



Volume 76 Issue 2

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### President's Message

## Let's discuss water rights

From now until November the Peoria City Council has the right to trigger an appraisal of the water system that serves Peoria and surrounding communities.

This right comes from the 1889 Agreement that authorized the city to sell the system to a private company. The system is now owned by Illinois American Water Company. If the City Council calls for an appraisal, the City then has the right to purchase the system at the appraised price. If the City decides not to purchase, the taxpayers are responsible for the cost of conducting the appraisal.

The LWVGP's established position includes, "The LWVGP believes financial analysis of public ownership of a water utility is warranted." (See [lwvgp.com](http://lwvgp.com).)

I hope we will have a thoughtful discussion about how to advocate for our position at our Annual Meeting in May. Here are some things to consider:

- o The appraisal/financial analysis done several years ago showed public ownership offers significant financial benefits to Peoria and/or customers of the system.
- o Our position was studied and established five years ago. Important developments since then need consideration.
- o Powerful forces are heavily invested in maintaining the status quo and oppose conducting an appraisal.
- o However, unless there is a determined consensus on the City Council to initiate an appraisal and complete the purchase if it is supported by the financial analysis, it may not be a good use of our time and energy to push our position.

The issue of public water is increasingly important. Peoria is blessed with an abundance of water. What we do with that resource deserves serious consideration by serious people. The members of LWVGP should be proud of the leadership we have shown on this issue.

———— Terry Kohlbuss, LWVGP president

### Important Dates:

**4 p.m. Mon., Feb. 13:** LWVGP Executive Board via Zoom.

**5:30-7 p.m. Wed., Feb. 15:** Drinks & Dialogue, Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 W. Glen Ave., Peoria

**8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Sat., Feb. 18:** LWVIL Issues briefing via Zoom.

## **DRINKS & DIALOGUE: Feb. 15**

Come to our next Drinks & Dialogue to learn more about important issues facing the Peoria County Board.

Land use, solar and wind energy, improving roadways and maintaining sustainability are all topics that touch Peoria County residents' everyday lives.

Join LWVGP as we host the new Chairperson of the Peoria County Board, Jimmy Dillon, to discuss issues challenging the members of the Board — and the relevance of those issues to area residents.

Topics will include:

Discussion of land use

Clean energy opportunities

New health and human service campus

Social time begins at 5:30 p.m., and our presentation will begin at 6 p.m. on Wed., Feb. 15, at the Lariat Steakhouse, 2232 W. Glen Ave. in Peoria.

As always, the event is free and the public is invited. Refreshments will be available for purchase.

Come, join the discussion and learn more about the issues.

————— Connie Romanus

## **Illinois Consolidated Elections 2023**

Illinois Consolidated election season has begun. Some Illinois communities will hold primaries or elections on February 28; for many others, Election Day is April 4.

Once all ballots are finalized, LWV of Illinois will be your resource for nonpartisan candidate information. Be prepared to use your voice during your local elections:

Go to [IllinoisVoterGuide.org](https://IllinoisVoterGuide.org) today to check your voter registration, register to vote, and sign up to be notified when candidate information is available.

Go to [lwgvp.org](https://lwgvp.org) for our candidate forum dates and information.

The Illinois Voter Guide will cover the municipal offices for all Illinois municipalities with populations over 10,000 people (mayor, alderman/council member, clerk, treasurer, police district council member), as well as all Illinois school boards.

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Greetings from the Membership Committee. We are gearing up for a busy 2023-24 year. The Committee meets in late February to plan for the year.

January brought one new member, making our total 128 members. We can do better! Start planning your list of invitees – we will get moving June 1 with reminders and invitations. It's never too late to invite friends and family to join.

If you want to volunteer to be a greeter at League events, just let me know – we need you.

———— Jan Deissler, Membership Chair

## VOTER SERVICES

Your League is hard at work planning candidate forums for the April 4 election. We have the following forums scheduled:

**Peoria Park District Central District Trustee** – 10 a.m. Sat., Feb. 18, at First Baptist Church in Peoria.

**Illinois Central College Trustee** – 11 a.m. Sat., March 4, at the Peoria Public Library North Branch

**Peoria At-large City Council** – 5:30-7:30 p.m. Tues., March 7, at the Peoria Public Library Main Branch Auditorium (Co-sponsors for this forum are the Peoria Public Library and the NAACP Peoria Branch.)

**Pekin Mayor and City Council** — 6-8 p.m. Thurs. March 9, at the Pekin Public Library. City Council race at 6 p.m. followed by the Mayor's race at 7 p.m. (Co-sponsors for this forum include the Pekin Public Library, the Pekin Area Chamber of Commerce, the Dirksen Congressional Research Center, and the Tazewell County Clerk.)

