

President's Message

Changes ahead to LWV membership

The League of Women Voters has been busy preparing state and local leagues for changes in structure, beginning with process for new and renewing memberships. Since 2018, the LWV has recognized a decrease in membership and need to increase diversity in membership; the changes in membership are an important part of this process. You can follow how this will be implemented on LWV website, Framing the Future: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/membership/lwv-new-membership-system-faqs>.

Membership dues/renewals will be collected by local leagues for the 2024-25 year. Individuals will be encouraged to pay a standard rate of \$75. There will be higher tiers for those who choose to pay more (\$150, \$250, \$500), and there will also be a pay-what-you-can option, where members can choose their own dues amount, at a minimum of \$20. It is hoped that this will attract a younger and more diverse membership. The household level will no longer be an option; each member will join individually. There will not be a student level. Beginning Feb. 1, 2024, dues will continue to be collected by local leagues and Per Member Payments invoices will be sent to leagues in January 2025.

Currently, membership fees are split in the following manner: LWV 51%, LWVIL 37% and LWVGP 12%. Under the new system, membership fees will be shared: LWV 33%, LWVIL 47% and LWVGP 20%. This amount includes amounts paid for higher membership levels.

Previously, when a member joined at a higher level, the league collecting the membership was able to keep amount over basic fee for budgeting. This practice will no longer be used and any funds designated with higher membership levels will be split out with LWV, state and local leagues. We will be starting

our membership drive at the end of spring and will be updating our website with the changes in membership levels, as well as a format for additional donations that would be kept with our league.

Lots of information here and more on LWV website, as well. I will use this spot to share information as it is available and plan some in-person meetings in the future. Please reach out to me or to board members with questions.

————— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

Important Dates:

- 4 p.m., Mon. March 11:** LWVGP Board Meeting via Zoom
- 1:30 – 3:30 p.m., Sat., March 16:** Proposed IL Changes to Open Meetings Act: What Citizens Should Know, sponsored by local ACLU Chapter at Peoria North Branch Library
- 6 a.m. – 7 p.m., Tue., March 19:** Illinois Primary Elections – **GO VOTE!**
- 5:30 p.m. social; 6-7 p.m. program, Wed., March 20:** Drinks and Dialogue at Lariat Steakhouse, Topic: Rank Choice Voting
- 6 p.m. Tue., April 9:** Annual Town of City of Peoria Meeting at Peoria City Hall, Room 400
- 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Sat., April 20:** Earth Day Celebration at Forest Park Nature Center

UPCOMING EVENTS: DRINKS & DIALOGUE

After a one-month break in February for primary-election candidate forums, D&D returns this month on March 20.

Sheldon Schafer will speak to the group about a proposed advisory referendum for the ballot in Peoria Township regarding Rank Choice Voting. It's especially timely ahead of the annual township meeting on April 9.

The language being proposed asks voters to recommend whether “the State of Illinois should adopt ranked choice voting.”

Join us to learn more on March 20, with social time at 5:30 p.m. and the discussion beginning at 6 p.m. at the Lariat.

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VOTER SERVICES

We had two candidate forums, ran a tenant council election for the Peoria Housing Authority at Sterling Towers, and registered voters at Illinois Central College. Not bad for a month!



On Feb. 7 we hosted, along with the Morton Public Library and the Morton Chamber of Commerce, a candidate forum for the 2nd District Tazewell County Board Republican primary. Three of the four candidates participated: Jonathan Hopkins, Eric Stahl, and Cathryn Stump. Karl Lutz, the fourth candidate, chose not to participate. With approximately 30 people in attendance, we had lots of great questions from the audience for the candi-

dates. Unfortunately, we had a technical issue and only about 20 minutes of the forum were streamed live on our YouTube channel. That portion is available on YouTube if you live in that district.

On Feb. 17, we co-hosted with the Chillicothe Library a forum for the 53rd Illinois' Senate District Republican primary. Because the candidates were all scheduled into an event that morning in another part of the district, we had to change the time to 2 p.m. We believe that may have impacted the attendance, but we still had about 20 people in the room. Again, three of the four candidates were in attendance. Jesse Faber was unable to attend once we made the change. The other three candidates, Susan Wynn Bence, Chris Balkema, and Mike Kirkton were in attendance. You can watch this forum on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfrS-6Fq0a0>

Unfortunately, we had scheduled four other forums, but they were all cancelled when one or more candidates opted not to participate. For the 3rd District Tazewell County Board – Republican forum we had multiple candidates opt out; for the 105th Illinois House – Republican forum there were only two candidates running and one opted out; for the 17th Congressional District – Republican it was the same, only two running and one opted out. For the 37th Illinois Senate District – Republican we had two of the three candidates commit and one of those two cancelled the morning of the forum. When this happens, it is the voters who are the losers as they don't have access to the candidates directly.

