

President's Message

One step forward

Earlier this year your Board of Directors signed a letter to the Mayor of Peoria and the members of the City Council. The letter requested that funding be set aside, "...to conduct an appraisal of the Peoria District of the Illinois American Water Co. (IAWC)"

This request of the Mayor and Council was based on the long-standing position of the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria as follows:

"Water is a necessary resource for human life, not a commodity. The most important attributes of a water utility are: transparency; local control of rates and quality, among other issues; local governance which is co-located with the water supply and service area; public oversight; high quality service; competitive rates.

"The LWVGP believes financial analysis of public ownership of a water utility is warranted."

At the Nov. 9 City Council meeting, At-Large Councilor Zach Oyler moved to amend the proposed City of Peoria 2022-2023 Biennial Budget to set aside \$250,000 per year, in 2022 and 2023 respectively, into restricted funds to be available should the Council decide to pursue due diligence of the waterworks. He was seconded by At-Large Councilor Sid Ruckriegel. The motion passed 6-5.

It should be noted that the City Council members were clear that this vote does not necessarily signal what their decision might be on initiating an appraisal of the IAWC Peoria District in 2023. Nevertheless, it is a step in the direction of the LWVGP's position.

I hope that our membership is pleased that our voice was once again heard and respected by our elected officials and our policy position advanced.

——— Terry Kohlbuss, LWVGP president

Important Dates (all ZOOM):

4 p.m. Mon., Dec. 13: LWVGP executive board.

7-8 p.m. Thurs., Dec. 9: Illinois Voter Guide Training.

Happy Holidays! Drinks & Dialogue is on hiatus until January.

MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBERS



Kathie Raiborn

I was born and raised in Peoria.

My maiden name was Baty and I lived in what was then the country on Gardner Lane off Galena Road/Illinois Route 29. My Dad owned Baty's Barn, which was located on Galena Road near Detweiller Park. It had a grand old history of horse shows, dances and roller skating.

I have two children, six grandchildren and (almost) seven great grandchildren, who all live locally. I have an Associate degree from Illinois Central College, a Bachelor of Arts from Western Illinois University and a Master of Early Childhood Education Administration from National Louis University.

My sister and her husband started Rogy's Gingerbread House (Rogy's Learning Place Centers) in the Peoria area 45 years ago. I worked for the Rogy Corporations for 42 years, retiring in 2018. At Rogy's, I started as an early childhood teacher, then Director of a center, Director of Curriculum and, in the last 25 years at Rogy's, I administrated the Preschool for All program funded through the Illinois State Board of Education, and the Federal Nutrition Program for 20 Rogy centers located across Illinois and Ohio.

I also served on a number of state and local committees advocating for children and families. For example, I served as a member of the Board of Directors at EP!C for six years, and on the State Advisory Council for the Child Care Bureau for the State of Illinois for 20 years. I also chaired the Collaboration and Integration Committee of that body for 14 years.

Locally, I served as the Legislative Chair for the Early Childhood Forum of Central Illinois for a number of terms. Now I remain involved in the community by serving on the Board of the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria, as well as the Board of the South-West Kiwanis of Peoria.

DRINKS & DIALOGUE . . .

. . . is on hiatus until Jan. 19. If you missed a couple of our latest programs — the October discussion on voting rights was particularly good — you can catch up on our Facebook page.

———— Katie Kelly, D&D chair

MEMBERSHIP

Happy Holidays! As we prepare for family and friend gatherings remember to be thankful for the freedom we have to celebrate special occasions.

Although our Membership Renewal date has passed and those who did not renew have been removed from the Active list, renewals continue to come in. If you have not renewed your membership, we hope that you will. If you are not going to renew, please send an email to the address below with any suggestions that would have made your membership more meaningful to you. That's one way we can make the organization more responsive to its members.

Current membership is at 125. We're striving for 154, so invite your friends, relatives and others you meet to join us as we continue to Make Democracy Work!

