

President's Message

Celebrate democracy by helping at LWVGP events

July 4 is just a few days away and is a time to celebrate the freedoms we have in our Democracy as guaranteed by the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and subsequent Amendments. The right of citizens to cast a vote for candidates to represent them at the local government level, the Illinois General Assembly and the United States Congress is a powerful action.

The League of Women Voters' motto ("Democracy is not a Spectator Sport") continues to be pertinent, especially in a presidential election years. It takes many individuals working together to host candidate forums, attend public events for registration of voters, partner with local civic organizations to encourage voter turnout, and other activities. Consider volunteering at a candidate forum as a timer or greeter, become a voter registrar by contacting your County Election Commission, or becoming a poll watcher at the polls on Election Day.

Our Voter Services Committee is working diligently to increase voter turnout and target areas of low voter turnout and would appreciate a few hours of your time to help make these efforts successful.

————— Connie Romanus, LWVGP president

Important Dates:

4 p.m. Mon., July 8: LWVGP Board meeting via Zoom
5:30 – 7:00 p.m. Weds., July 17: Member Social at Suite Fire Bar and Grill
5:30 p.m., Weds., Aug. 21: Drinks & Dialogue at Peoria Public Library North Branch
(note temporary location change and earlier time!)

HONORING MEMBERS WE'VE LOST

Condolences to the family of long time League member **Hettie Beers**, who passed away June 13 at the age of 96, in McCordsville, IN. Hettie was very active in the LWV Greater Peoria beginning in the 1960s and beyond, mimeographing the Voter newsletter and working on League study on city manager-council form of government. She worked on campaigns for Shirley Belke and Dorothy Sinclair (League members) when they ran for public office, and continued to be interested in local government. Hettie was a 50-plus-year member of the League and was an election judge at her retirement community in 2020.

Hettie is buried in Springdale Cemetery with her husband. She is survived by three sons, numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. Condolences can be sent to Scott Beers, Springdale Lane, Greenfield, IN 46140

Condolences to Sharon Maule and family on the death of **Theodore (Ted) Matthews II**, who passed away on May 2 at the age of 89. Ted had been a League member for many years; he donated his body for medical research and education. A celebration of life was held June 15. Condolences can be sent to Sharon Maule, 3318 W. Parkridge, Peoria, IL 61604.

DRINKS AND DIALOGUE

Our D & D gathering in June was a welcome dose of good news about WTVP.

CEO Jenn Gordon told us that while the investigation into previous mismanagement is ongoing, the station's financial situation has stabilized. She detailed how the new Board of Directors and staff are working tirelessly to rebuild and modernize everything that WTVP does. It was especially good to hear that community support in the form of memberships remains strong. The relationship with and funding from the Public Broadcast System (PBS), which is critical to WTVP, is expected to return to normal soon.

That seems like a pretty strong comeback from a pretty bad situation. As always, leadership matters!

One of the best things about D&D is the opportunity to meet and assess in person the individuals who are leading some of the most important organizations in our area. The ability to get straightforward information and to ask probing questions is extremely valuable to us as voters.



Our time with Ms. Gordon also opened a line of dialogue about how WTVP and the LWVGP can work together where our missions overlap. There should be more to report on that if and when those discussions develop into specific plans.

D& D will be on break for July in deference to our

Summer Social but look for us again in August. In the meantime, stay cool.

———— Terry Kohlbus

UPDATE ON RANK CHOICE VOTER AWARENESS

We have been working with Sheldon Schafer and Fair Vote Illinois to schedule two public meetings on Rank Choice Voting, in addition to focusing our August Drinks and Dialogue on the subject. Meetings are scheduled for:

- Aug. 21 at Peoria Library North Branch, McKenzie Room, at 5:30 p.m. with speaker Rebecca Williams from Fair Vote Illinois. Scheduled as August's Drinks and Dialogue. Note: Time change due to library hours.
- Sept. 10 at Peoria Heights Library meeting room at 5:30 P.M. (Library closes at 7 p.m.)
- Oct. 8 at Peoria Library Lincoln Branch at 6 p.m., in Hot Air Balloon Room.