We registered 18 Illinois Central College students over two registration periods. Thanks to the three League members who are deputy registrars for handling this.

Finally, with help from four League members we were able to supervise the election of a tenant council at Sterling Towers, one of the Peoria Housing Authority properties. We held a meet-and-greet for the candidates and then ran the election the following day. By day's end, League members had counted votes and declared winners from this election.



Early voting for the March 19 primary is well underway. Check with your local election authority to see where and when you can vote. In Peoria County for the first time, you can go on election day to any polling place and cast your ballot. This is not the case in Tazewell or Woodford counties at this time. If you don't know where your polling place is, please contact the election authority in your county.

And finally, election judges are needed in virtually every county. If you are interested, please contact your county election authority. In Peoria, contact the Peoria County Election commission at 309-324-2300; in Tazewell, contact the Tazewell County Clerk at 309-477-2264; in Woodford County, contact the Woodford County Clerk at 309-467-2822.

———— Rob Parks and Eileen Steed, Voter Services Co-chairs

COMMUNICATIONS

Thanks to Lori Hanson for updating LWVGP Facebook with information on candidate forums past month. Katie Jordan has updated LWVGP.org website with March Drinks and Dialogue information, updated Donate form with our P.O. Box address, and linked several pages where members could volunteer for various activities to lwvgppresident@gmail.com. She also updated the link to the president's email on Facebook.

Katie Jordan is sending out the League newsletter via MailChimp by the first of each month, as well as upcoming meeting notices once or twice/month.

Appreciate all the photographers who took photos taken at forums, voter registration and other events past month. These can be sent to Lori or Katie to post on our sites: jordan.katie96@gmail.com and littlelort@yahoo.com

If you are interested in working with our Communication Committee, contact Connie Romanus: cromanus1249@yahoo.com

Last but not least, if you have Facebook account, please check out [lwvvp.org](https://www.facebook.com/lwvvp.org) Facebook and share events, as well as help us track any unwanted comments or postings.

———— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

2024 TOWNSHIP OF THE CITY OF PEORIA ANNUAL MEETING

Sheldon Schafer is organizing interested citizens to attend Peoria Township Annual Meeting at 6 p.m. April 9 at Peoria City Hall. He will present a proposal to place an advisory question on rank choice voting on future ballot. During the meeting, a moderator will be selected from those present. A vote will be taken on business items. To vote, you must reside in the Township of the City of Peoria. Some parts of 61615 are not in township limits; your voter registration card will show which township you reside in.

We hope to have 15-20 members who can help to support this initiative. A similar effort was taken that resulted in an advisory question asking citizens if they supported redistricting of federal districts to promote fair representation. Seventy-five percent of voters in 2023 Spring Primary in Peoria voted yes. While these are non-binding, they help to inform voters about the issue and raise attention to the dysfunctional way our current maps operate and need for effective change.

———— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

PEORIA WOMEN'S CIVIC FEDERATION (PWCF)

Did you know the LWVGP is a member of the Peoria Women's Civic Federation? This group was founded in 1905 by delegates from 20 women's clubs meeting at

the Peoria Women's Club in Peoria. Currently, this coordinating organization represents members of 41 local groups. Meetings are held monthly to inform delegates about happenings in the community. The organization encourages and promotes projects for improving the Peoria area. Meetings are on held at 10:30 a.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Lakeview Branch of Peoria Public Library. The position for LWVGP delegate is open for 2024 year. I hope you will consider participating in this group. It is rewarding, requires little time and is a great way to meet other local delegates.

Contact Connie Romanus if you are interested: 309-264-9113 or cromanus1249@yahoo.com.

LWVIL MISINFORMATION / DISINFORMATION TASK FORCE UPDATE

Join us for an online-exclusive webinar from 7-8 p.m. Weds., March 6, on the subject of "How Illinois Strives to Ensure a Secure Election Process."

Matt Deitrich, Public Information Officer, Illinois State Board of Elections, will speak followed by Q & A. The event precedes the March 19 Primary Election and is the first of several League webinars where noted authorities will speak on relevant topics leading up to the U.S. Presidential Election on Nov. 5. Presented by LWVIL's newly-formed Misinformation and Disinformation Task Force, the event is part of an effort to provide tools and resources that educate voters.

