



VOTER

Volume 2007-2008, Number 4

October 17,2007

CALENDAR

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NOVEMBER 2007

- 4 **Tuesday Topics** – Lunch 11:30, am. Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library,
Marsha Nielson, Exec. Dir. KS. Health Policy Association
MENU: BBQ Beef Sandwich, Baked Beans, Potato Salad, Brownies and Beverages

- 13 **LWVT/SC Board Meeting** – Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library,
Upstairs meeting room, all members welcome 11:30 – 1:00.

- 15 **Governmental Issues Dinner** – McFarland's Restaurant (basement), 4133 SW Gage Center Dr., 5:30,
Make your reservations with Maryanna Quilty, see information in the VOTER.

DECEMBER 2007

- 4 **Tuesday Topics** – Lunch 11:30 am, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library,
Pat Stinson, "First Ladies II",
MENU: Cream of Broccoli Soup, Assorted Deli Meat Tray with Homemade Buns, Assorted Cookies and Beverages

- 11 **LWVT/SC Board Meeting** – Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library,
Upstairs meeting room, all members welcome, 11:30 – 1:00

- 14 **VOTER deadline.** Send Articles to Lois Cox : lois5510@hotmail.com

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of public issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Prez Sez



Georgia Sandlin
President LWVT/SC

One of the more popular activities of the League has become the election of the mayor of an elementary school in Topeka. This year we were welcomed to Low-

man Hill School by Principal Russ Hutchins. Thanks to the work of Bob Harder and the expertise of the school staff the activity takes only a small part of the school day but teaches a big lesson.

I have been impressed by how the attitudes and behaviors of the students are a reflection of our adult society. Here are some of the comments I have heard. "I don't know any of these people." "I'm not going to vote for her, she's mean." "Who should I vote for?" "Do I have to vote?" "Why are we doing this?" "That's my sister but I'm not going to vote for her." "I like all of them."

As they parade by us, the girls with their "Girl Power" shirts and the boys with their baggy pants, we are re-

minded that they are just starting this process but we have heard the same statements from adults. Being a member of the League, I believe they will learn why they vote and who they are voting for. I believe they will make an effort to learn about the candidates and assist in the electoral process. I believe this because the League and teachers and principals are here to help them learn how to safeguard democracy by voting. And they will have started the process at Lowman Hill School.

Georgia Sandlin

November-December
2007

LEAGUE MEMBERS

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS

November 15, 2007 at 5:30 PM

McFarland's Restaurant

The League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County invites the Shawnee County Legislative Delegation to a social gathering and dinner to discuss the issues of the 2008 Legislature

Buffet with choices of meats, vegetables and desserts

\$16.00

Make your reservations with Maryanna Quilty 234-6925

mquilty@cox.net

You may pay at the door but reservations need to be to Maryanna by November 13. McFarland's basement is handicap accessible. Enter by the south door and take the elevator.

SHAWNEE COUNTY COMMISSION MEETINGS

August 23 – October 11, 2007

by Georgia Sandlin

Since the VOTER is published every other month the LWVTSC Board felt the notes from Shawnee County Commission meetings were sometimes not relevant when published. For this VOTER I will attempt to summarize the relevant issues that were addressed since August 23. The notes from individual meetings are posted on our web site soon after each meeting. If you prefer the other format let us know.

In August the commissioners approved the budget for 2008. Folks were mighty proud to report that property taxes would go down. On the flip side Jim Olson, executive director of Community Resources Council, expressed his frustration at having to beg for money for social services each year.

The hassle over merging the IT departments with the city of Topeka was winding down. Commissioners Ensley and Miller continued to stress their willingness to combine the departments.

It is probably a coincidence that the agenda of the Shawnee County Commission meeting on

September 10 stretched to three pages when Commissioner Miller was absent. Three requests for out-of-town travel were approved with few questions.

The baseball field at Lake Shawnee is expected to cost \$921,000, but, the artificial turf is expected to be cost efficient and save the county \$150,000 over time. September 24 brought the report from Rodney Ferguson that the county recycling department is losing money. Action by the commissioners to increase fees was delayed until legal work is completed.

Shawnee County was commended by the Sierra Club and Kansas Energy Office for making commitments to be more energy efficient. Just as the commissioners were appearing politically correct the folks from Valencia Road came back. The agreement between the citizens of the area and the county is not clear. Rural water services to a resident were in question. Commissioners Ensley and Miller again sided with Kansas Sand and Commissioner Buhler voted for the literal transla-

tion and the people of Valencia Road

On October 4 the Commissioners adopted a resolution that exempts property from the platting process that, by law, is subject to the city's building and zoning laws. The city will probably be looking at this issue.

