



# THE VOTER

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Sept. 2017

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## **IMPORTANT DATES**

Thursday, Sept. 7, 6 pm  
General Meeting, Water  
Co. Buyout, Advanced  
Medical Transport  
auditorium, 1718 S.  
Sterling, Peoria..

*Continued on back page.*

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Greetings, Members!

**Water- a necessary resource for human life!** At the local, regional, and national level, we as League members are involved in important and critical activities to address water-related issues. In this newsletter, a variety of reports share information about opportunities for you to take action. Please review and consider how you may become involved in at least one of these activities.

### **Hurricane Harvey**

Our thoughts are with our friends, families, and neighbors in Texas and Louisiana who are suffering from the impact of Hurricane Harvey! The size and pace of this natural disaster is immense and requires unprecedented support for the affected areas. Let us each consider offering support as we are able.

Watching a woman get out of a small boat carrying only a large purse, made me think about the overwhelming task of leaving everything behind except for a few items. What would I take, I thought? And then, I saw rescuers pull an elderly couple from their flooded home- a couple who would have drowned if not for these rescuers.

Watching multiple scenes unfold with the heroic actions of neighbors saving lives is a testament to the strong bond among us that has often been forgotten in our recent discourse. It is my fervent hope that the sadness and destruction caused by this crisis will also result in a renewed sense of connectedness and compassion.

### **LWVGP Local Study of the Ownership of the Water System**

Learn more about the financial aspects of ownership of the water distribution system in the upcoming LWVGP educational forums. At our next General Meeting on September 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm at Advanced Medical Transport, Tom Fliege, Chair of the CEO Council's Water Infrastructure Objective Study Group, will present on an Objective Analysis of City of Peoria's Option to Purchase Peoria District of Illinois American Water Company.

### **LWV Illinois Nutrient Pollution Education Project**

I have copied in this Voter information from Bonnie Cox, President of the LWVIL about a project designed to educate young people about combating nutrient pollution in our waterways.

*Continued on p. 2*

Presidents's Message, continued:

The LWVGP is a member of the LWV-Upper Mississippi River Region ILO. More information is available for review at the LWVIL website at [www.lwvil.org](http://www.lwvil.org). If you are interested in representing us in this project, **please contact Farrell Davies at 309-696-3217 or [farrelldavies2@gmail.com](mailto:farrelldavies2@gmail.com) no later than September 8<sup>th</sup>.**

Sincerely,  
Farrell Davies  
President- LWV of Greater Peoria

### **CEOs SAY CITY-OWNED WATER MAY BE A GOOD DEAL FOR LOCAL TAXPAYERS**

Private business owners rarely suggest the public might be better served by government.

Yet the CEO Council of Central Illinois argues Peoria should investigate the possible benefits in owning the local water franchise. Tom Fliege will explain its reasoning at the **6 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 7 meeting** of the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria at Advanced Medical Transport, 1718 N. Sterling, Peoria.

Fliege is chairman of the CEO Council's Water Infrastructure Objective Study Committee. The group spent more than a year assessing public ownership of water as if it were the purchase of any other business. Five subcommittees — best practices, information gathering, labor relations, legal/legislative and pro-forma bonding — operated “to complete an objective, fact-based analysis,” according to the committee's mission statement.

The group determined that City of Peoria should exercise the repurchase provision of its 1889 franchise agreement and learn whether or not public ownership is a good option here. In part, its decision to seek Due Diligence was based on the inability to determine local costs since that information is not available under the current operator, Illinois American Water Company.

“I had an open mind when we started this process,” Fliege said. “As a result of our investigation, I became convinced that public ownership may hold great promise for the Peoria area.”

This is one in a series of public education meetings on public ownership of the water utility.

LWVGP's position also supports the City of Peoria moving forward on Due Diligence toward possible purchase of the water utility. It does not include a recommendation on how the utility should be managed/operated.

-- Cheryl Budzinski

## Part 2 - Possible Management Structures of the Water Company

The second in the series of special meetings to educate ourselves and the public about "Due Diligence" and possible management options- if Peoria were to purchase the water system- was held Thursday, August 24, 2017. People assume that the most likely management would be as a department within Public Works. Great turnout at the meeting again which included Roger Goodson from Illinois American Water Co.

