



The League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria

THE VOTER

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January 2019

Board of Directors

2018-19

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Important Dates

2:30 p.m. Thurs., Jan. 3.
Candidate Forum Planning,
1630 N.E. Glen Oak.

12:30–1:30 Mon., Jan. 14.
LWVGP board meeting, Peoria
Public Library downtown.

5-6:30 p.m. Wed., Jan. 16.
Drinks & Dialogue at W.E.Sulli-
van's, Peoria Heights. Human
trafficking is the topic.

9-10:30 a.m. Sat., Jan. 19
Program Planning Breakfast at
Schnuck's on University.

6-7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7.
General meeting, Electoral
College Reform, Advanced
Medical Transport.

President's Message

Time to 'weigh in'

Program Planning Breakfast
9-10:30 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 19
Schnuck's on University

This time of year, we hear a lot of ads about weighing in and losing the pounds gained during the holidays — lots of pain and hard work. The LWVGP is asking you to weigh in, too. However, our “weigh in” is painless and fun!

All LWVGP members are invited to come and weigh in on upcoming programs for 2019-2020 — and the LWVIL current positions — by attending the annual Program Planning Breakfast from 9-10:30 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 19, at Schnuck's on North University.

We'll be reviewing and making recommendations on the current LWVIL positions on representative government, natural resources, and social policy, as well as the LWVGP program and study plans. And, we'll be sharing breakfast together as we make plans. Your input is valuable and necessary as we continue to Make Democracy Work!

Looking forward to seeing you and hearing from you at the “weigh in.”

Farrell Davies
LWVGP President

VOTER SERVICE, January

We look forward to the new year of 2019. Early we are planning a forum for the 15 candidates in the Peoria At-Large City Council race. We are working on the time and place. We will meet at 2:30 p.m. Thursday Jan. 3, at 1630 N.E. Glen Oak to finalize the plans. We have already had offers of help with our spring forums. That is wonderful. More offers would be gladly received.

We do expect to organize several forums before the April 2 election. There are contested races in Dunlap, East Peoria, Peoria Heights and Tazewell County, as well as the Peoria Park Board and Illinois Central College Board. Suggestions are welcome and new members may join our committee. We have been meeting on the second Thursday of the month.

— Mary Jane Crowell, Voter Service Chair

DRINKS & DIALOGUE, January 16

Join us to learn about human trafficking and its impact on Central Illinois communities. Human trafficking is listed as the second most lucrative illicit business in the world, second to illegal drug marketing. Director of Human Trafficking Services at the Center for Prevention of Abuse (CFPA) Sara Dillefeld Sefried and CFPA Executive Director Carol Merna will be our speakers.

CFPA is the only agency authorized by the State of Illinois to provide a combination of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and adult protective services. Through abuse prevention programming and community presentations, CFPA lives out its mission to help everyone – women, men, and children – live free from violence and abuse.

Drinks & Dialogue will meet from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at W.E. Sullivan's, 4538 N. Prospect Rd, Peoria Heights. Social time begins at 5 p.m. Parking is available along Prospect and on Sieberling St. behind the Nook. Refreshments are available for purchase. Bring a friend and join the discussion on this important topic.

— Connie Romanus

PEORIA CITY/COUNTY LANDFILL COMMITTEE, December

The Peoria City/County Landfill Committee met at 3 p.m. Dec. 5 at Peoria City Hall. Chairman John Morris conducted the meeting.

The Foth Engineering report indicated that they are still talking to developers for a potential solar project and they hope to find a good possibility for use of landfill property. Scott Reeise gave the financial report which showed no problems for the year even though gate garbage tonnage receipts are down. The projection for 2018 is 180,000 tons garbage and previous years were closer to 220,000 tons. Comments were that tonnage is down across the industry and better recycling and the economy are factors.

Waste Management said that they will be preparing a new air emissions report and an updated landfill capacity report in 2019 for the current landfill that they are operating.

With the drop in tonnage they are estimating the current landfill would close in 2023.