These meetings have been set up to educate voters on Rank Choice Voting and how it can promote election of candidate with at least 50% of votes, representing the majority of voters. There will be an advisory question on November 2024 ballot for

voters in Township of Peoria; this is a non-binding question. If you have not attended a presentation on Rank Choice Voting, consider attending one of these meetings and bring a friend!

WHAT IS RANK CHOICE VOTING? (excerpted from Fair Vote Illinois)

“Rank Choice Voting (RCV) reduces issues of vote splitting or so-called ‘spoiler’ candidates and unrepresentative outcomes that can arise when more than two candidates run for a single position.”

“With RCV, voters can sincerely rank candidates in order of preference. Voters know if their first-choice vote doesn’t win, their vote automatically counts for the next choice instead. This frees voters from worrying about how others will vote, and which candidates are more or less likely to win.”

“Winners elected with RCV have broad representation and truly represent a stronger mandate to govern or stronger winners in primary elections. Better choices, better campaigns and better representation.”

————— Connie Romanus

JOHN R. LEWIS VOTING RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT ACT UPDATE

Every day, the freedom to vote is under attack. Since the 2012 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* gutted the *Voting Rights Act* (VRA), at least 29 states have passed 94 laws that make it harder to vote, with the burden falling hardest on Black voters and other voters of color.

We need a fully restored VRA to defend our democracy and protect the freedom to vote. That is why the League is proud to support the reintroduction of HR14 and S4, the *John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act*, vital legislation that is needed to fully restore and modernize the VRA and ensure that discriminatory voting policies are stopped in their tracks.

Tell your members of Congress to protect the freedom to vote and support the passage of the JLVRAA. Contact your representatives on the subject via the [League page accessible here](#).

Equality — and our democracy — cannot wait.

* * * *

VOTER SERVICES

The Voter Service Committee is actively working on Voter Registration, Candidate Forums for the November election, Mock Elections in our local high schools and Get Out the Vote initiatives.

In June, the **Voter Registration team** headed by Piper Petrocelli and Mary Jane Crowell registered 5 voters at the Peoria Police Summer Safe Zone Block Party; 6 voters at the Peoria Pride Family Cookout; 2 at the Carver Community Center; and 33 at the Naturalization Ceremony. We are awaiting results from the Freedom Fest - Southside Community Center; the Peoria Pride - Chiefs Game; and the Streets Belong to Me with the Peoria Park District. The team has been very active not only registering voters, but also increasing our visibility in the community.

The **Candidate Forum team** headed by Susan Russell and Michelle Bohm have reached out to the candidates for the State's Attorney race Robert Boucher and Jodi Hoos. The forum will be held at the North Branch of the Peoria Public Library (3001 W. Grand Parkway) in the McKenzie Room on Saturday, Sept. 28. The forum is scheduled for 11 a.m. to noon.

Regarding the Woodford County District races, in County Board District 1 there are 2 four-year term seats to be filled, and one 2-year expired seat because someone resigned. It means we have 3 people (2 Republicans and 1 Democrat) running for two positions in CB District 1: John Krug, Johnathan Earl Schertz and Larry Stine (four-year term), and Timothy Wilcoxon seeking a two-year term.

In CB District 2, there are three people running for two seats (2 Republicans and 1 Democrat): Timothy C. Worner, Mike Laming, and David Meinhold.

In CB District 3, there are three seats open and three Republican candidates on the list. A Democrat has filed an 'Intent to fill a vacancy' for this CB 3. It will be a contested election. The candidate who has the 'intent to fill a vacancy' is Pamela K. Terry, Republicans: Autum Jones, Richard Reeb, and Gregory Walraven.

