

President's Message

It's time for Legislative Interviews

Every year, the LWVIL Issues and Advocacy Committee encourages local Leagues to develop and solidify relationships with their state senators and representatives by holding Legislative Interviews.

The goal of the interview is to strengthen the lines of communication between our local League and our legislators and to build goodwill rather than lobby for specific bills. The emphasis should be on a respectful exchange of views and information, setting the stage for future action in the state and your community.

The General Assembly will be on a break during the week of April 22. Our League will be trying to schedule interviews with local legislators; we will coordinate with other leagues if legislative districts overlap with other Leagues, such as McLean County and Kewanee.

The Issues and Advocacy Committee will provide priority questions for our interviews no later than April 5 along with a standard form on which to provide information about interview responses. This will help LWVIL engage in targeted advocacy. We will be scheduling face-to-face interviews, when possible, but may schedule a Zoom meeting if that is an acceptable option.

We will form a team of 5-6 interested members, some with experience meeting legislators and some new to the process. Contact one of our Board members if you are interested in participating. This is an opportunity to get engaged. Prepare, listen, respect time limits, and enjoy engaging in this important part of our political process.

————— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

Important Dates:

- 4 p.m., Mon. April 8: LWVGP Board Meeting via Zoom
- 6 p.m. Tues., April 9: Peoria Township Meeting at Peoria City Hall -
Arrival by 5:30 P.M. to verify address in Peoria Township
- 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Sat., April 20: Earth Day Celebration at Forest Park Nature Center,
5809 N. Forest Park Dr., Peoria Heights
- 10 a.m., Sat., April 27: Mock Election Training via Zoom
- 6 p.m. Weds., May 22: Annual Meeting to Elect 2024-25 Board, Location TBD

LWVGP ANNUAL MEETING

We will hold the Annual Meeting at 6 p.m. on May 22. Plan to attend this meeting to approve the slate of officers for 2024-25 term, as well as program schedule and proposed budget. The proposed slate is included at the back of the newsletter. The budget will be sent out to members to review after the April Board meeting. Current membership is 135. A quorum of 20 % of the voting members is needed at this meeting to conduct business of the League. **The minimum number of members needed for this meeting is 27.** A written proxy may be submitted to the Secretary prior to the meeting to equal no more than 5% of quorum, which is equal to one vote.

The location of the meeting will be determined, and information sent to the membership.

———— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

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VOTER SERVICES

We held two candidate forums last month. Combined attendance was nearly 50 ppl. Video Streaming on LWVGP YouTube channel to-date is 70 views combined.

There were several forums we had to cancel due to candidates not responding to the communication, sending back the forum Rules on time, and one candidate who canceled on the day of the event. We are contemplating ways to improve attendance and candidate participation. We will review our ideas over the coming months to prepare for the general election forums in the fall.

We will continue our voter registration work targeting communities and local events before the next election. When the Illinois driver's licenses become available to non-citizens on July 1, we will be looking to make sure that the driver's license does not have "**Federal Limits Apply**" below the "**Driver's License**" at the top. We do not want to register non-citizens – who are all ineligible to vote.

On Saturday April 27 at 10:00am there will be a *Mock Election Training* via Zoom. The zoom link will be sent to all league members. Voter Services will take the lead in organizing these events. All members are welcome to participate – we need a team for each location! This is a way to educate students on the election process and register new voters. Our league has conducted mock elections in the past. If you are interested in participating in this project, please register for the Zoom training when you receive the link. We will be reaching out to the schools next month to gauge interest and begin scheduling events.

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

MEMBERSHIP

Theresa Koehler has agreed to be Chair of the Membership Committee. She has been doing a terrific job maintaining our member roster. We had one new member in February, bringing our total membership to 135.

In the coming months, we will be reminding members when it is time to renew based on the date they last renewed membership. This will be part of the changes in LWV Transformation process.