The existing landfill capacity is an issue as PDC will be building the next landfill and Waste Management will not be the operator. Waste Management discussed the existing composting facility permit and pointed out that it was not being used and that they did not see any need to renew it. They requested permission from the Committee to close that permit.

Chris Coulter commented that PDC had no intention of doing composting at the site and it was fine with them if Waste Management closed out the composting permit with Illinois EPA. He added if PDC decided composting was needed they could bring it up to the Landfill Committee and re-apply for a permit. This type of permit does not go through local County siting review.

PDC reported that work on the Vicary Bottoms wetland along Kickapoo Creek will require more and deeper digging to create the wetland than originally anticipated and PDC will need to get approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Work on this project will likely begin in 2020.

The next meeting is 3 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 16, at City Hall.

— Joyce Blumenshine, Observer

LWV UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER TASK FORCE UPDATE

You can help reduce the Gulf Dead Zone.

The Dead Zone is the area expanding from the discharges of the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico where water oxygen levels are absent or so low that fish and aquatic life must leave the area or die. The area is larger than the state of New Jersey. Much of the Dead Zone is the result of nutrient pollution caused by high levels of common fertilizers like nitrogen and phosphorus.

Lack of progress in reducing the size of the Dead Zone is noted. Goals set in 2008 have not been reached and the Dead Zone continues to increase in size. Voluntary compliance for nutrient pollution reaching the Gulf is contrasted to the mandates set by the U.S. EPA for clean-up of nutrient pollution in Chesapeake Bay, which did make significant reductions of the problem in the targeted time-frame.

You can reduce your part of the Dead Zone by buying locally-grown organic produce, meat and eggs from small farms, by buying phosphate-free dish detergents and soaps, and by purchasing only phosphorous-free yard products. Find out what your lawn service uses and insist on phosphorous-free lawn care.

LWV of Greater Peoria is a member of the LWV UMR. Peoria Board member Elaine Hopkins and member Joyce Blumenshine attended their pre-conference session held this summer in Chicago.

Additional background on nutrient pollution and tips for what you can do are at <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/our-work/water/nutrients>. An excellent series of articles researching this issue is listed at the recent LWV UMR blog <https://www.lwvumrr.org/blog/frustrations-lack-of-progress-environmental-groups-are-maddened-but-epa-is-pleased>. More information about the LWV Upper Mississippi River Task Force is at <https://www.lwvumrr.org/> and a full listing of their blog posts is at <https://www.lwvumrr.org/blog>.

— Joyce Blumenshine

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL, December

Interesting, yet very long meetings! I admit that I do not attend all City Council meetings and so it is nice to have the podcast/video available. I was especially discouraged when I watched the Dec. 4 meeting. At about 1 hour and 25 minutes, the council's frustration with the budget and with citizens/business groups' input (criticism) was not well received. There were repeated comments about the small percentage (@11 percent) of our real estate tax bill going to the City, which is kind of true. Actually, it is @ 14 percent if you include the garbage fee which is the city's. Also, when you look at all your utility bills with charges, fees or taxes- stormwater fee, electric/gas charge, cell phone fee/tax, water bill fee/tax, GPSD charge/fee, you understand that real estate taxes aren't the only money the city collects from us. And, now a pension fee.

Please pay attention to the At-Large City Council candidates in the primary election on Feb. 26. We need the ten best candidates to continue to the April election. Go to candidate forums. Ask the candidates for specifics –such as, what is the candidate's specific solution for the budget? How will they work with other council persons to sell their solution?

— Cheryl Budzinski, Observer

League of Women Voters AFFORDABLE HOUSING STUDY, December

Peoria Housing Authority Chief Executive Officer Jackie Newman, Melissa Huffstedtler, Deputy Director for Springfield Housing Authority, and Aldisa Jordan, Director of HCV met with the committee on Dec. 4 at their offices. They were very willing to answer all our questions and are working to make PHA and their tenants succeed.

