



The League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria

THE VOTER

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Board of Directors 2018-19

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Important Dates

- **12:30–1:30 Mon., Dec. 10.**
LWVGP board meeting, 1st
United Methodist Church.
- **5-6:30 p.m. Wed., Jan. 16.**
Drinks & Dialogue at W.E. Sul-
livan's, Peoria Heights.
- **9-10:30 a.m. Sat., Jan.**
- Program planning breakfast
at Schnuck's on University.
- **6-7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7.**
General meeting, Electoral
College Reform, Advanced
Medical Transport.

Note: There is **NO** Drinks &
Dialogue this month.

President's Message

Electoral College Reform

With the 2018 midterms behind and the 2020 election conversations already ramping up, it's time to educate ourselves about the important topics that will be raised and debated. We are incredibly fortunate to have League resources for research and learning about those topics.

For example, consider the electoral college. The LWVUS position says the direct popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished.

Delegates at this year's national convention decided abolishing the electoral college should be our focus for 2018-2020. As a result, LWVIL Electoral College Committee developed "Electoral College Reform: Why We Should Abolish the Electoral College and How to Do It."

Rosemary Heilemann from the LWV of Wilmette helped produce the program. She will be here to show it and answer questions at our Feb. 7 general meeting.

Check out the kudos from Constitutional experts:

Dr. George C. Edwards III, University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Jordan Chair in Presidential Studies at Texas A&M University. "*With this excellent presentation on the electoral college, The League of Women Voters are making a major contribution to improving democracy in America.*"

Dr. Tom Ginsburg, Constitutional scholar at the University of Chicago. "*The League of Women Voters is a critical organization for American democracy, and their electoral college proposal makes imminent sense. In years to come, the need to reform the archaic way we elect the president will only become more pronounced, and I hope the League's proposal gains widespread attention.*"

Save the Date and Bring a Friend!
Farrell Davies

DRINKS & DIALOGUE

There is no Drinks & Dialogue in December. We will meet at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 16, at W.E. Sullivan's Irish Pub, 4538 N. Prospect Rd., Peoria Heights. We will be in the back room. Parking is available on Prospect and in a lot to the west of Sullivan's. Our topic and speaker to be announced.

Happy Holidays to all! Thank you for your support and participation at Drinks & Dialogue this year.

— Connie Romanus

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL, November

The Nov. 27 meeting continued the budget discussion. Of particular note, Councilman Jim Montelongo had asked to look at specific parts of both expenses and revenue. Specifically, they looked at eight expenses that support other agencies: Springdale, Animal Control, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Civic Center, Debt Service, Downtown Development Commission, Peoria Area Economic Development Council, and Minority Employment Action Team. Representatives of most of those agencies answered questions from Council and presented their work. None were cut, but it was interesting to look at other areas besides cutting Public Safety.

Revenue items:

Montelongo wanted discussed: the AMT franchise agreement and a 10 percent fee on all revenues. Apparently the AMT franchise is paid yearly to the city for dispatch services (almost \$100,000 and includes a small annual escalation.) Interesting that former County Board Member Steve Morris represented AMT rather than County Board Chairman Andrew Rand, who was sitting near Morris. Morris was very strong in his defense of the contract since the contract continues for 6-7 more years. And, the city apparently has to give 5 years notice of intent to not renew the contract.

There was also discussion of Roger Goodson's suggestion, in October, of adding a franchise fee from Illinois American Water. City Manager Patrick Urich pointed out that Illinois American wouldn't pay that money out of profits, but would add the cost to our water bills.

Councilwoman Beth Jensen asked about a Not-for-Profit Public Safety Fee which has been implemented recently in other communities and is being considered in others. The idea being that some large NFP businesses use quite a bit of Public Safety services, but pay no real estate taxes which are a main funding source for Public Safety. Urich indicated that those are voluntary payments, not required. Much discussion, but the fee generated would not create much revenue according to Urich.

The proposed Public Safety Pension Fee may be tweaked some more and had three "no" votes (Jensen, Zach Oyler, and Sid Ruckriegel.) The proposed additional tax on package liquor had two "no" votes (Denise Moore and Ruckriegel.)

Councilwoman Beth Akeson's amendment to the council's Conflict of Interest rule passed unanimously. I would have objected since it refers to two very confusing state statutes, but part of the ordinance includes publication in pamphlet form. I don't know how that will really become understandable in a pamphlet. We will see.