The **Mock Elections** team headed by Tikka Peeples and Rob Parks will be confirming next month the date for a Mock Election at Richwoods. They are also reaching out to Manual.

The **Get Out The Vote** team headed by Pam Schubach and Eileen Steed are awaiting the reports from Smart Data to refine the scope of the GOTV plan to reach out

to inactive voters in Peoria for the upcoming election. We determined that voter turnouts in the Woodford and Tazewell Counties were great enough that they do not warrant direct mail communication.

———— Eileen Steed, Voter Services Chair

MEMBERSHIP

Mark the date for the Membership Social on Wednesday, July 17, at 5:30 p.m. at the Suite Fire Bar and Grill which is located at Holiday Inn and Suites at Grand Prairie, 7601 N Orange Prairie Rd. in Peoria.

You should have received an invitation in the mail along with a membership form and interest survey. (A copy of the invitation is also included later in the newsletter.) Please mail back the membership form and interest survey, [join online](#) or bring them to the Social.

Feel free to bring a friend to the social, as well. It's a great time to join the League!

—————
This month we also express our appreciation to those members who have joined as Defenders of Democracy, with an additional contribution to their annual membership dues to support the League's work.

Eleanor Roosevelt Membership

Kristie and Glenn Collier

Sandy Stemler

Joyce Blumenshine

Carrie Chapman Catt Membership

Jim Runyon

Ida B Wells Membership

Roberta Parks

Lori Hanson

Pamela Schubach

————— Theresa Koehler, Chairperson



You're Invited!

Summer Membership Social

Wednesday, July 17, 2024

**Holiday Inn at Grand Prairie
Suite Fire Bar and Grille
7601 N Orange Prairie
5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

Whether you've been a member for years, or didn't renew recently, or you're interested as a new member, we look forward to seeing you.

Beverages and appetizers provided.

Please bring a friend.

Connie Romanus
President
cromanus@yahoo.com
(309) 264-9113

Theresa Koehler
Membership Chair
theresakoehler@comcast.net
(309) 693-0026

* * * *

PEORIA COUNTY BOARD: June 13

The Peoria County Board held its June 13 meeting with all members present but Brandy Bryant.

Following regular business and a 35-minute executive session, the board had a two-hour-plus policy discussion regarding the use of remaining ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds. Peoria County received \$34.8 million in federal recovery funds and has contracts in place covering all but \$9.8 million. Federal law requires that all ARPA funds be obligated/contracted by Dec. 31, 2024, and spent by the end of 2026, or else returned.

Since the board previously allocated funds into five categories, the policy discussion served to review previous expenditures, confirm or change planned uses, and provide direction to county staff who will bid projects and oversee their completion. ARPA rules dictate appropriate uses and all allocations were compliant.

The original allocations follow:

- \$2.4M, Social Determinants of Health
- \$1M, Small Business Assistance
- \$14M, New Health and Human Services building
- \$14.9M, Capital projects: roads, bridges, building repairs and maintenance, new construction, etc.
- \$2.5M, Broadband Internet into rural areas

The policy discussion yielded small changes in anticipated uses and the board reached consensus on staff direction. Those seeking details on proposed, modified and underway projects should view the meeting [video here](#) and begin at 1:44:15.

In regular business, the board unanimously approved zoning for two event venues in Kickapoo and Rosefield townships. The first event space includes new construction along US-150 on the east side of Kickapoo, and the second revives the former Kickapoo Creek Winery site under a new owner who also operates Venue Chisca in Peoria's Warehouse District.

In the consent agenda, equipment for a commercial kitchen was approved in the amount of \$27,101 for the new Health and Human Services building for food safety training, health foods demonstrations and for possible use by entrepreneurs needing a licensed kitchen for food preparation. Also, a new chip spreader for sealcoating county roads was approved at \$362,000 along with the construction of a storage building in the amount of \$439,000 at the Highway Department's North Station. Local funding commitments were approved for resurfacing of Cameron Lane from IL-116 to Smithville Road and reconstruction of Radnor Road from Willow Knolls Road to north of Ridgeview Road. If federal or state funding was secured, both projects would not begin until 2025 or 2026.