Select discussion notes:

- PHA will be opening up the voucher list which hasn't been done since 2015.
- Discussed the fact that Springfield has 97-98 percent occupancy rate. Peoria has 80 percent which affects federal moneys available to those agencies. PHA has been working to fix this. The main problem has been painting in the vacant units. The goal would be to get a 30 day key-to-key. They are also working to get new tenants ready.
- Recently PHA Board approved using 110 percent of the Fair Market Rate for Payment Standards which they hope will attract additional landlords to the Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) program, which means a three-bedroom rent could be \$1,092 instead of \$1,022.
- Tenants pay 30 percent of their adjusted monthly income for rent
- Section 8 (HCV) is for very low-income persons. Vouchers are tenant-based.
- PHA is pushing their Self Sufficiency Program with self-directed goals.
- PHA units are frequently on bus lines.
- Tenants work, but do not earn a livable wage.
- Asked "What is livable housing?" the response was: anything that should work, must work – windows, stove, refrigerator, plumbing, electricity, etc.
- Springfield's Housing Authority has worked with Home Owner Associations and successfully moved to other areas in Springfield.

Meeting on Dec 12 with two landlords:

Pete Schmidt and Jim Center met with our committee. Both have been landlords for many years.

Both have been working with the City of Peoria to bring workable solutions to issues.

- One had 11 “Section 8” rentals, but now has two. He has 17 houses in Zip Code 61605 and personally collects rent monthly. He has mostly long-term renters paying \$450-\$650 monthly.

- One landlord visits his units several times a month to see that the outside is being taken care of. Both work with their tenants on payment plans if tenant is having temporary financial issues.

- One landlord said he does not know what he’s going to do about the City’s new pension fee; some of his tenants cannot afford it.

- They check out perspective renters multiple ways since they want quality renters.

- They do not accept new Section 8 tenants. Besides potential renter issues, problems with PHA included: employee turnover; requirements like painting walls in the basement/ furnace room; and required annual inspections with appointments not kept.

- They do not necessarily make money over the course of a year because of needed repairs or replacement of items at their units and the rent they charge.

Meeting on Dec 12 with Michelle Miller of Prairie State Legal Services:

Most of the committee was not familiar with Prairie State Legal Services nor with the court system that deals with tenants and landlords.

- Prairie State Legal covers many counties.

- They don’t take every case — low-income requirements, able to assert a legal defense, etc.

- Judge Kate Gorman may handle 25 cases per session typically with some on expedited trial or getting seven days to move if evicted. Housing Court is handled by attorney John Redlingshafer.

- Evictions can be for many reasons: non-payment, or withholding rent, heat shut-off, a pet in “no pet” lease, etc.

- Sometimes PHA has the same problems as private rentals. Taft is old and deals with mold, leaks, bad electrical, etc

- Some rental units have been purchased for \$5,000 and rent out for \$700/month.

- PSLS represents clients sometimes who are paying rent but the landlord won’t fix big problems and tenant is obligated to fulfill their rental contract and can’t afford to go elsewhere.

- “Habitability” – units must comply with code. If utilities are not paid and shut off, the landlord must evict within 72 hours. The city does require hot water.

- Typically, their clients don’t attend “tenant training”

- They were asked: Could workshops be done in schools so students learn “How to be a tenant” and “How to Rent” (consumer education classes)? These could possibly be done at Parent University (Peoria Public Schools), possibly by Bar Association. This could be part of practical “math” classes.

- They find that “Contract for Deed” is not a good tool for low income tenants because the tenant must do repairs that they are unfamiliar with and don’t have the money to do.

- Housing Action Conference of Illinois is a good source of information

Michelle handed out their one-page tenant information sheet. (Their other document on their website is almost 90 pages - very detailed and probably not used.)

—— Cheryl Budzinski, Chair

PEORIA HOUSING AUTHORITY, December

Peoria Housing Authority Board was scheduled to meet Dec. 27; meeting changed to Dec. 20. No Board packet available on website. Board meeting minutes not posted for past four months. Have requested to be on e-mail list to catch changes in meeting dates from website postings. The 2019 meeting schedule is not available at this time. Note: November Board meeting not held as scheduled; no notification on website of this. Will monitor this.