If you are not already a member, we invite you to join the League. Become active on one of our committees or simply provide support to those who are working to provide information to the public.

Jan Deissler – 635-1872

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

We need an LWVGP Observer for Springdale Cemetery Authority, which meets at 4 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month.

If you'd like to help, please call Cheryl Budzinski at 253-9594 or email c_budzinski@hotmail.com

VOTER SERVICES

Thanks to all who completed our Voter Services survey in late October. We learned many things from our membership.

First, the majority of us feel it is important to continue both voter registration and voter education efforts.

Our candidate forums are really the bread and butter of what this committee does. We need to continue them and do more of them. We do, however, need to step up our technological game. We need to improve our skills with the virtual portion of forums and in many cases do a combination of a virtual and in-person forum. So, we will work on that.

We learned that not as many people as we would like use Facebook or our website when looking for candidate information.

We also learned that you would like us to increase our outreach regarding voting by working with young adults and by encouraging voting in historically low turn out areas. So we will start planning for that for future elections. I don't know just yet how that will look.

It also appears our membership would like us to do more local voter guides in competitive races. We have used the LWV of Illinois' Voter Guide in the past somewhat sporadically. We will look at doing that more consistently and promoting it more heavily OR doing our own, independent of the LWVIL. More to come on that decision.

Finally, I think I realized we have to do a better job of asking our members for specific types of help rather than just saying "Would you like to volunteer?" Thirty-four of the respondents to the survey indicated an interest in becoming involved as a deputy registrar, election judge, helping with candidate forums or guides, or helping with new outreach programs. If you are one of those folks, I can assure you we will be in touch soon.

Again, many thanks to all who completed the survey.

On a final note, Illinois Voter Guide Training is available from 7-8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 9. This one-stop voter education tool is intended to be promoted to our members and communities throughout Illinois.

Registration required. Members only. The event link will be sent a day in advance. (Those registering within the 24-hour period prior to the event will receive the event link one hour before the event.)

Go to the Events Calendar at lwvil.org to register.

—— Roberta Parks, Chair

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Oct. 26

A quorum was present for Special City Council meeting regarding the proposed 2022-2023 biennial budget and other business. Minutes and videos can be found on city website: www.peoriagov.org

Township officials asked Trustees to consider an increase in tax level of property taxes for 2022. Max Schlafley, Township Assessor, discussed decrease in levy annually since 2018; this was done to decrease amount held in reserve to 50%. An increase of 4.5% is being requested for 2022 to maintain reserves and cover increase in services during coronavirus pandemic. Supervisor LaTrina Leary presented ways the Township has decreased rent expenses with purchase of building more centrally located to residents. After much discussion, Trustee Zach Oyler made substitute motion to maintain current rate not to exceed 0.0880. Option to use city recovery funds for Township could be alternative funding source according to City Manager Patrick Urich. Motion passed

Mark Fenton gave presentation on Complete Streets and Active Transportation program. This includes redesign for walkability, access to shopping and safe streets for all users, as well as economic benefits. Pop-up demos planned. Mr. Fenton is consultant for National Public Health, Planning and Transportation. Peoria was selected to participate in this program. See video of meeting for more details: www.peoriagov.org

In other business, At-Large Councilor Charles Grayeb expressed concern for ability to contain fires to point of origin and asked Fire Chief James Bachman to provide statistics on this since Engine 2 taken off line. Mr. Grayeb asked the city manager if there was funding in current budget to restore engine for remainder of the year; Mr. Urich acknowledged there were enough funds to accommodate this.

Much discussion took place by council members regarding the timing, lack of information, legality of the action and overtime impact on budget. Legal counsel reported that city manager had authority via statute and city code to set head count of employees. The measure passed 6-4 to restore the engine.

City Manager reviewed sixteen items in report back to council on budget issues for 2022-2023 Biennial Budget. More detail can be found online in meeting minutes, as well as video of meeting.

—— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Nov. 16

The elephant in the room for the Peoria City Council's special Nov. 16 2022-2023 budget meeting was how to pay public safety pension obligations.