Another special meeting Tuesday for the budget.

— Cheryl Budzinski, Observer

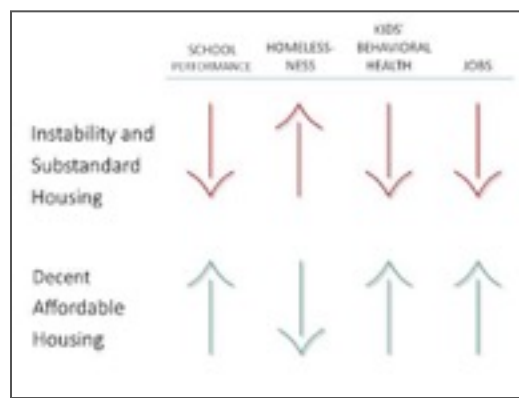
League of Women Voters HOUSING STUDY, November 1

Jane Genzel, Executive Director of Peoria Opportunities Foundation presented “An Overview of Existing and Needed Affordable Housing in Peoria” at our Nov. 1 meeting.

Peoria Opportunities Foundation has been involved in New Hope apartments for previously homeless, East Bluff projects including a newly funded East Bluff project, and senior housing projects. Ms. Genzel was previously Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Peoria.

Their mission is to be a catalyst for positive change resulting in community revitalization. To achieve that, they develop affordable housing with emphasis on developing self-sufficiency and economic wealth for low-income families and individuals.

From Ms. Genzel’s presentation, to answer the committee’s question, “Why affordable housing matters to a community?” she offered this graphic:



Source: City of Peoria, Affordable Housing Report, March 2018
Policy Research Brief: How Housing Matters, Chicago: MacArthur Foundation

Jane explained the continuum of housing: Supportive, Public Housing, Section 8, Rental, Ownership; explained the family income with each; and noted the growing skill-set to maintain housing at each. Financing and development are very complicated and involve tax credit financing which is a federal allocation with states awarding the credits. Peoria Opportunities operates their facilities for a set number of years after construction.

Ms. Genzel showed photos or renderings of many of their projects. Recently the city awarded TIF money for multiple new houses in the East Bluff. They consider their housing is a community asset – being well developed, well-maintained, and well-managed.

Thank you to Jane Genzel and many Peoria Opportunities Board members for attending and explaining “Affordable Housing” concepts and showing examples and answering questions.

Our Affordable Housing Committee will meet with Ms. Jackie Newman, Director of Peoria Housing Authority on Dec. 5 and with Prairie State Legal Services on Dec. 12 to look at two more aspects of Affordable Housing.

— Cheryl Budzinski, Chair

We need a few volunteers to re-check websites that were included in our e-Transparency project. Email Cheryl if you are willing to help. Thanks.
c_budzinski@hotmail.com

League of Women Voters HOUSING STUDY, November 15

Ross Black, City of Peoria Community Development Director, answered many questions at our Nov. 15 meeting. Here are some highlights from my notes:

→ The five-year Consolidated Plan is a HUD requirement addressing needs and annual plans.

This is what Councilwoman Akeson has referred to as needing updating. (Cheryl emailed the current plan to committee.) That plan is used to get federal housing money such as the federal HOME program money which goes to development – mostly Habitat for Humanity houses. CDBG money goes to roofs, handicapped accessibility, etc.

→ Discussed the Inspection form for rentals. It is detailed -and available online.

→ Talked about what is considered “livable” in the city. Most properties meet minimum standards; but structural problems, no utilities or not functioning utilities, or extreme clutter would be unlivable.

→ Talked about new registration program for non-owner occupied.

→ Regarding the 2,000 – 2500 unit shortfall of affordable units in our area, those are for extremely low income families.

→ Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a 3 bedroom is \$983/month. However, housing authorities can set FMR by zip code

→ In zip 61605, 20-25% of properties are vacant.

→ 100-120 houses are demolished by the City per year – each costing about \$10,000- \$12,000 to demo. There is a backlog of about 400 houses needing demolition. Director Black gave an example of a house valued at \$10,000 needing a new roof costing \$14,000 will be abandoned because the house won't be worth the cost and that wouldn't be the only repair needed. Regarding the “market,” there is no active market on the South Side.

Also, there is the generational change that millennials don't necessarily want ownership. People are not moving in large numbers into Peoria.

The number of inspectors now is seven. Ten years ago there were 17.