Online Event Location: [Register to attend the webinar.](#)

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PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: Feb. 8

The Peoria County Board held its February 2024 meeting with all members present except Brandy Bryant, Dan Kelch and Paul Rosenbohm. The agenda was again light, resulting in a 30-minute meeting.

In regular business the board unanimously approved a three-year contract with Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies of Washington, DC, to provide the county with representation on federal issues including possible earmark projects, grants and economic development. Former Congressman Rodney Davis will participate on the four-member Cozen O'Connor team and will assist the county with relationship

building in Congress and among the various executive offices. The total cost over the initial three-year agreement is \$296K. Approved on a vote of 14-1 was the name “Peoria County Health & Human Services” for the new facility under construction on the site of the former health department. Also unanimously approved were bridge and road projects on Voorhees Road and Hanna City-Glasford Road between Smithville and Lancaster Roads.

Unanimously approved consent agenda items included:

- A four-year collective bargaining agreement between Peoria County and AF-SCME-Health Local 3665 resulting in annual 3% salary increases.
- The FY24 State’s Attorney Appellate Prosecutor agreement that provides assistance for the Peoria County State’s Attorney office with appealed cases.

Links to the meeting agenda and video are here: [Agenda](#) & [Video](#)

———— Jim Runyon, Observer

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION: Feb. 13

The Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners met on Feb. 13 for its regular monthly meeting. Two polling places were moved because they did not meet accessibility requirement. Federal Companies was awarded the contract for delivery and return of voting equipment to and from polling places for both 2024 elections. They had the winning bid of \$11,600 and have done the work ably many times in the past.

Between the opening of early voting on the previous Thursday and the Tuesday of this meeting, 100 voters had cast their ballots, and 10,000 Vote By Mail ballots had been sent out.

———— Irene Pritzker, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Jan. 24

Council approved intergovernmental agreement between city of Peoria and Dunlap Community Unit School District 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 Chuck Grayeb were recognized as well.

Collective bargaining agreement approved between city of Peoria and AFSCME, Local 3464 for two years ending Dec, 31, 2025; requires staff to reside within limits of city of Peoria. City staff and legal department were commended for work on this.

A presentation was given on the scope of work done on Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) project year one and the plan for year two (2023). It was noted that CSO plan is city's response to unfunded federal mandate to meet Clean Water Act requirements. 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 \$7,854,859.00.

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 was objecting to plan for housing development voted on southside that was voted on earlier in meeting.

More information is available on city website on agenda, minutes and video:
www.peoriagov.org

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Feb. 13

Council meeting began at 6:00 p.m. with quorum present. Mayor Rita Ali made statement regarding Annual Township meeting scheduled for April 9. Any township electors that wish to have an item on Agenda of this meeting must provide written notice to the Township Clerk, Stephanie Tarr, by March 1, with specific information on advisory question on public policy to be considered on ballot. Requests must have signatures of at least 15 electors within Township.

Consent agenda was passed unanimously without discussion: Items of interest:

- Mayor Ali read a testimonial regarding Lester Bergmann, long time City Council member who oversaw three landfill operations in Peoria, who passed away on this date.
- Approved intergovernmental agreement between City and Greater Peoria Sanitary District for cleaning and inspection of selected city sewer segments in Council Districts 1 and 2, and separate agreement for Districts 2 and 3.
- Approved 2024 Utility Assistance Program using \$153,000.00 of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds for low-income households. Applicants who currently receive ongoing utility assistance are not eligible. Applicants will be put in lottery for virtual drawing.

Regular business items of interest:

- City Manager and Chief of Police request for \$365,000 funds for IL Department of Human Services Special Allocation was approved. Youth Violence Prevention Grants worth \$250,000 were awarded to Boys and Girls Club, Dream Center and Minority Contractors. Youth Micro Grants were awarded to nine programs for total of \$115,000.
- Over a contentious nearly three hours, 37 people addressed the Council on issues related to Gaza and Israeli war, at one point arguing and making insulting comments. Mayor Ali warned those in crowd they would be removed if they did not calm down. The mayor also stated Council would not support cease-fire statement, but would be posting statement regarding the war on City of Peoria website the next day.

The meeting was adjourned for Council to go into executive session.

Meeting Agendas, videos and past minutes can be found at: <https://peoriagov.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingInformation.aspx?Org=Cal&id=167>

Meetings are held on second and fourth at 6:00 p.m. and can be heard at WCBU 89.9, on public-access TV channel 22, and at city website or in person at City Hall.

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

DUNLAP DISTRICT 323 SCHOOL BOARD: Feb. 15

The regular school board meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. on February 15, 2024 with eight members present.