At the prior meeting, council members voted to allow public safety pension tax to sunset as scheduled rather than ask property owners to continue paying a fee. This tax added \$2 million annually to city budget in 2020-2021 towards the pension obligation.

City Manager Patrick Urich provided the council with six options for upcoming budget including whether to fill open positions in Police and Fire departments, restoring one engine for fire department and code enforcement positions. There was little support to cut \$621,000 for public safety. By law, the city pension obligation for 2022 is approximately \$27.7 million with an additional \$360 million due before 2040. Mr. Urich reminded the members that pension obligation comes up every year with budget process. Paying minimum amount puts city further behind and may mean city would have to dip into reserves to make pension payments in the future. He stressed importance of a long-term solution strategy.

All members agreed they did not want to cut public safety funding for police and fire departments. Another option was to take funds received in 2021 due to increased revenues to cover 2022-2023 Pension Fund obligations, giving the Council more time to consider long-term solutions. After much discussion on options provided, the Council deferred voting on request to approve the resolution adopting 2022-2023 biennial budget for one week to consider how to fund public safety pension.

During Public Comment period of meeting, Karrie Alms, concerned citizen, reminded Council that requesting names and addresses of citizens was a violation of Open Meeting Act (OMA) and asked staff to ensure compliance to OMA. She also cited lack of availability of handouts and Council correspondence to public as issue for transparency, especially in view of city budget and committee meetings. Another concern mentioned was Robert's Rules of Order and lack of respect for each other during discussions. She asked Council members to be positive role models in community, especially to youth.

—— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Nov. 23

Peoria City Council addressed the \$4 million gap in its 2022-2023 budget when it met Nov. 23.

City Manager Patrick Urich gave overview of revenue in general fund so far this year in addition to payments anticipated for last two months of 2021. Increased performance in sales tax, shared state revenues, funds from American Rescue Fund for 2021 and recovery from pandemic have exceeded expectations and

are anticipated to total \$17.4 million by year end. This will allow \$4 million to be used for pension fund liability for 2022-2023, as well as fund reserve balance of general fund at 27.4%.

The Council adopted the 2022-2023 Biennial Budget for City of Peoria on an 8-3 vote. Councilors Zach Oyler, Denis Cyr and Sid Ruckriegel voted nay. Funding for police and fire remained intact for upcoming biennium.

In regular business, a motion was approved to accept FY2021 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Grant in amount of \$78,319 and approve two-year agreement with Flock Safety for automatic license plate recognition cameras.

——— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: Nov. 11

Peoria County Board held its regular monthly meeting Nov. 11 with all members present except Chairman Andrew Rand. District 15 member Steven Rieker participated via phone.

The meeting was preceded by a Redistricting Committee meeting that discussed recent changes to the draft county board district boundaries, including recent modifications for the more rural areas in Districts 14 and 16. Four public comments were read into the record. The interactive draft map that will be recommended for approval is available at <https://data-peoriacountygis.opendata.arcgis.com/apps/redistricting-explained/explore> Videos describing the redistricting process will be posted on the same site.

One proclamation was read recognizing Small Business Saturday. Ten items on the consent agenda were approved without discussion. Among these items were approvals of a contract extension for independent external auditing, a three-year contract for health care provision for juvenile and adult detainees, technology improvements for the county board room, and a bid for rehabilitation of a bridge on Swords Avenue.

Under regular business:

- o Following four public comments, special use was approved with restrictions for an AirBnB operating on N. River Beach Drive in Medina Township.

- o A Joint Emergency Telephone System Board for Peoria and Stark counties was approved. Stark County is the final Illinois county without 9-1-1 service and this alignment will permit this service within the next two years.

- o PCAPS redemption and adoption fees were modified.

——— Jim Runyon, Observer

PEORIA ELECTION COMMISSION: Nov. 9

The Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners held their regular meeting Nov. 9. All were present, including new Commissioner Jeanne Williamson.