Meetings on October 8 and 11 saw a dispute arise when Marti Leisinger, Shawnee County financial administrator, recommended switching county banking services from CoreFirst to US Bank. County Treasurer, Larry Wilson, objected (with a list of reasons) to no avail. Commissioner Buhler wanted more information but the vote went 2-1. Lo and behold the subject appeared again, at Commissioner Buhler's request at the following commission meeting with officials from CoreFirst Bank in attendance. Commissioner Miller moved that the discussion be deferred once again so more parties could get into the mix. By the time you read this the issue will be settled

One Way to Help the League

Nobody knows better than members how thoughtful and important is the work of the League. We have always tackled difficult topics with impartial and thorough scrutiny. This year we will undertake immigration at the national level, water resources at the state level, and, having completed our work on mental health, will soon

choose a new topic at the local level.

Your dues and participation are highly valued. Your financial support is also needed. The \$53 annual dues are divided as follows: \$26.80 to national; \$20 to the state; only \$6.20 to the Topeka League.

Your dues should be sent to Sybil Wiegman, Treasurer, 2805 SW Tallgrass Drive, Topeka, KS 66614-6 0 2 6

Your contribution in addition to your dues will be greatly appreciated and put to good use. Please send your "dues" to Sybil Wiegman, Treasurer.

Your donations made by check, to help the League should be made out to LWV Topeka Shawnee County and mailed to me, Diana Siegal at 900 SW 31st St. Apt 339, Topeka, KS 66611.

Thank you, Diana Siegal, Chair,

PROCEEDINGS OF THE TOPEKA CITY COUNCIL FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

The hot topics for August were the 2008 budget, possible merger of the City and County departments of informational technology (IT), purchase of a new helicopter, and the leak of the Council's confidential evaluation of Bonaparte's performance for the previous three months.

The 2008 budget finally passed on August 21st by a five-to-four vote shortly after midnight after six hours of deliberation. \$700,000 for the proposed Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software was deleted from the budget, and Bonaparte was directed to decrease salaries in City departments by \$300,000 (excluding police and fire departments) and \$200,000 in capital expenses or upgrades from his 2008 budget. The Council passed the Harmon Amendment restoring funds to many social agencies that had been previously removed in Bonaparte's proposed budget and rejected numerous other attempts to cut the budget. The approved budget called for a 1.68 mill increase in the property tax, estimated to increase by \$19.32 on each \$100,000 of appraised evaluation of property. The 2008 budget included \$150,000 for the first payment on a new helicopter; if this money

is not used for the purchase, then it could pay for the maintenance for the 1994 Schweitzer helicopter.

At the same meeting, the Council voted in favor of a motion allowing the expenditure of up to \$2000 to investigate the leaking of the Council's confidential evaluation of Bonaparte's previous three month performance.

The possible merger of the City and County departments of IT continued to make news during August.

On August 28th, the Council decided to purchase the Lawson ERP software for \$3,900,000 to be paid for over six years. The County Commission had previously voted to go with a similar system from Sungard. The City employees involved in this decision felt that a merger of the City-County departments of IT was still possible, and further, the Council once again reaffirmed its directive for Bonaparte to pursue further negotiations around this issue with the County. On August 27th, County Commissioners Ensley and Milner sent a letter to Council members and the mayor indicating that they were amenable to a merger but had reservations with a City-operated merged IT department.

Later in the week, Mayor Buntun vetoed the purchase of the Larson ERP software because of receiving many phone calls against its purchase. At a Council meeting lasting about ten minutes on September 5th, its members overrode the Mayor's veto by a seven-to-two margin. The City will implement its ERP system on January 7th, 2008, and will not make a lease payment for IT out of the 2008 budget.

In September, the conflict between Fire Chief Giles and the firemen flared into the open. The firefighters' union held a vote on September 12th and 13th on the ability of the fire chief to lead the department. The decision was overwhelmingly in favor of no confidence in the fire chief. Subsequently, the Council instructed the city manager to meet with the conflicting parties. The city manager has consistently backed Fire Chief Giles and Bonaparte's interventions seemingly have yielded little change in the parties' motions. In another development, the steelworkers' union has backed the firemen. Thus, October should prove an interesting month regarding this issue.

(Proceedings of the Topeka City Council for August and September Continued from page 4)

On September 10th, before the Council's policy and finance committee, City Attorney Brenden Long and Mayor Bunten proposed an ordinance to require out-of-town landlords to be represented by a local agent and to face stiffer penalties if not in compliance. Apparently other cities were successful in implementing such a policy. Local landlords have expressed opposition to this proposal.

By Joe Sargent

VOTER

Consensus Meeting

Immigration Voice Meeting

January 17, 2008

Sun's Restaurant

IMMIGRATION STUDY VOICE

The Immigration Study Committee Voice Meeting was held on 9/20/07, at Sun's Restaurant, fifteen members were in attendance.