Proclamations recognized June as Peoria Proud and Pride Month, and the 50th anniversary of the Limestone Girls Softball Association. Three citizen's remarks focused on the reopening of the Peoria Planned Parenthood facility on Knoxville Ave., needed tree trimming at the former Hanna City Work Farm, and a request for ARPA funds to assist with the current water issues in Edelstein.

Link to the meeting [Agenda](#) is here and the video link is above.

———— Jim Runyon, Observer

PEORIA COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION: June 18

The monthly meeting of the Peoria County Board of Election Commissioners was held on Tuesday, June 18. Commissioner Jeannie Williamson was absent.

An unusual expenditure was for the repair of some voting equipment. According to Executive Director Elizabeth Gannon, it is less costly to pay for the repair of a few pieces than to pay for a warranty.

Director Gannon said she had enough election judges for the primary but will need more for the November general election. "Snowbirds" are back and have said they are willing to work in November. She will be holding an open house for prospective judges on Saturday, July 20, starting at 9 a.m. Anyone interested in attending should RSVP to the election office, 309-324-2900.

———— Irene Pritzker, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: May 28

The Council meeting began at 6:00 P.M. with all members present. The consent agenda was passed with brief discussion on item 24-149 regarding modernization of traffic signal systems. Councilor Kelly inquired if this included cameras to detect speeding or red-light violations. City Manager Ulrich stated that the city did not have authority to have speed cameras installed. Legislature has not shown interest in approving speed cameras outside of the Chicago Metro area and collar counties.

Council actions:

- Approval of Planning and Zoning Commission resolution for Grey Oak Subdivision on North Knoxville Avenue. Residents of neighboring subdivision were present to speak regarding concerns of flooding on nearby properties and location of retention ponds in planning.
- Accepted grant from Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for FY 2023 Economic Development Initiative, Community Project Funding Grant in amount of \$2M for sidewalks in 61605.
- Mayor Ali discussed process to fill vacancy of City Treasurer position; applications must be made by June 16 to fill term of office through May 2025. Individuals must have been residents of city for at least one year.

Council adjourned for executive session to discuss possible acquisition of property, as well as closed meeting minutes review according or Open Meetings Act.

The next Council meeting will be June 11 at 6 p.m., at Peoria City Hall. Agenda is available at <https://peoriagov.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingInformation.aspx?Org=Cal&id=153>

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

PEORIA CITY COUNCIL: June 11

Mayor Ali approved Proclamations for Juneteenth, Pride Month, 125th Anniversary of Knights of Columbus, Ernestine Jackson Freedom Day Parade and Migraine and Headache Awareness Month.

- Council approved May 2024 actual expenses of Peoria Township and June 2024 anticipated expenses.

- Received and filed first reading on Ordinance Amending Chapter 27, Article XII, Section 267 of Code of City of Peoria to revise Motor Fuel Code Violation Penalties. This change affects motor fuel operators who do not pay business license and/or fees in timely manner and provides penalty provision for insolvent gas station operators. Staff had requested strengthening current ordinance to decrease overdue payments and fees, as well as taxes. Council will vote on this Ordinance at the June 25 meeting.
- Tim Bertschy and Mary Peterson, Co-Chairs of Steering Committee for City of Peoria Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity, gave an overview of the 2023 Annual Report. Starting in 2021, this Commission identified many racial disparities in Peoria city and county. Strategic Plan Priorities are aligned with both City and County government plans. Critical success factors identified for implementation are: Improve Peoria Public Schools, grow employers and jobs, invest in infrastructure and transportation, support sustainability, reinvest in neighborhoods, keep taxes and fees competitive and have efficient government. Some areas of focus: disparities in health, broadband inequity, violence against children, child and youth development, housing quality, and transportation and mobility.
- Deferred item 24-143 regarding Landfill 2 Agreement with Waste Management for 30 days.