The new rules were in effect covering public comments:

Public Comment Rules:

1) Members of the public who wish to address the Board must provide the Chairperson with written notice of their intent to speak prior to the meeting being called to order. The pre-printed written notice shall request the name and address of the speaker, as well as a short statement indicating the speaker's topic. Members of the public are not, however, required to provide their address as a precondition to addressing the Board.

2) Prior to the Consent Agenda, the Chairperson may recognize individuals who have provided written notice of their intent to speak. If the individual wishes to address a specific agenda item, the Chairperson may recommend deferral of the citizen's request until the agenda item is called.

3) Each citizen is limited to five minutes unless revised by the Chairperson subject to appeal, and the aggregate Citizens' Remarks shall not exceed thirty minutes per meeting unless the time is extended by majority vote of the members present.

That agenda item was moved to the beginning of the meeting, and speakers were limited to five minutes. This allowed the Commission to answer public concerns about the integrity of voting systems and the reason why local vendors did not tender bids.

The Request for Proposals went out in February, and two vendors returned bids. They were ES & S and Hart Intercivic. Both companies gave presentations to the committee formed to evaluate and recommend a new voting system. The committee used a weighted 12-point rating to compare the two proposals.

Hart scored higher on 9 of 12 points, including 100% on security. Hart is set up to handle cumulative voting (which is used in the City of Peoria), while ES & S would have to set it up. Both systems would be accessible to handicapped voters. Both systems use secure paper ballots. The Hart system cannot be accessed without a code from Hart, and everything is encrypted. All ballots will look the same whether used for early voting, mail in voting, or on voting day.

The evaluation committee recommends Hart because of security, ability to meet the County's needs, customer service, and ease of reporting. The exact cost of

the new voting system will not be known until after negotiations. The number of precincts was not known in February when the RFP went out.

There was discussion about whether the Commission should pay for the return of vote by mail ballots. This has always been done in the past, but business reply envelopes do not require postmarks, which is sometimes an issue. A decision will be made at next month's meeting.

Also discussed was the need to update the pollbooks and provide printers to do ballots on demand. This will also be decided at a later date.

—— Irene Pritzker, Observer

PEORIA HOUSING AUTHORITY: Nov. 1

Peoria Housing Authority Board of Commissioners held its regular monthly meeting with a quorum present. Absent were Commissioners Alma Brown and Kim Furness. There were no community comments presented.

New receptionist, Tenora, was introduced and welcomed. Current employee, Ernest Jackson, was promoted in the accounting department. There were no FSS graduates this month, but anticipate one in December.

Jackie Newman, Chief Executive Officer, reported on recent program she attended on "Choice Neighborhood" program. She sees this as an opportunity to begin positioning PHA and partners to pursue grant funding available for Housing Authorities with distressed properties, such as Harrison. The two-year grant would need to involve city planning, as well as other partners. A second two-year grant could be applied for, as well as other funding.

Ms. Newman was enthusiastic regarding the recent ground breaking for Providence Point housing development that replaces former Taft housing. She recalled that PHA had been talking about this since 2010; the historic significance of getting project to this point; efforts resumed over the past three years. She thanked the Board for their support and encouraged them to keep momentum going to upgrade older housing stock, such as Harrison.

Melissa Huffstetdler reminded the Board that PHA was seeking third party investor for RiverWest recapitalization, as this property is 20 years old.

Reports were approved by consent agenda. Resolutions were passed to award contract for employee health insurance with Blue Cross Blue Shield with 1% increase; approved proposed 2022 utility allowance schedule for housing choice voucher program; and approve proposed 2022 utility allowance schedule for public housing, which is required to be in compliance with HUD regulations.

There was no update on CEO candidate search. Ms. Newman reminded the Board of the importance of employee training in available grants and other programs to position PHA for future success.

The next meeting of the Board of Commissioners of PHA will be December 6. Meeting schedule and agenda available at www.peoriahousing.org.

———— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY/COUNTY LANDFILL: Nov. 18

Peoria City/County Solid Waste (Landfill) Committee held a Special Meeting Nov. 18 via MicroSoft Teams access, Chairman Steve Morris presiding.

Minutes from Aug. 4 and Sept. 15 were approved.

Foth Engineering reports unexpected budget expenditures for the latest time-frame were due to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency request to do an earlier-than-expected inspection. A significant amount of paperwork needed to be done for that, which was not in the budget, and unplanned repairs were necessary.

Emergency work to refurbish the landfill gas blower motor required additional repairs and paperwork regarding several shutdowns. Planned work on new well lines was completed. Landfill gas methane was measured at 37.9% for the month of October, which was described as within typical landfill gas level ranges. 8,000 gallons of landfill leachate was transported to the Greater Peoria Sanitary District for treatment.

Both the municipal solid waste and special waste amounts received at the landfills so far this year are below 2020 levels, with a total of 6,260 tons less received. Foth and City staff are monitoring the situation but currently there are no changes recommended for the landfill budget.

Ten pre-approved special wastes were listed as having been received for the time-period, including three with contaminated soils; one comprising treated wood; one regarding recalled food products, and five asbestos containing materials. Chairman Morris' signature was requested for two reports: an Assessment Monitoring Report for Acetone Concentration at Upgradient Groundwater Monitoring Well G26S; and the 405-CAAPP Forms for Flare Shutdowns that Exceeded the One Hour Duration which were related to the blower motor replacement.

A draft 2022 Landfill Budget was presented for review and will be voted on at the next meeting. The budget draft has the 2022 increased Landfill #2 host fee of \$2.68 per ton of municipal waste received figured in, but also included considera-

tion of reduced tonnage receipts, keeping the amount at the same 170,000 annual tons, as anticipated for 2021. For 2021, the host fee has been \$2.62 per ton. Other revenue, including leases for land use, will help the 2022 budget. Costs for City and County personnel are being kept the same for 2022 as in the 2021 budget.

Waste Management, current Landfill #2 operators, presented their report with no problems found in load checks. The Waste Management request for Committee approval to authorize Chairperson Morris to sign short-term submittal requirements that may come up before the next Landfill Committee meeting was approved, subject to review and approval in advance by Foth. City staff member Shaun Schoonover will be taking over the detailed financial reports for the Committee and Foth is assisting him as he moves into the work.

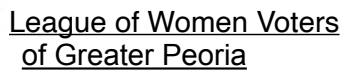
There was no written PDC report, however Eric Shangraw, Coulter Companies/PDC AreaCare, was present to comment that the PDC landfills, transfer stations, and hauling services were sold to GFL Environmental of Canada and that was finalized Oct. 1. Tim Curry, Region Landfill Manager for GFL, commented that he was excited to be there and that Chris Coulter is assisting with the sale transition for the next several months. He and another GLF staff member will give more of an introduction at the December Landfill Committee meeting.

Chairman Morris proposed a committee meeting schedule for 2022: Jan. 19; March 2; April 13; May 25; July 13; Aug. 24; Oct. 5; Nov. 16; and Dec. 21. Committee member Steve Van Winkle asked when the committee would go back to in-person meetings. Due to on-going COVID guidelines it is not known when that might happen. Mr. Curry added that he hopes the meetings will continue with a virtual attendance option as he lives three hours away. Under new business, Committee member Rick Fox asked that the agenda for the next meeting include discussion about landfill options for coal combustion residuals. Mr. Fox commented that he would like the Committee to have a policy discussion and also talk to GFL regarding their views on the issue and options for when they begin construction of the new City/County Landfill #3.

Full meeting agenda packets are available under Solid Waste Disposal Committee at <http://www.peoriagov.org/boards-commissions/>. Those with public comments can send them to the City Public Works division by noon of the meeting day or comments could be made at the meeting.

The next scheduled Committee meeting is 3 p.m. Dec. 8

————— Joyce Blumenshine, Observer



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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