Theresa will be meeting with committee members soon to identify needs, as well as greeters for upcoming meetings.

———— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

2024 TOWNSHIP OF THE CITY OF PEORIA ANNUAL MEETING

Sheldon Schafer is organizing interested citizens to attend the Peoria Township Annual Meeting at 6 p.m. April 9 at Peoria City Hall. He has submitted a petition to the Township Clerk for an advisory question on rank choice voting to be put on the November 2024 ballot.

During the meeting, a moderator will be selected from those present. A vote will be taken on business items, including the question on rank choice voting. To vote at this meeting, you must reside in the Township of City of Peoria. Some parts of 61615 are not in township limits; your voter registration card will show the township where you reside. You are encouraged to be in Peoria City Hall chambers by 5:30 p.m. to be checked by the Township Clerk. Citizens who do not reside in the Township of the City of Peoria will not be permitted to vote at this meeting.

We hope to have 15-20 members who can help to support this initiative. A similar effort was taken in 2022 that resulted in an advisory question asking citizens if they supported redistricting of federal districts to promote fair representation. Over 70% of voters in Peoria Township voted yes. While these are non-binding, they help to inform voters about the issue and raise attention to the issues and need for effective change in government.

For more information about rank choice voting, visit this link:

<https://fairvote.org/our-reforms/ranked-choice-voting/>

————— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

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PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: March 14

The Peoria County Board held its March 2024 meeting with all members present except Brandy Bryant. The agenda was full but resulted in a 30-minute meeting.

The board amended an agreement with Trajectory Energy LLC to construct solar farms in the Peoria County Business Park along Maxwell Road. Construction is expected this spring and the leases are set at \$1,200 per acre generating approximately \$6K per year. It also accepted bids for the demolition of eight unsafe structures with addresses in Edelstein, Elmwood, Chillicothe, Peoria and Edwards; and replacement of five residential roofs in the 61605 zip code. Salaries for the Circuit Clerk and Coroner were increased after being frozen since 2015. Both positions will have salaries of \$111,674 starting in December 2024 and will increase 2% annually through 2027.

Also unanimously approved were a culvert replacement on Akron Road, an engineering agreement for road improvements on the Hanna City-Glasford Road between Smithville and Lancaster Roads, sealcoating in thirteen townships, and a new 45 mph speed limit on Koerner Road from Parkside Circle to Charter Oak Road.

The board agreed to purchase a new chip spreader to replace the previous equipment purchased in 2005, and accepted a bid of slightly more than \$1M for replacement of the Peoria County Jail ring road and the Juvenile Detention Center parking lot. Courtroom technology improvements and a new one-year agreement with the county corrections employees were approved.

The board recognized March 19 as National Agriculture Day and Nick Mueller, Dunlap High School senior, on his IHSA Class 2A wrestling championship.

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

————— Jim Runyon, Observer

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION: March 12

The Peoria County Board of Elections met on March 12 for its regular monthly meeting.

Some 10,600 primary ballots had been mailed to permanent Vote by Mail voters, and 5,600 had already been returned. That is about 5% of registered voters in the county. As of the meeting, there had been about 1,000 early voters. Executive Director Elizabeth Gannon anticipates a 25% turnout. She is comfortable with the number of judges for the primary but will need more for the general election in November.

The only discussion with the Board was whether someone from the sheriff's office will be needed on election night when ballots are returned. Director Gannon will discuss that with the sheriff.

————— Irene Pritzker, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: Feb. 27

City Clerk Stefanie Tarr gave an overview of Certified Municipal Clerk designation available from International Institute of Municipal Clerks and the significance of Chief Deputy City Clerk Trina Bonds' achievement in earning this honor and the importance of continuing education.

Public meetings were held on following: Proposed Galena Rd Industrial Park Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Proposed W. Lamont Avenue Special Service TIF, and Proposed Distillery TIF. Members of the public spoke at the last two public meetings. All three projects were approved. Comments can be found in meeting minutes.