Agenda, minutes, and video are available at: <https://peoriagov.civicweb.net/Portal/>

————— Connie Romanus, Observer

SPRINGDALE CEMETERY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY: June 17

All Board members attended the June 17 regular monthly meeting.

From the financial report, it was noted that the Clifton, Larson and Allen accounting firm will not prepare the 2024 audit, so a new auditing firm must be secured.

The cemetery is experiencing an average financial year and is projected to meet budget for the remainder of the year. Due to changing burial trends, the cemetery reporting categories will see change in the future as there is increased interest in cremations over full-body burials. This will result in less income than with full-

body burials. There is also growing interest in natural burials and scattering gardens.

Of the anticipated \$365,000 in state grants, \$100,000 is needed for road work and infrastructure improvements. The board discussed hiring an engineer to determine how to best undertake the needed work. The board passed a revised motion to spend \$24,000 from the Capital Expense line for benches and landscaping in a scattering area. The crumbling concrete rose design will be replaced with a granite one at the scattering garden.

The Peoria Historical Society will host an open house at the mausoleum on Thursday, July 25, at 10 a.m.

————— Joan Wojcikewych, Observer

DUNLAP DISTRICT 323 SCHOOL BOARD: June 20

The regular school board meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. on June 20 with all seven members present.

Superintendent's Report included:

- One FOIA request being processed
- Board meetings will now be held on Wednesdays.
- Many non-certified positions open
- Jack Piper, senior, honored as 2024 Journal Star Baseball Player of the Year

Mike McKenzie, financial officer, speaking of district finances, said they are good overall with a slight surplus over last year. He recently received the property tax report, but still has not received \$590,000 from the state. Property tax of \$22 million received was more than last year. The tax levy went up but the rate stayed the same.

Dunlap Training Center proposal: 42,500 sq. feet not to exceed \$8.5 million to be built on the high school campus, and to be used by all students involved in extracurricular activities, including feeder school students. Facility to be paid for out of current \$38 million reserves.

A board member was assured that the plan to have a new building for Wilder Waite could continue even with this training center being approved. With final approval, plans for constructing the new Wilder Waite will begin in early 2025.

Information items: school activity accounts, board policy revisions, culinary trip, AP courses textbook proposals.

Consent agenda item approved: transportation contracts

Action items approved: copier replacement, support personnel association contract, and 2025 Federal Grant Plan.

Action on resolution authorizing Notice to Remedy to teacher Paige Reese was tabled.

Open meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

———— Dottie Strickler, Observer

TAZEWELL COUNTY BOARD: May 29

The Tazewell County Board held its monthly meeting May 29, with 18 members present. Absent were Mark Goddard, Roy Paget and retiring board Chairman David Zimmerman.

On an 8-10 vote, board members rejected the one-year extension of a special use permit for a 22-acre, 5-megawatt solar farm at Springfield and Eisele roads in Groveland Township. Multiple neighbors opposed the farm, which had received a special use permit one year ago on existing farmland but saw delays in permitting. Though outside city limits, East Peoria also opposed the solar farm, citing the land as one of the few directions the city could grow with new development (rather than annexation of previously developed land).

On an identical vote, the board rejected a special use permit for a 1,300-acre solar development in Malone and Delavan townships that saw strong support from neighbors and the Delavan School District. Board members expressed concerns about whether some of the proposed plantings to screen the farm sufficient, as well as the potential loss of "prime farmland" for the 40-year life of the project. Debate included a challenge from board member Sam Goddard to respect the private property rights of landowners to select how their land would be used.

The board heard roughly one hour of public comment from more than 15 speakers. Six represented developers of the two solar projects; four were county residents speaking in opposition to the solar projects. Another resident urged the county to adopt an ordinance governing the siting of renewable energy projects that would contravene existing state law.