**Springfield Mayor James O. Langfelder and East Peoria Commissioner Tim Jeffers and Springfield Water Division Manager Ted Meckes** spoke about how their publicly owned water utilities are organized and managed and answered questions from the audience.

League of Women Voters GP's "position" supports the City of Peoria moving forward on Due Diligence toward possible purchase of the water utility. Our position does not include a recommendation on how the utility should be managed/operated.

A video of the meeting is on our FaceBook page for you to watch the meeting. Highlights include:

- Springfield bought the water rights and created a Lake in 1860's. They also own/run their own electric , power utilities (CWLP.) That was controversial at the time. Their wholesale users pay a higher rate, subsidizing the residential users.
- East Peoria's system has been owned by the city for over 100 years. Water and wastewater are separate Enterprise Funds. Their higher usage customers (CAT) pay a lower rate. They use "true costs" for billing.
- Average bill for water in: Springfield \$22.77/month; East Peoria \$36.12/month; Peoria \$55.40/month.
- Both cities follow "Open Meetings Act" requirements, with Springfield live streaming their council meetings speaking to the issue of "transparency."
- Both reminded us that utilities don't pay federal taxes.
- Both enjoy efficiencies of sharing equipment, some pooling of personnel, software, GIS information.
- Senior citizens in East Peoria get a discounted rate.
- Rodger Goodson from IAWC stated that they will be replacing lead pipes to the house at no cost to homeowners "because it's the right thing to do." He also stated that IAWC will have a complete assessment of pipes in Spring 2018. Mr. Jeffers said East Peoria doesn't have lead pipes in their system.
- Commissioner Jeffers feels it is a carrot for economic development for high water users to have a 15% reduction in costs.
- The cities don't subsidize their water utility.
- Mayor Langfelder said we should always ask, "Who benefits, is it for the public good?"

Please view the video for more important content.

Cheryl Budzinski

### Voter Service Report

This committee will start the new League year with its first meeting on Thur. Sept 7 at 3:30 pm at 1630 NE Glen Oak, Peoria.

We will consider our mission and work for the coming year related to education of citizens and activities to help them connect to their local government bodies.

We want you to note the Moderator Training on Sat. Sept. 16 at Schnucks from 10 to 2 pm. **Come** and learn how this is done! **You** may wish to do this one day.!

We are still in need of registrars to work at the big Naturalization Ceremony on Wednesday, September 20 at 11 am at the Civic Center. Won't you help us?

We welcome new members to this committee.

-- Mary Jane Crowell

## September Drinks and Dialogue

Wednesday, September 20, 2017 , 5:30 to 6:30 PM  
Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 West Glen Avenue, Peoria, Illinois

### **Crime ... and Punishment.**

The United States has 5% of the world's population, but almost 25% of the world's prisoners. Between 1970 and 2009, the prison population in the United States jumped by approximately 700 percent.

Some experts suggest that more treatment and public health options are needed to combat crime. Partly in response to this, we have "drug court", "mental health court" and "veteran's court". In contrast, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has recently pushed for stronger enforcement of our federal laws, and directed federal prosecutors to pursue the most severe charges possible against offenders, as a "... key part of President Trump's promise to keep America safe ...".

In 2012, the national conference of the League of Women Voters adopted the following position statement on sentencing policy: *The League ... believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. The League ... opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.*

So, what's the correct approach? How should our community punish those who have violated our criminal laws? At our September 20, 2017, "Drinks and Dialogue", we'll discuss the "punishment" aspect of "crime and punishment" with the help of retired Peoria County Circuit Court Judge Michael E. Brandt.

Prior to becoming a state circuit court judge, Mr. Brandt was an Assistant State's Attorney and an Assistant Public Defender in Peoria County, as well as an attorney in private practice. Currently, he is an adjunct faculty member at Bradley University in Criminal Justice and Legal Writing, practices law part-time, and participates in pro bono representation through Prairie State Legal Services. He brings a wide range of experience and perspectives to this topic, having served our community in these different capacities for over forty years.

The event is free and open to the public.