Consent agenda passed with one item deferred to March 12.

Presentation was made by Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Melodi Green on status of minority and women-owned business participation in Peoria capital projects. This report was requested by Councilor Denise Jackson. Chief Green gave an overview of historical data for contractor projects, as well as targets for use of minority contractors, and processes used by the City. Members discussed barriers as well as efforts to improve participation, the latter including a March 28 expo at the Peoria Civic Center. Finance Director Kyle Cratty was recognized for establishing a transparency dashboard to track project expenses, including city's bid process and Purchase Ordinance.

Cratty reviewed the unaudited financial report for month ending Dec. 31, 2023. Civic Center bridge loan has been repaid and will be reflected in February 2024 report. Overall, on pace with budget for 2024-25. Expenses decreased \$9.8 million year over year with sales tax income recognized throughout the year. Mayor Rita Ali discussed proposed elimination of 1% grocery tax effects on budget with loss of \$4 million if effective July 1. This could mean cut-back on some services. Council members also discussed the unfunded public safety pension liability and encouraged citizens to share concerns about unfunded pension liability with state legislators.

Peoria City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m. You can follow council meetings in person at City Hall, at WCBU 89.9 radio, on access channel 22 or video at city website, as well as find agendas and meeting minutes: <https://peoriagov.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingInformation.aspx>

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: March 12

Meeting began with public hearing regarding city-wide sewer rate adjustments. No members of the public were present for hearing. Proposed sewer lateral rate changes were approved and will increase average quarterly residential household bill by \$0.52 beginning May 1. (File #: 24-063)

The Town of City of Peoria meeting followed; Town Officials approved February 2024 actual expenditure and anticipated expenditures for March 2024.

The consent agenda passed with little discussion. City Manager Patrick Urich received an increase in base salary of 3% and a longevity bonus \$5,000. Urich was recognized for his performance managing city operations and infrastructure.

The first readings were presented on termination of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts: Northside Tax TIF, Central Business (Downtown) TIF and Midtown Plaza TIF. Discussion on these included how funds can be used for adjacent projects if expenses eligible; if no adjacent projects, remaining funds may go to taxing bodies or eligible road improvements.

Council approved contracts for Wisconsin Ave. Roadway Improvements in amount of \$5,000,000 from Nebraska Ave. to McClure Ave. Other business included approval of ordinance for Redevelopment Agreement with HLT, LLC for 617-619 Main St. to develop Restaurant and Bar in Downtown Historic District (Dist 2) for \$992,000 of TIF eligible funds.

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

DUNLAP DISTRICT 323 SCHOOL BOARD: March 21

The regular school board meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. on March 21 with eight members present (one remote).

The superintendent's report:

- Dr. Scott Dearman recognized the bus driver and monitor with the Eagle Talon Award for their heroic actions at the bus accident in February.
- Two FOIA requests have been submitted.

- Dearman commended the middle school principal and others for their handling of the incident involving a handgun found in a student's locker in mid-March. He acknowledged that some students knew about the student's handgun possession the day before, but the staff did not find out until the next day. He reminded everyone that "if you know something, say something."

A parent expressed concern with the procedures regarding the gun incident. He would like better communication with parents as to school lockdown and other protocols for this type of emergency situation.

Dr. Matt Andrews, Associate Director of Curriculum, presented detailed rationale, proposals, and cost for new high school English and speech textbooks. The cost to the district would be \$142,726 with an additional \$94,160 provided through grants.

Other information items included details on the 8th Grade Trip to Washington, D.C., the Living the Strategic Plan Goals and Progress Report, and the elementary school orchestra reorganization.

The board approved the payment of bills, the amount of \$7.7 million in the treasurer's report, district investment report, and bank statements.

With the caveat that there will be further discussion about parking lot design, summer projects were approved.

The purchase of a district vehicle was not approved.