Thank you to Director Black.

—— Cheryl Budzinski, Chair

We're invited!

The Peoria County Election Commission will celebrate moving to its new location with an open house from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 11, at 4422 Brandywine Dr., Suite 1. You can meet commissioners and staff members, enjoy refreshments and tour the new office. The Election Commission moved on Sept. 13. If you have any questions, you can contact the commission at 324-2300.

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION, November 13

The Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners met on Tuesday, Nov. 13, with commissioner LaColis Reed absent.

While going over the month's bills, Director Tom Bride asked for permission to spend up to \$70,000 to pay for election judges. He might not need that much, but he wanted to be sure to have enough to cover all the judges, including early voting, election day, troubleshooting, and check-in judges, and their mileage. That was approved. A budget amendment was also approved to align it with the County's budget. The Election Commission budget was reduced by \$20,000, but because of the uncertainty of costs involved with the move and the November election when the Commission budget was first approved, the lower figure was easily met.

The Brandywine building will have the moveable wall installed on Nov. 15, except for the panel including the door. Everything should be unpacked and stored in the very near future.

The canvas of the Nov. 6 election will be held on Nov. 21. Fourteen ballots from out of state and out of country were received the day of the meeting, and some challenged ballots were still to be determined. A few minor glitches occurred during voting due to split precincts. Some people in a few precincts were to vote on the Park District referendum, and some were not. It was explained in great detail how these glitches were handled, and that no votes were missed or counted when they should not have been. Procedures have been put in place to assure that these problems will not arise in the future.

The Commission's attorney said that the owner of the Brandywine building has threatened to sue over real estate taxes for the building. This should not be a problem because there is nothing in the lease saying that Peoria County must pay a share of the taxes.

A new subcommittee has been formed to study the Nov. 6 election, to determine what worked, what did not work, and find ways to implement efficiencies for the next election.

— Irene Pritzker, Observer

VOTER SERVICE, December

We have completed another election cycle. It was a busy one as we pursued the education of citizens and encouraged them to cast their ballots.

Why do we do this? Ultimately, we strive for greater justice in our society and the improvement of the human condition.

We already know that we will have a field of 17 candidates for the Peoria at-large City Council race next spring. We look forward to accomplishing our goals of encouraging citizens to be involved in their local government. Watch for opportunities to help us do this.

— Mary Jane Crowell, Voter Service Chair

SPRINGDALE CEMETERY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, November 20

Steve Kerr chaired the meeting –

Manager Mark Matuszak reported:

→Treasurer Jim Stuttle presented financials for review and discussion. The Board was pleased with expenditures on target for the year. The Budget Actual showed repair of equipment as higher than usual but was compensated by overage in other budget line adjustments.

→The 2019 Budget was further reviewed, discussed and approved by the Board and will be posted for public comment. The final budget will be voted on Dec. 18.

→Manager's Report: Burials are still down. The Board discussed possible reasons but it is a trend for inner city cemeteries. Most burials at this date are happening in rural cemeteries. Two family estates are in the discussion process, and overall the purchase of lots is at a good level.

→Four tours were given this Fall: East Peoria High School, Washington Gifted School, Master Gardeners and Mark Bills Middle School.

→City subsidy discussions are on-going.

→Seasonal layoffs have been implemented and the cemetery is now functioning with four (4) staff. Fall cleanup was affected by the early onset of winter weather and may need to be completed in the Spring.

→Construction progress is moving along on schedule for the Scattering Garden.

→Fundraising is moving along nicely for "The Civil War Shaft Project".

→Prairie Gardens Marketing update was reported and marketing of the cemetery was discussed.

There was agreement that the cemetery's history could be the key to setting Springdale Cemetery apart from other cemeteries in the area and the State.

The Board then called Executive Session.

— Kathie Raiborn , Observer



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

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ON THE WEB:

www.lwvgp.org

IMPORTANT DATES

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- Jan. 16** 5-6:30 p.m. Wed. Drinks & Dialogue at W.E. Sullivan's, 4538 N. Prospect Rd., Peoria Heights.
- Jan. 19** 9-10:30 a.m. Sat. Program planning breakfast at Schnucks, 4800 N. University St., Peoria.
- Feb. 7** 6-7 p.m. Thurs. General meeting featuring Electoral College Reform at Advanced Medical Transport, 1718 N. Sterling Ave., Peoria.