Connie Romanus, Chair

### **LOGO REPORT: Springdale Cemetery Board, Aug. 20, 2017**

Peoria County Coroner Harwood, will be working to schedule ceremonies related interring unclaimed remains at Springdale. An unsolicited \$10,000 donation from an estate was received, and was put into the special projects account.

The Peoria Park District upgraded the golf cart with a newer used model. The manager sent the City Treasurer a request of \$50,000 for first incremental funding for this fiscal year. The City of Peoria was on-site working on drainage issues during recent weeks. The bridge restoration project will be Foundation funded.

There have been ongoing sewer problems for the office. The entrance dedication ceremony went well. Several inquiries related to natural burials have been received. The managers are working with the Universalist/Unitarian Church's 175 year anniversary committee on a tour of historic members' graves.

As a result of the recent Pekin pet burial fiasco, the group taking care of that will be getting plots in the Springdale pet area. Becky Doubleday was appointed as Secretary, after Garth Madison resigned from the board.

-- Rick Fox, Observer

## **LOGO REPORT: Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, July, 27, 2017**

**Public Input:** Cheryl Budzinski commented that the commission website was difficult to navigate and that it affected transparency and the ability to access FOIA forms and information.

**Executive Director report:** Outreach activities were expanding with mayors and boards of approximately 15 -16 communities contacted over the last 6 months to find out how the commission can be of assistance

The commission approved a total of 2.5% salary increase based on merit for full time employees (a lump sum total of \$9,276). A member from Woodford County objected because Woodford County was only giving its employees a 2% increase.

A presentation was given on the Peoria Lakes Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Members include representatives from the Tri County Regional Planning Commission, Army Corps of Engineers, Nature Conservancy, Heartland Water Resources Council, and Peoria Lakes Basin Alliance. The first public meeting for input with a staff presentation was held at the Ivy Club on 7/13/2017 after it was advertised on WTVP July 6-9. Another meeting will be held in the Quad Cities in January, 2018. Information for this group can be accessed at [PartakeinPeoriaLakes.org](http://PartakeinPeoriaLakes.org).

A report was given on Peoria Pekin Urban Area Transportation Study (PUATS) project that prioritizes the use of federal highway funds for grants for road construction and maintenance. Projects for years 2021 and 2022 have already been approved. There was a discussion about the scoring process that minimizes personal bias in the decision.

The report on the Greater Peoria Multi Modal Freight Study was given. The study was originated to look at a development in Pekin, but the focus shifted to Peoria in 2016. Tioga Group was contracted as the consultant in March 2017. A kickoff meeting was held on May 22, 2017. The focus will be on container shipments of soybeans and grain to China. Discussions are continuing with USDOT, IDOT, Illinois Soybean Assn, Dan Silverthorn of TransPort, and the Port Authority in Granite City.

Russ Crawford questioned if the revenue stream for this project had been properly considered. Eric Miller assured him that a cautious approach has been taken. The purchase of annual maintenance of GIS software by ESRI for \$13,900 and GIS support for El Paso of up to \$5000 was approved.

-- Michael Savoie, Observer

## **LOGO REPORT: Peoria Election Commission August 8, 2017**

The Peoria Election Commission meeting began with the reappointment of LaColis Reed to the Commission for a three year term. Also, all the current officers of the Commission were reelected to their current offices. The 2018 budget was approved with an increase of less than 2% over last year, even though 2018 will see two elections. The budget should be available online. Since Peoria County is updating their website, Director Tom Bride felt this is a good time to upgrade the Election Commission site as well. It will be more user friendly and will be able to show how people voted by precinct for the races at the top of the ticket. Plans are for it to go live on December 14, 2017.

Approval was given for Director Bride to be an Election Observer in October for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. This is organized through the State Department. He will go to either Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, or Georgia in the former Soviet Union.

The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing the Brandywine building, which is to be the new home of the Election Commission. As of the meeting date, there was still no definitive report that the interior was environmentally healthy and that it met ADA requirements. The owner had changed the windows and exterior lighting, even though that was not required. The County (which signed the lease) asked for proof of remediation and did their own testing. The building failed. The lawyers for the Commission asked the County to stop

payment on the lease, but the County Administration chose to give the owner more time. The owner did a second test, but the County felt the results were questionable. Stanley Steemer was then asked by the County to test. They said everything was okay. The Commission at the August meeting was waiting for the latest results from interior and exterior testing that had been done two weeks previously.

