



VOTER

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CALENDAR

MAY 2008

**6 Tuesday Topics -
Topeka and Shawnee
County Public Library,
11:30**

Speaker – Representa-
tive from Westar – Coal fired
plants

MENU: Quiche, Tossed
Salad with Dressings, Rolls &
Butter, Assorted Cookies,
Beverages

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

JUNE 2008

**3 Tuesday Topics – O'Doo-
ley's, 1930 SW Westport Dr.,
11:30**

Speaker – “The Don and
Judy Show”, Don and Judy Moler
fill us in on happenings in the
legislature during the 2008 Ses-
sion

MENU: To be announced

**6 Drop off items and pricing
for the Garage Sale, 2706 SW
Indian Trail, 10:00-2:00**

MENU: Whatever we or-
der.

**7 Garage Sale – 2706 SW In-
dian Trail, 8:00-1:00**

**10 LWVT/SC Board Meet-
ing** – Topeka and Shawnee
County Public Library, upstairs
meeting room, all members
welcome, 11:30-1:00.

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

On April 10 Nancy Kirk and I attended "An Afternoon with Tom Brokaw" at the Dole Institute in Lawrence. Some of his

remarks were very pertinent to the mission of the League of Women Voters. We would like to think that we have come a long way from the days when property owners were the ones with the right to vote. As Mr. Brokaw pointed out, our election system has become so convoluted, and varies so much from one area of the country to another that he characterized it as "broken and inconsistent". As I was listening I was reminded of the League's position on the selection of the president. I'm having it

printed in this VOTER to remind all of us.

Mr. Brokaw places the responsibility of what happens in this country on its citizens. This is where we step into the picture. Just as he points with pride to the "Greatest Generation" and their commitment to service he said our future rests with the citizens of this country. Unfortunately, it won't happen just because we want it to. Action is needed and it can take place here in Topeka as well as Washington DC.

Georgia

LWVTSC GARAGE SALE

JUNE 7, 2007

8:00-1:00

2706 SW INDIAN TRAIL

HERE IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO DONATE THOSE NICE ITEMS YOU NO LONGER USE.

BRING YOUR ITEMS TO 2706 SW INDIAN TRAIL ON **JUNE 6**

PLEASE HAVE YOUR ITEMS PRICED

SELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Selection of the President, as Announced by National Board, January 1970, Revised March 1982 and Updated June 2004.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential elections system – from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

COUNTY COMMISSION REPORT

GEORGIA SANDLIN reporter

February 21, 2008

Sometimes business flows at the Shawnee County Commission meeting and sometimes it stops where one would least expect it. No action was taken on a resolution to name a short street, NW Stover Rd. in cooperation with the city of Topeka.

Anne Freeze, Shawnee County Health Agency, would like the purchasing for the health agency to remain within that department because the agency's supplies are so different from other county purchases. There was some discussion but I know this has been resolved.

If you build in the county that doesn't necessarily mean the road will come. There

is a resolution that will require anyone who builds on minimum-maintenance road to sign an understanding that the road will not receive more maintenance just because the residence is there.

February 28, 2008

Anyone entering the Shawnee County Courthouse must pass through the security apparatus. Sheriff Barta has proposed another plan for the security station at the south entrance to the courthouse. The commissioners approved the sheriff's request to solicit bids. Commissioner Miller expressed reservations that the change would warrant the expense.

Steve Bolton, of the refuse department, saw his request to purchase a warranty for a one-ton pickup hit the wall. The price of the warranty was left out of the original request. The request was deferred. *County Commission continued on page 4*

Commission continued from page 3

We may not learn the rest of the story.

Under "Administrative Communications" Commissioner Ensley proposed that the county write a letter to the Topeka City Council with an offer to lease or manage Cypress Ridge Gold Course. Mr. Eckert, Shawnee County Counselor, noted that the letter was already written and in his file from the last time the offer was made.

March 3, 2008

The little flap over the naming of Stover Road was resolved in a happy way. The Stover family stepped forward to report that Commissioner Miller need not fear. The Stover family is indeed law-abiding and from distinguished ancestors. Two family members attended the county commission meeting and thanked the commission for honoring them.

A bulk of the meeting was given to a power point by Barry Beagle of the planning department. Mr. Beagle explained the resolution under consideration regarding the size of accessory buildings relating to the size of the property. The current zoning is applied more to an urban setting relating the

size of the accessory building to the home on the property. The vote on the change of this zoning will be taken on March 17.

March 10, 2008

The agenda for this meeting covered two and one half pages, which illustrates how much business stacks up when one meeting is skipped. The previous Thursday meeting was not held because Commissioner Buhler was in Washington DC with other government officials asking for money from Senators Brownback and Roberts and Representative Boyda.