**Peoria Heights Village Trustee** – 5:30 p.m. Wed., March 15, at the Peoria Heights Public Library (Co sponsor for this forum is the Peoria Heights Library)

All of these forums will be live-streamed on the LWVGP YouTube channel and can be viewed any time after the forum is complete. At all forums (except the Peoria City Council as that forum will be structured somewhat differently than the others because of the number of candidates running) audience members are encouraged to submit questions to the moderator to be asked of the candidates. This is a great opportunity for you to get answers on topics that are important to you.

In other news, early voting starts March 10. That is also the day that vote by mail ballots are sent to voters who requested them. You can request a vote by mail ballot by going to [www.peoriaelections.gov](http://www.peoriaelections.gov).

———— Roberta Parks & Eileen Steed, Voter Services Committee Co-Chairs

## **GREETINGS FROM THE CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE!**

We hope you, and all of those important to you, are off to a good start in '23.

The Climate Change Committee continues to make progress in working with representatives of local governments on climate change and sustainability issues. We have meetings scheduled for early March with the sustainability coordinator for Peoria County, and with Peoria City Councilwoman Denise Jackson.

Every unit of government, in the policies that it adopts and actions that it takes, impacts climate change and sustainability. For example, the largest amount on a typical taxpayer's property tax bill is for the local public school district. How that district spends its revenue impacts both taxpayer pocketbook and environment.

After salaries, transportation costs are often the highest expense that a school district incurs. Most of that transportation cost goes toward purchasing, fueling, and maintaining the district's fleet of buses. Currently, most school buses are powered by diesel fuel. But other options exist – like electric buses. An electric bus costs significantly more than one powered by conventional technology. But costs for electric buses are going down, as more schools warm to and implement this technology.

While there are drawbacks (including a supply shortage), there are significant advantages to converting to an electric fleet. Electric school buses are highly efficient and cost less to fuel than conventional buses. Since there are fewer moving parts, electric buses also cost less to maintain. And importantly, unlike diesel buses, there are no toxic fumes from bus exhaust for students and drivers to inhale.

While purchase cost is an important issue, the federal Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act included \$2.5 billion dedicated exclusively to electric school bus procurements, and another \$2.5 billion dedicated for “clean” school buses, which includes electric buses. In many cases, there are also state and federal grant monies available to bring acquisition costs down.

Should we actively work to help local schools acquire electric buses?

Tiny Williamsfield (Knox County /population 620) gives a glimpse of what is possible. Williamsfield CUSD 210 has partly electrified its school bus fleet, and plans to transition all six school buses to run on electricity by FY 2024. That electricity will be sourced entirely from the solar panels already operational on campus.

Those solar panels are a story for another day. Stay tuned – or better yet, become a member of the LWVGP Climate Change Committee, and help us write that story. The more we work together, the more we can accomplish.

—— John T. Brady, Climate Change Committee Chair

## FOMO? THINK LOGO

Dwindling local media coverage means many of us feel disconnected from our own community. If you want to help bridge the gaps, consider joining our Local Government Observers. For decades, LWVGP has had a valuable presence at meetings from the Peoria City Council to the Peoria County Board and beyond. In recent years, we have worked to spread that information via our website and The Community Word monthly newspaper. We'd love to expand. The need is deep — and it's a great way to get to know what's going on in town. The Illinois League will hold a virtual training session March 18.

If you're interested, contact Terry Bibo Knight at [terry.bibo.freelance@gmail.com](mailto:terry.bibo.freelance@gmail.com)

### **PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: January 10**

Meeting began with public hearing to annex 9601 N. Allen Road. Ron Holohan, Treasurer of Dunlap Library Board spoke to concerns regarding Peoria annexation of property parcels five times over past years, resulting in decrease revenue for Library. A public hearing regarding proposed Medina Plains-Allen Road Business Park Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District will reconvene on January 24.

Consent agenda approved with little discussion: Worker compensation settlement for \$140,000 to firefighter injured on two separate dates; adult use cannabis dispensary located at 1210-1222 W. Glen Ave. and properties on N. University, commonly known as Crossroads Center Shopping Center in District 3; mixed-use building approved for residential, including short-term rental and commercial (class C-N) at 331 N.E. Perry Ave. This was recognized as creative use of space.

Community Development Director Joseph Dulin gave follow up on abandoned school demolition scheduled for spring that will be using local labor and hiring of local minority contractor.

Councilor Tim Riegenbach gave update on Darwin Corp. housing issue on East Bluff. Director Dulin was recognized for his efforts to get one-month extension on order to vacate; virtual town hall with Prairie State Legal on resident rights was held Dec. 20, 2022, with a neighborhood meeting to clarify misinformation.

Council adjourned for closed session. More information is available on city website on agenda, minutes and video: [www.peoriagov.org](http://www.peoriagov.org).

