was concerned about some Fridays designated half-days or with no student attendance. She indicated that situation is difficult for families with two working parents. The response was that the board does not create the calendar, but can relay concerns to the calendar committee.

There was considerable discussion about the problems related to DHS parking. The board said that they are working on several solutions to lack of parking spaces and access to entering the building in the morning.

Tax levy presentation: The board CFO said that every November the proposed tax levy must be presented to the board. The school board asks the county for an estimate of what they think the school district's final Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) will be. CFO Mike McKenzie uses the amount that they estimate to determine the amount that the district should ask to be levied. Final EAV is available around April 1.

The board must have a Truth in Taxation publication hearing since this year's proposed levy is more than 105% of prior year extension (dollar amount received). There will be a tax levy hearing and vote for board approval on Dec. 21, followed by filing with the country clerk by last Tuesday in December.

Showing the chart of the 2022 tax levy, presenter explained maximum rates and calculated rates. The overall rate in 2022 was 4.447%. Levy requested was \$40,899,267 and extension (amount of taxes received) was \$40,316,491. In 2023 the estimated county tax levy rate has a 7.93% increase. In case the county is wrong with its 7.93% increase, the district wants to make sure to get the maximum rate in the education funds, so the board will propose a rate of 9% even though they don't expect to get that.

At this time a disclosure of cash balance is required. As of 6/30/2023 the totals of cash and cash equivalents is \$22,944,751 and total for investments is \$35,595,519.

As required in December the board will reveal sales tax bonds.

Other information items: Deadline for Clifton Strengths Test is Dec. 15.

Payment of bills, review of treasurer's report, district investments reports, and bank statements were all approved.

Also approved were working cash bond resolution, resolution of intent, and BINA Proceedings.

DHS course selection guide was presented. A few people would like further explanation of the new course proposals for AP United States Government and Politics and American History through Sports. Students will enroll for the 2024-25 year this December. The board does not participate in course proposals, but anyone interested can ask for more information from the assistant superintendent of curriculum, the high school principal or teachers. With a roll call vote of 6 ayes and 1 no the DHS High School Course Selection Guide was approved.

There was approval of purchase of more buses for the 2024-25 school year.

The closed session was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

———— 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**

Connie Romanus, President  
[president@lwgp.org](mailto:president@lwgp.org)

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**Newsletter**  
Chris Kaergard  
[ckaergard@gmail.com](mailto:ckaergard@gmail.com)