Requests for maintenance, travel, new employees, purchases were approved in routine fashion, with few questions. Three items of business may be of interest. First, Libby Ensley of the elections office was asking to rent more space in anticipation of the election year's activities. Second, Marti Leisinger, of the finance office was asking for a policy to be set as to who would authorize the use of the county credit cards. The third was a request that a moratorium would be placed on new software requests until the the completion of the mainframe transition. The third request met some resistance from department

heads until they had reassurance from the commissioners that the regular business of the county would not be disrupted. The commissioners would be free to approve exceptions to the moratorium if the need arises.

Updates were given to the commissioners on the status of the Mainframe transition, Sungard project, and Orion project. All were reported to be OK and on time.

March 20, 2008

Even though the zoning rules proposed were less restrictive regarding the size of accessory buildings built in the county some people still were not happy with the changes. Several of those people came to address the commission. County planning director, Barry Beagle, presented the commission with regulations more appropriate to a rural setting now that the planning commissions of Topeka and Shawnee County have been operating separately. Commissioners Buhler and Miller have indicated they are in favor of the changes. Commissioner Ensley sees no need for restrictions on size. After some minor changes the final resolution will be placed on the consent agenda for the March 27

continued on page 5

continued from page 4

commission meeting.

March 24, 2008

Tom Welch has retired from the employ of Shawnee County after 25 years. Tom worked in Emergency Management. He received a plague, handshakes and wishes of good luck this March morning.

The meeting wrapped up shortly thereafter. Fees for Sherwood Regional Wastewater Treatment System have been combined by resolution. Also approved was the purchase of software and two front loader chassis.

April 3, 2008

The commission meeting started with a big congratulations to the Topeka Road Runners for winning the South Division of the North American Hockey League. Some of the players were at the meeting as well as coaches and management.

The meeting clicked along with approval of purchases, bids and contracts. The flow was slowed when Commissioner Miller questioned the purchase of a Blackberry for the Deputy Director of Emergency Management and the purchase of two Polk City Directories

Subscriptions. The Blackberry purchase was approved 2-0, the directories purchase was deferred.

April 7, 2008

This Monday's meeting lasted less than 10 minutes minus the 90 minutes allowed for executive session. Dave Sterbenz will serve on the Northeast Regional Council, which distributes homeland security money. The commission also approved the use of credit cards and the filling of a vacancy in the health agency.

Georgia Sandlin, reporter

ENERGY AND OUR WATER RESOURCES

“ The local committee for the State Study on Water management as Related to Power Production and Alternative Energy Sources has submitted these articles to help us understand this issue. We appreciate that we have had such informative speakers at Tuesday Topics. We look toward a Concurrent Statement of position in September. Committee members are: Lea Billinger, Gwen Elliot, Carol Jory, Lucy Demonchaux, Jo Ann Meyers, Georgia Sandlin and co chairs Marge Ahrens and Nancy Sargent.”

THE REPORT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS COMMENTS ARE ON PAGE 6; DEFINITIONS ARE ON PAGE 7; AND THE CLIMATE + ENERGY PROJECT IS ON PAGE 8 AND 9 of the VOTER

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

1. The production of energy, no matter what the process with the exceptions of solar, wind power, and landfill gas, requires significant amounts of water. Producing current levels of electricity from fossil fuels and nuclear energy uses 39% of the freshwater withdrawals in the US. Although the US population is expected to rise dramatically while freshwater supplies are not, there is no current national program directed to understanding the relationship between energy production and water. By Gwen Elliott from Sandia National Laboratories: Energy-Water Nexus Water Resource Use/lean Energy/US EPA
2. Conservation and encouragement of renewable are included in our League positions on energy, water, environmental quality and land use planning and zoning. Energy conservation lowers water usage and water conservation lowers energy use. Unfortunately conservation is not often addressed in the current debates about energy in Kansas; it should be a part of our new position on Water Management as related to Power Production and Alternative Energy Sources. By Jo Ann Meyers
3. In some parts of the world, water is like air -you take it for granted. Not Kansas. There has always been a need for Kansas to negotiate water rights, and this has led to one of the most complete (or something) water law systems in the nation. By Lea Billinger.
4. Demand for corn for ethanol production raised the commodity price over \$10 a bushel which in turn raised food prices dependent on corn, such as corn oil and meal, poultry, pork and beef. Ethanol production uses one million gallons of water a day which can be recycled, but contains pollutants. Raising corn also pollutes and uses a lot of diesel and water. Ethanol cannot be distributed through pipe lines, only hauled from production plants to distribution centers raising the price and causing exhaust problems from trucks. By Carol Jory
5. Fuel extract and refining consume water and often affect water quality. The choice of methods of producing energy determines the amount of additional water used and altered by its use. Thermoelectric power generation affects water oxygen levels and temperature, with nuclear power consuming the most water, then coal, then natural gas. Air emissions from fuel combustion can affect downwind aquatic ecosystems and water quality. By Marge Ahrens
6. The Committee has added a list of words and phrases that are used in the CEP climate + energy project resource material that is enclosed on pages 8 and 9 of the voter. The definitions appear on page 7 of the Voter. The CEP climate + energy project resource material is enclosed on pages 8 and 9 of the Voter.