The board approved a new staffing estimate cost of \$219,736.69 for 2024-25 school year. It also approved new parking lot bid of \$338,965 and \$33,000 for entry/exit, and approved rooftop bids.

The open session was closed at 7:20 p.m.

———— Dottie Strickler, Observer

TAZEWELL COUNTY BOARD: Feb. 28

The Feb. 28 meeting of the Tazewell County Board was called to order at 6 p.m. with 18 members present and one vacancy. Absent were board members Russ Crawford and Maxwell Schneider.

Board members approved 12-2-2 the appointment of Jon Hopkins of Morton to fill a District 2 board seat (Morton/Groveland/Tremont/Hopedale area). He succeeds

Vivian Hagaman, who resigned last month. Members Bill Atkins and Roy Paget opposed the nomination, while Tammy Rich-Stimson and Nick Graff voted present and Sam Goddard did not vote.

Atkins had sought to delay the nomination for a month, arguing that Hopkins was one of four GOP candidates seeking nomination for three seats on the board in the primary, and that the board shouldn't give any candidate a leg up as an incumbent. During public comment another candidate in the primary, Karl Lutz, chastised board members for their vote on Hopkins' appointment.

The board also approved proposals for construction management (P.J. Hoerr, \$47,500) and architectural services (Wold Architects and Engineers, \$1.6 million) for the new Justice Center annex to be located on the west side of Capitol Street between Court and Elizabeth streets. The vote on each was 14-3-2, with members Mike Harris, Goddard and Paget opposed, and Rich-Stimson and Hopkins abstaining.

The majority of funds for the new building are available because of the American Rescue Plan. Some courtrooms would be moved from the existing courthouse to the new building, which would feature a connection to the existing jail in the Justice Center. Currently prisoners must be walked or driven across the street from the Justice Center to the courthouse. Some board members continued to express concern about the potential cost and scope of the \$28 million to \$32 million project.

The board also heard a report from County Clerk John Ackerman about various recognitions received by his office and other groups in the county. Notable among them was a recognition for preserving the history of World War II veterans. There are 16 surviving WWII veterans in Tazewell County, with three having passed away in the last year. Those still with us range in age from 95 to 106.

The meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

———— Chris Kaergard, Observer

Proposed Nominating Slate of Officers and Directors LWVGP 2024-2025

OFFICERS	ROLE	TERM
Connie Romanus	President	6/2023 – 5/2025
Open	1 st VP	6/2024 – 5/2025
Open	2 nd VP	6/2024 – 5/2026
Jim Runyon	Secretary	6/2024 – 5/2026
Sean Koors	Treasurer	6/2023 – 5/2025
Directors		
Beth Jensen		6/2023 – 5/2025
Andy Diaz		6/2024 – 5/2026
Hind Abi-akar		6/2024 - 5/2026
Chris Kaergard	Newsletter Editor	6/2023 – 5/2025
Eileen Steed	Voter Services	6/2023 – 5/2025
Dottie Strickler		6/2023 - 5/2025
Brooke Somerville		6/2023 – 5/2025
Sue Russell		6/2024 – 5/2026
Kristie Couri Collier		6/2024 – 5/2026
Joan Wojcikewych	Appoint by new Board	6/2024 – 5/2025

Slate of officers & directors approved at May 2024 Annual Meeting
 New Board appoints up to two Directors at July 2024 Board meeting.
 1st VP position moves to President 5/2025
 2nd VP position moves to President 5/2027



League of Women Voters
of Greater Peoria

P.O. Box 9786, Peoria, IL 61612-9786

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

Connie Romanus, President
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Roberta Parks, 1st V-P
Sean Koors, Treasurer
Jim Runyon, Secretary

Hind Abi-akar Jan Deissler Andy Diaz Beth Jensen Chris Kaergard
Terry Kohlbus Brooke Sommerville Dottie Strickler Joan Wojcikewych

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