The Commission's lawyer said he has recommended since March to stop payments, which is permitted without breaking the lease. He has recently learned that the building has a history of mold and so repeated tests should be performed at 60 and 90 days. City of Peoria inspectors will have to sign off on the ADA requirements for a wheelchair ramp. The results of the last air quality test should determine what the County does.

The Commission expressed exasperation with the County dragging its feet. As commissioner Camille Gibson said, it's "an egregious use of tax money." The rent for the building comes out of the Election Commission budget, but it is the County that is doing nothing.

-- Irene Pritzker, Observer

### **LOGO REPORT: Peoria Park District, July 24, 2017**

The Riverfront Park Apartments project will begin Phase 1 in the fall of 2017. Board members and some attendees discussed concerns over the loss of green space for entertainment events to the apartment development project. Concerns included the possible impact upon future revenue for the city if larger entertainment events can no longer be accommodated. The City of Peoria has encouraged the Peoria Park District to attract larger venues to the Riverfront and may not be fully aware of the restrictions the Riverfront Apartment development may place upon future entertainment planning. The board will informally provide more information to the City of Peoria on this matter. Formal communications with the City of Peoria may be warranted in the future.

In addition, noise complaints from the Peoria and East Peoria residential areas in proximity to the entertainment events were mentioned. Events must now end by 11:30 PM in part due to those complaints. An East Peoria resident who has worked with East Peoria officials on similar noise issues offered information and assistance with ongoing efforts to minimize noise problems for residents.

Successful fund raising and logistical arrangements for moving the historical LeTourneau monument from Glen Oak Park and the LeTourneau house to the Wheels of Time Museum were reported. Lead paint was removed from the inside and exterior of the house. The Board approved the agreement with the Wheels of Time Museum for the relocation of the statue to Wheels of Time near the LaTourneau house.

The Board approved initiating the extension of smoking restrictions to the park district playgrounds, shelter areas, and park district vehicles. The process of announcing the changes and putting proper notification in place will follow the required timelines.

-- Monica Reising, Observer

**The Environmental Issues informal group** will meet Thursday, Sept. 14th at 9:30 a.m. at the Panera Restaurant off of Sterling in the Westlake Shopping Center.

We are looking at the topic of coal tar sealants and other issues you would like to bring to the committee. For more information phone Joyce at 309-678-1011.

## **LOGO REPORT: Peoria City Council, Aug. 8, 2017**

A detailed presentation & discussion of Peoria's budget woes was front and center in this session of Peoria City Council. At-Large Councilman Zach Oyler and 3rd District Rep. Tim Riggenbach were absent from Tuesday's proceedings.

Bradley University's plan for custom campus and city street signs dominated the Consent Agenda. At-Large Rep. Beth Jensen questioned city staff on whether or not the West Bluff Home Owners Association and University neighbors were consulted about the signage change. After much guffawing, staff stated that they were unsure if any neighbor outreach was attempted. "Public input" on governmental issues is a cornerstone of Jensen's platform, as she consistently pushes for citizen inclusion in city policy.

Additionally 2nd District Rep. Chuck Grayeb wondered if the red color of the proposed signs is in violation of state or federal signage regulations. Staff replied that the color of the signs may be a problem, as a similar plan on the Illinois State campus, was scuttled due to federal guidelines. Mr. Grayeb went on to say that BU is the city's "5th largest employer and a good neighbor." He felt confident that the school would have no problem interacting with citizen groups & getting consent for this "iconic branding". Given these outstanding issues, Jensen pressed for a 1 month vote deferral. A new hearing on the signage is now set for September 12th.

Item 17-248, of the Consent Agenda concerned a new Commercial Building Rehabilitation Program for the city's south side. 1st District Rep Denise Moore urged approval of the program, which she brought forward after "getting calls" from many 1D residents, on the topic. Businesses can front money for commercial improvements and then seek approval for matching grants, up to \$20,000. The \$150,000 program will be funded from the South Village Tax Increment Financing fund.