Six others, mostly from out of the area, urged the county to consider a proposal relating to what they consider to be election security. They are affiliated with a national organization called United Sovereign Americans, which is featured in a recent piece [posted to the national League site](#) about court efforts to preemptively affect the 2024 elections, and profiled in a [recent LA Times piece](#).

The board also accepted the resignation of District 2 board member Randi Krehbiel of Hopedale and unanimously approved appointing Eric Schmidgall of Mackinaw to the District 3 seat vacated last month by Sierra Smith of East Peoria. Schmidgall was the top vote-getter in the March primary to fill one of three District 3 seats in the November election.

Unanimously approved in the consent agenda was \$50,000 in national opioid settlement funds for the Health Department and coroner's offices. Members also unanimously approved the use of \$100,000 from the developmental-disabilities tax levy for the construction of restrooms and elevator upgrades at the new Tazewell County Resource Centers (TCRC) building in downtown Pekin serving people with developmental disabilities and visual impairments.

———— Chris Kaergard, Observer

TAZEWELL COUNTY BOARD: June 26

During a 2 ½ hour meeting on June 26, the Tazewell County Board reversed course on two major decisions taken the prior month.

Board members reconsidered and approved a one-year permit extension for a 22-acre, 5-megawatt solar farm located on 30-plus acres at Springfield and Eisele roads in Groveland Township on a 12-6 vote with one abstention. They voted 14-5 to approve a special-use permit for a 1,300-acre solar farm in Malone and Delavan townships in southern Tazewell County. Full vote tallies [are available here](#).

Board member Bill Atkins of Washington – who voted in favor of the extension both in May and in June – pointed out the board had not followed its own established policies and precedents when denying Catmint’s extension. An attorney for the Coyote Road project outlined how multiple findings listed in the board’s denial in May did not comport with facts established in the case reviewed by the Zoning Board of Appeals – essentially laying out the company’s grounds for a potential lawsuit.

During public comment, four citizens spoke against the Catmint project, including East Peoria Mayor John Kahl, who urged the board to ignore state law on the subject. Two representatives from the developer spoke in favor of the extension. Eight residents and representatives of the developer spoke in favor of the Coyote Road project, while three residents opposed it. Public comment on both cases lasted more than 1 hour and was followed by a 25-minute executive session to discuss probable litigation before the vote.

Board members also voted 4-15 to not place on the November ballot a referendum to abolish the position of county auditor. Presumptive auditor-elect William Funkhouser (unopposed on the fall ballot) is a Bradley professor and CPA. He spoke during public comment, urging board members to give him two years in the position to demonstrate its effectiveness and/or play a role in crafting a different proposal. A number of board members remarked on the substantial vote against eliminating the position in a 2018 referendum.

After a 15-minute executive session to discuss personnel issues, board members voted unanimously and without comment to approve a three-year, fully-managed IT service agreement with Heart Technologies. The contract, which expands upon an already existing agreement, will add approximately \$17,500 per month to the county’s bill and will include, among other provisions, a staffed, on-site help desk for employees during weekday working hours.

The unanimously approved consent agenda included an item to outsource vote-by-mail ballot mailings to the Missouri-based company Knowink. Its processes will enable residents to track their ballots as they move through the mail.

The meeting’s only absence was Vice-Chairman Mike Harris; one vacancy in District 2 must be filled at the July meeting. Members adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

———— Chris Kaergard, Observer



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
2024-25**

Connie Romanus, President
president@lwgp.org

Sean Koors, Treasurer
Jim Runyon, Secretary

Hind Abi-akar Kristie Collier Andy Diaz Beth Jensen Chris Kaergard
Theresa Koehler Sue Russell Brooke Sommerville Dottie Strickler Joan Wojcikewych

Newsletter
Chris Kaergard
ckaergard@gmail.com