The format followed was based upon a discussion of six preview study questions from the National LWV. Each question was read aloud, and background information was shared with the group by the Committee. The respondents were asked to rate each item, High Priority, Low Priority, or Disagree. The first four questions contained several items to be considered.

Question I: Federal Immigration Laws should take into consideration the Following:

The respondents were asked to consider each item in terms of priority, and then rate the responses in terms of Rank Importance.

Results were as follows, in Rank Order:

1. Rights of all workers to a safe working conditions and a livable wage. Family unification also important.
2. Rights of all individuals in the United States to fair treatment under the law.
3. Economic and Business needs should be considered along with humanitarian causes.

Question II: Un-authorized Immigrants currently in the U.S. should be treated as follows;

Results were as follows, based upon High Priority, Low Priority, Disagree;

High Priority: All allowed to earn legal adjustment status by doing things such as, paying taxes, learning to speak English, study in civics, etc.

Low Priority: Some deported/ some allowed to stay, earn legal

adjustment status based on needs of U.S. Employers.

Disagree: Assess fines before allowed to earn legal adjustment status.

Question III: Federal Immigration Laws should provide efficient, expeditious, system with minimal delays or no backlog for legal entry into the US for Immigrants who are;

High Priority: Entering the US because of persecution in their country.

Low Priority: Entering US to meet Labor needs.

Disagree: None

Question IV: In order to deal more effectively with unauthorized immigrants, federal law should include;

National Industry Card or Social Security Card.

Disagree: All disagree

Federal Immigration law dealing with unauthorized immigrants should be enforced by including;

High Priority: A program allowing immigrants to go in and out of the US to meet seasonal and sporadic needs.

Low Priority: More effective tracking of people with non-immigrant visas until they leave the country.

Disagree: Fences and other barriers would help.

Question V: Federal Immigration Law should address and balance long term financial benefits from immigrants with the cost to federal and state government.

Result: All agree

Question VI: Federal Immigration law should be coordinated

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

with US foreign policy to pro-actively help improve economic, education, and job opportunities and living conditions in the nations with large emigrating populations.

Topeka/Shawnee County League of Women Voters

Board Briefs

12 October 2007

Summary

The group agreed that all workers should have a safe work environment and should have equal rights under the law, and that family unification was important, and economic issues should be considered in balance with humanitarian issues. The group did not like the idea of a national ID card. The respondents agreed that some legal status could be earned by learning to speak English, paying taxes, etc. Few liked the idea of monetary fines. Seasonal migration as needed was approved; however, fences and other barrier would not be effective.

There was unanimous agreement that Federal Immigration Law should balance economic contribution that immigrants provide against the cost to federal and state government.

There was total agreement that Federal Immigration Law should be considered, and coordinated with US foreign policies, and there should be an effort to pro-actively improve the economic conditions in other countries, particularly those countries with large emigrating populations.

Many diverse aspects of the Immigration issue were discussed, and a lively discussion followed on all the issues raised.

At the September Board Meeting, it was learned that:

- The net profit from the annual membership event was \$55.55.
- New members included Susan Farley, Dr. Ira Stamm, Dina Cox, Donna Brohaugh, Nancy Kirk, Claudia Larkin, Brenda Guilfoyle, Philicia McKee, Gloria Barron, and Jan Nuzman.
- The October 20 Advocacy Training will be held at the Community Room at Brewster East, located at 900 S.W. Thirty-First Street on the ground floor, from 10:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M.

Lois Scibetta is chairing a committee to develop ways to attract younger members.

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- Lois Scibetta is chairing a committee to develop ways to attract younger members. attract younger members.

A document titled "League Lingo" will be given to new members.

- Tuesday Topics Speaker on November 6.
- The Governmental Issues Dinner will be held November 15 beginning at 5:30 P.M. at McFarland's Restaurant.
- A document titled "League Lingo" will be given to new members.

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
Lois Cox, VOTER EDITOR
910 SE 43rd Street
Topeka, Kansas 66609-1620

I want to add my voice to yours by joining the League of Women Voters. I enclose:

_____ \$53 for a 1 year individual Membership

_____ \$75 for a 1 year Household Membership

_____ \$83 for a 1 year Sustaining Membership

_____ \$25 for a 1 year Student (age 18) Membership

_____ I am unable to join the League at this time, but enclosed is a tax-deductible

Contribution In the amount of \$_____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Please make check payable to League of Women Voters Topeka Shawnee County and

Send to Sybil Wiegand, Treasurer, 2805 SW Tall Grass DR., Topeka, KS 66614-6026

(785) 478-1679