<http://www.centralillinoisproud.com/news/local-news/proposed-program-to-give-peoria-businesses-the-chance-to-make-improvements/784885124>

Regular Business was absorbed by a slide show concerning Peoria's budget obstacles, by Finance Director/Comptroller Jim Scroggins and City Manager Patrick Urich. The report was packed with facts and figures. A lengthy Q & A session, with council members followed. The biggest unknown, in this financial maze, remains the city's Combined Sewage Overflow bill and how it will be paid. That issue is yet unresolved and will definitely be addressed in the near future.

The main take away from the presentation was the city's loss of revenue and rise in costs, on many fronts. The report contended that an overall loss in sales tax played a part in this year's \$7.9 million budget shortfall. Landline telephone excise tax collection dropped significantly, due to increase mobile phone use. Urich then conceded that increased on-line shopping caused a loss in commercial sales tax. Additionally, gaming revenue dropped, due to the growing popularity of video gambling. Video machine wagering cut into lottery sales, accounting for approximately \$1,000,000 less revenue.

Peoria's cost centers rose as well. Employee pension costs were cited as a cumbersome debt. Pensions now account for approximately 40% of the Fire Department and Police Department payroll. These costs were predicted to rise in the future. Interestingly, 70% of Peoria's budget is spent on public safety & infrastructure. During his presentation, the City Manager proposed a 5-10% cut in city services to bridge this year's gap.

Once again, Jensen pressed the City Manager to hold public budget meetings, to inform and gather insight from residents. Urich stated that 4 or 5 such meetings will be held in August and September. Tuesday night's budget report was much more comprehensive than this report has outlined. Below is a link to the entire presentation.

<http://www.peoriagov.org/finance-department/2016-budget-information/>

Resident Doug Johnson used the "Citizen's Opportunity to Address" to argue for a return the previous meeting format, in which, council members could converse with citizens, at the end of sessions. He also touted the virtues

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of raising the minimum wage in town. This issue's value has never been debated in the Council.

A link to the full agenda and minutes is available at:

<https://peoriail.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

<http://www.peoriagov.org/finance-department/2016-budget-information/>

-- David Berry, Observer

### **LOGO REPORT: Peoria City County Landfill Committee, August 16, 2017**

The Landfill Committee was called to order by Chairman Steve Morris for its regularly scheduled meeting the third Wednesday of the month, Aug. 16th, at 3 p.m. in Room 404 at Peoria City Hall. The Foth Engineering Report included that 10,000 gallons of leachate from Landfill #1 were transported to the Greater Peoria Sanitary District for July, and that there were no shut-downs of pumps for the month. The solar panel powered pumps are working well.

July and August are critical months for control of invasive weed species, and Foth said they would be working with landfill staff on mowing plans. The financial report showed receipts for July as the highest for the year to date and fiscal year net revenues are positive.

PDC plans for construction of a concrete slab as part of the Citizens' Convenience Center for the new Landfill #3, which will be built and managed by PDC, were provided. Plans are moving forward for scheduling the slab construction. This was one of the shortest committee meetings in memory, with the meeting adjourning in about half an hour.

-- Joyce Blumenshine, Observer





League of Women Voters  
of Greater Peoria

623 W. Stratford, Peoria, IL 61614

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

ON THE WEB:

[www.lwvqp.org](http://www.lwvqp.org)

**IMPORTANT DATES**

**Thursday, Sept. 7, 6 pm General Meeting, Water Co. Buyout,  
AMT Auditorium 1718 N. Sterling, Peoria.**

**Wednesday, Sept. 20, 5:30 pm. Drinks & Dialogue, Crime and Punishment,  
Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 W. Glen, Peoria.**

**Thursday, Sept. 14, 9:30 am, Environmental Issues Committee,  
Panera Bread at Westlake Shopping Center, off Sterling, Peoria.**

**Saturday, Sept. 16, 10 am, Moderator Training,  
Schnucks Supermarket, 4800 N. University, Peoria.**

**Wednesday, Sept. 20, 11 am, Mega-Naturalization Ceremony,  
Peoria Civic Center.**