—— Connie Romanus, Observer

## **PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: January 24**

Council approved intergovernmental agreement between city of Peoria and Dunlap Community Unit School District 323 regarding Medina Plains-Allen Road Business Park TIF district. Councilman Denis Cyr was recognized for his leadership on this well-thought-out agreement and revenue sharing with school district; Councilors Zach Oyler and Charles Grayeb were recognized as well.

Collective bargaining agreement approved between city of Peoria and AF-SCME Local 3464 for two years ending December 31, 2025. It requires staff to reside within city limits. Staff and legal department were commended for their work.

A presentation was given on the scope of work done on Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) project year one and plan for year two (2023). It was noted that CSO plan is city's response to unfunded federal mandate to meet Clean Water Act. There is no sunset on this plan which includes using long term loan with Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) at 1.34 % interest. The amount of funding approved for 2023 is \$7,854,859.

Council adopted rezoning and special use provisions in District 1 for residential housing, including single family, multi-family and elderly. This action is necessary as first step to apply for Illinois Housing Development (IHDA) funding for project. Jane Genzel, Peoria Opportunities Foundation Director will be involved with these projects as well as Pivotal Partners Development Company.

Two residents gave comments: one individual and her family were seeking housing and have been evicted; another individual from District 1 objected to plan for housing development on South Side that was voted on earlier in meeting.

More information is available on city website on agenda, minutes and video: [www.peoriagov.org](http://www.peoriagov.org)

—— Connie Romanus, Observer

## **ELECTION COMMISSION: January 10**

Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners held their regular monthly meeting Jan. 10. Public comments showed concern for the school board candidate petitions and handling of the challenges.

Under expenditures, \$34,000 was left from the 2022 budget, but some of that money will pay for paper that has been ordered but has not yet been received. Only one bid had been received for a Permanent Vote by Mail mass mailing. Quick Silver's bid of \$10,000 was approved. Approval was also granted for equipment delivery for the 2023 election cycle to Federal Warehouse for the sum of \$5,900. They have been used in the past without any problems.



There will be no primary voting in Peoria County this year since it is not needed. The printing of ballots could not be completed until January 26 because municipalities and libraries do not need to complete their lists until then. First ballots will go to overseas and military voters on February 17.

The Board moved to executive session to discuss pending or anticipated litigation.

—— Irene Pritzker, Observer

## **PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: January 12**

Peoria County Board held its regular meeting with all members present but with Members Brian Elsasser and Eden Blair participating by phone.

It was the first meeting where board members and the Clerk accessed information and voted via iPads and new software that consolidated a number of key functions. Even with training and earlier mock meeting run-throughs, the new system resulted in several meeting delays.

Regular business included approving several zoning changes, special uses and waivers in Hallock, Hollis, and Kickapoo townships. The board also approved construction and renovation services within the Peoria County courthouse not to exceed \$1.325 million for the IT and Public Defenders departments. Also approved were an appropriation of \$300,000 for supplies for local road districts, and the FY2023 Legislative Initiatives.

Proclamations were read recognizing the Peoria Notre Dame boys' soccer team's recent Class 2A state championship, the Peoria High School second place finish in the 5A football state championship, and Randy Weber's lifetime of public service as a correctional officer, county commissioner and township official. Member Sharon Williams was recognized for her tenth anniversary on the board. There were no citizen's remarks and the consent agenda passed unanimously.

Among items approved/accepted:

A three-year agreement between the Illini Bluffs School District, the county and Sheriff for policing services,

Two grants totaling over \$600,000 for body-worn and in-car cameras,

Agreements for preliminary engineering services leading to the rehabilitation of a bridge on Maxwell Road and safety improvements on the Hanna City-Glasford Road.

An agreement to conduct a Peoria County Transportation Equity Study.

You can link to the agenda and video here: [Agenda & Video](#)

—— Jim Runyon, Observer

## Peoria Housing Authority: January 26

Monthly meeting of PHA Board of Commissioners held in person and virtually. Two residents from Sterling complex spoke during community comments; concerns centered on security issues on evenings and weekends, including lack cameras in elevators and lobby areas, trash and other waste materials not disposed of properly. CEO Armica Crawford discussed resident council re-engagement, volunteer floor captains and working collaboratively with residents to resolve issues.

The Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program celebrated four graduates who have reached goals for home ownership and finance and education.

CEO Armica Crawford reported on \$1.5 million grant recently received. She also discussed upcoming events at Sterling Towers and Harrison to assist residents with legal documents, such as healthcare power of attorney and wills.

Aldisa Jordan, Director of Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, discussed focus on voucher issuance and relationships with landlords, as well as customer service. She mentioned passage of HB2775 and fair income source in rental process.

Meeting adjourned for closed session. Meetings held at 4:30 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of the month. As always, agendas and past minutes are available online: <https://www.peoriahousing.org/about.aspx>.

—— Connie Romanus, Observer



League of Women Voters  
of Greater Peoria

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