The superintendent's report:

- Four FOIA requests were submitted and are being prepared.
- Awards for several staff members were announced. Those people will be honored at the next board meeting.
- Assistant Superintendent Matt Andrews thanked emergency personnel, director of transportation, staff, students, and parents for their quick action in helping with the bus accident that occurred on Feb. 5 at the intersection of Allen and Townline Roads.
- Open enrollment for pre- kindergarten was February 1, and registration is March 7.

The Eighth Grade Girls State Championship basketball team and coaches were present for recognition.

Board President Dr. Abby Humbles submitted school activities account reports for information and discussion.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Scott Adreon showed information about summer projects with proposed cost, schools involved, and priorities. Top priorities are the parking lot extension and rooftop. Total proposed cost is \$1.6 million.

There were no comments on these information items: Student fees; facility rental agreement; pavement maintenance plan; entryway to Dunlap Middle School/High School campus; and bids for rooftop units.

Andrews explained staffing requests for school year 2024-25. He showed charts of enrollment and staffing needs for elementary, middle, high school, and special education. The preliminary staffing requests are based on current enrollment and matriculation and projected student course requests as course selection is still being completed at the high school. Requests for new staff are as follows:

- Elementary schools: one ESL teacher and one literacy coach.
- Middle schools: one English/Language Arts/Social Studies teacher.

- High school: Wellness Counselor.
- Special ed: school social worker, school psychologist, and an assistive technology coordinator.

Total cost of \$552,089.76 for all staffing requests includes salary and benefits.

The open meeting concluded with approval of bill payment, treasurer's report, investment report, and bank statements.

The purchase of district vehicles was tabled.

The regular meeting concluded at 6:53 p.m., followed by a closed session.

———— Dottie Strickler, Observer

TAZEWELL COUNTY BOARD: Jan. 31

Tazewell County Board was called to order at 6:01 p.m. on Jan. 31. Of the board's 21 members, 14 were present. Members Bill Atkins, Russ Crawford, Mark Goddard, Sam Goddard, Vivian Hagaman, Dave Mingus and Nancy Proehl were absent.

Tazewell County Resource Center President Jamie Durdel provided a presentation to the County Board about his agency, which recently purchased the multi-story former Busey Bank building at 33 S. 4th St. in downtown Pekin. TCRC provides services to people with developmental disabilities, including job training, behavioral health programming, and group homes. The new site lets them consolidate administrative offices under one roof, reduce rent expenses, and bring some training programs into Pekin. TCRC leases unused space in its new building to CASA and Crittendon Centers. Community day centers continue to operate in Tremont and Morton serving an average of 220 people per weekday. The agency is pursuing licensing for a behavioral health program focused on assisting the increasing homeless population in Tazewell County.

On a vote of 8-6, members agreed to defer for one year the commencement of a lease with Carle Health for 2,500 square feet of the former UnityPoint clinic building at 1800 Broadway that the county purchased last year to house some Health Department services away from the main Tremont facility. The lease had been scheduled to begin in January and now will begin in January 2025. Renovations on

the county portion of the building will continue. Opposed were Mike Deppert, Mike Harris, Kim Joesting, Kaden Nelms, Roy Paget and Max Schneider.

Board members also approved creating a substance-use disorder counselor position in the courts-and-probation office, using funds from the national opioid settlement.

Tabled until next month was a resolution approving per-diem reimbursements for board member Russ Crawford. The requests for eight per-diem payments totaling \$600 came outside the fiscal year in which they occurred. Though such reimbursements are permitted if approved by a vote of the full board, multiple members wanted to wait and hear from Crawford in person. Crawford routinely winters in Florida, but travels back to attend most board meetings. He did not attend January's meeting.

There were two public comments: One resident asked the county to consider exploring if it could intervene with the Illinois Commerce Commission regarding a proposed Ameren power line running through farmland. The second comment was from a representative of Nexamp Solar, explaining his company's request for an extension on the special-use permit for a 5-megawatt solar farm at the edge of the Mackinaw River floodplain in Sand Prairie Township because of a longer-than-expected permitting process. The board later voted to approve the second request.

Among more than two dozen items on the consent agenda, the board approved routine animal control service contracts with Washington, Delavan, South Pekin, Mackinaw, East Peoria and Pekin. The resignation of District 2 board member Vivian Hagaman was also accepted, with a replacement for the Republican to be nominated within 60 days by board Chairman David Zimmerman.

Members recognized for service anniversaries in county government were Greg Longfellow (5 years), Mike Harris (25 years) and Greg Sinn (35 years).

Members adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

———— Chris Kaergard, Observer



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

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**League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria Board of Directors
2023-2024**

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