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION, December 11

The Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners met on Tuesday, December 11, with commissioners Matt Bartolo and Sandra Burke absent. Under approval of bills, two large items stood out. The Verizon bill included election day, and rent will include January 2019.

The Commission approved the purchase of pollbook software from VR Systems of Tallahassee, Florida. It was one of two low vendors. Peoria County IT looked at it, along with Director Tom Bride and assistant Elizabeth Gannon, who felt it best served the county's needs.

The election office has started planning for the city primary in February. They will send letters to polling places. Early voting will be held in the election office, hopefully with three days of voting in a downtown location. Director Bride prefers the main library, but it is closed on Sundays. The Commission will approve the schedule in January.

The subcommittee looking into efficiencies after the November election should have its report ready next month. The State's Attorney reported on the challenges to candidate petitions, both of which have now been deemed invalid. Early voting and vote by mail will begin on Jan. 17. 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

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Are you interested in being on the LWVGP Board or interested in being on a committee? The nominations Committee is working toward a slate of officers and directors for the membership to vote on at our Annual Meeting in May.

Is there an issue you think our League should study or take action on? Our local chapter has studied the possibilities of public ownership of Peoria's water and is currently examining the affordability of public housing. And we can take action if the League at the national, state, or local level has a position on your issue.

Nominations committee members include Ryan Hidden, Mollye Bright, Katherine Coyle and Shelley Epstein. We understand that the 2018-19 Board expressly wants Board diversity. A survey done by League member Peter Kobak, and reinforced through observation at our meetings, indicates the vast majority of our members are older, Caucasian women with "advanced" degrees. The Board reflects that

demographic also.

What would be expected of you? Attend at least nine of 12 Board meetings; assist with fundraising; and participate in or chair a committee.

For more information, e-mail me at c_budzinski@hotmail.com. Additionally, if you would like to receive our Board Agenda and attend Board meetings but not be on the Board, members are welcome to do so.

We will publish the slate of Officers & Directors in the April 2019 Voter.

— Cheryl Budzinski, Nominations Committee Chair

SPRINGDALE CEMETERY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, December 18

Steve Kerr chaired the meeting.

Treasurer Jim Stuttle presented financials for review and discussion. The 2019 budget was approved unanimously.

Executive Director Mark Matusak attended the Peoria City Council Meeting on Nov. 27. There was no funding level adjustment. He said he felt there was confusion by some members not understanding the City of Peoria owns Springdale Cemetery which makes a difference in perception regarding funding. There was agreement that there would be an effort to educate and dispel this perception.

- Burials are off by 10 for the year, which averages less than one a month.

- The Michael Ryon Memorial request for mourners to donate to the cemetery brought over \$600 in donations.

- Project Updates: Prairie Gardens Scattering Garden projects continue to move forward as weather permits. There will be a spring event to market the Garden held before the first scattering.

- Equipment Repairs: High cost repair for one mower.

- Volunteer mowers: Matusak reported there used to be as many as five or six volunteer mowers at the cemetery. They are now down to two. He would like to recruit new volunteers for next year to help with the maintenance of the grounds.

- “The Civil War Shaft Project”: Billboard has been placed announcing the project. Bruce Brown’s Fundraising efforts - \$20,000 with 100 percent match equaling a total of \$40,000. The goal for the project is \$60,000. Efforts continue.

- Springdale Historic Preservation Foundation will hold an event to celebrate the restoration work on the Memorial on Good Friday 2019.

No Executive Session was held.

— Kathie Raiborn, Observer



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of Greater Peoria

623 W. Stratford, Peoria, IL 61614

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

ON THE WEB:

www.lwvgp.org

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6-7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7.

General meeting featuring Electoral College Reform at Advanced Medical Transport, 1718 N. Sterling Ave., Peoria.