DEFINITIONS

1. Grey water: Water that does not contain toilet discharge; it is water from washing clothes, dishes; from showers etc and makes up 50-80% of residential water waste. It may be used for watering lawns and for some irrigation.
2. Aquifer: Underground soil or rock through which ground water can easily move. We have the High Plains Aquifer, called the Ogallala, and the Ogallala Beds.
3. Ground Water: Supply of fresh water found beneath the Earth's surface in aquifers.
4. Water Table: Level of ground water; level of water in an aquifer; boundary of the saturated/unsaturated zones of water.
5. Acre foot: Covers an acre one foot deep in water.
6. CPR-Conservation Reserve Program

In the Farm bill-provides technical and financial aid to farmers/ranchers to address soil and water concerns in environmentally beneficial and cost effective manner. For example: riparian buffers of native grass; conversion of erodible crop land to buffer zones.

7. CRP-Conservation Reserve enhancement Program:

Much like CRP except that the land is taken permanently out of production; includes water rights being permanently retired.

8. Net Metering

Agreement between a utility and an owner for banking excess power produced by a wind or solar system in the electric grid. With wind this spins the meter backwards thus banking the electricity until needed by the customer. If net metering is not allowed, the utility can purchase the surplus electricity at a lower, wholesale rate.

TOPEKA CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

from February, to April 1, 2008

Joe Sargent, reporter

As I sit down to write, much is happening in our community. On April 4th near midnight the Robinson R44 police helicopter developed suspected mechanical failure and crashed, landing in a parking lot on the Washburn campus. Fortunately, the two police officers and a passenger in the helicopter sustained no serious injuries. The helicopter was extensively damaged. Earlier that same day Mayor Bunten issued two vetoes against the purchase of a second Robinson R44 helicopter and the Enterprise Resource Center, both of which were reauthorized by the council on April 1st.

During February and March the purchase of the second Robinson helicopter continued to garner headlines. On February 5th the council voted down a proposal by council member Haynes to suspend the rules so that the council could consider voiding the purchase of the second helicopter. The vote was four to four with six votes needed for passage.

In late February the issue of whether the Kansas Open Meetings Act was violated by the council in December was discussed by a Kansas Senate committee. What concerned the senators was the telephoning by councilperson Blackburn of four other council members before

the council's vote on December 4th regarding a communication allowing the purchase of the helicopter. It is not clear whether the Senate committee took up the matter further.

Interim city attorney Copley on March 18th informed the council that lease-purchase agreements for the helicopter and the Enterprise Resource Center did not conform to Kansas cash-basis law (Kansas Statutes 10-1116b and 10-1116c). Councilperson Haynes brought this to the attention of the city's legal department. Kansas Statute 10-1116b prohibits a city entering into a lease-purchase agreement without stating specifically that the entity is obligated only to make periodic payments on monthly installments. Kansas Statute 10-1116c requires that the language in the lease purchase agreement extending beyond the current fiscal year (if paid by cash) state the cost of the item, the yearly interest cost, and the amount of other costs excluding the actual cost of the item and interest. Because of these concerns Copley prepared two resolutions to be considered on April 1st.

(City Council continued on page 11)

(City Council continued from page 10)

On April 1st the council voted five to four in favor of both resolutions but neither of these votes exceeded the votes needed to override the promised mayoral vetoes. Of significance, the president and chief executive officer of Municipal Services Group (MSG), Don Stevens, attended this council meeting; MSG is the finance company backing both purchases. He stated that if entities such as Topeka backed out of financial agreements, there would be consequences stretching far into the future. It was estimated by the city administration that the mayoral vetoes would cost the city one million dollars.

The alleged violation of Topeka's code of ethics by councilperson Alcalá came before the council on February 12th. The vote to consider the possible violation was rejected by the council. Alcalá did not attend the council meeting.

During public testimony on February 12th Lieutenant Randy Philips of the Topeka Fire Department expressed concerns that for the first time in the department's history positions for battalion chiefs and shift commanders were open to applicants outside the department. Firemen continue to attend council meetings in considerable numbers.

Money in this year's budget for a planned fire station in District 9 was diverted to street repairs that were not in the 2008 capital improvement budget. Two million dollars were taken from the appropriation for the fire station and this left \$500,000 in this fiscal year for site location, design, and engineering work of the planned fire station. An additional \$620,000 budgeted for replacement of traffic signals this year was added to the two million. Council member Harmon, the representative for the 9th District, insisted that he wanted two million dollars appropriated in 2009 for the new fire station.

The Cypress Ridge Golf Course continued to be in the red in 2007 and so various options regarding its future are currently under consideration.

The developers for the revitalization of the College Hill area missed a December 31st deadline in 2007 to complete the project. The council on March 4th granted them a one year extension to December 31st, 2008 to finish the project.

BOARD BRIEFS

1. State Council will be April 26 at the Topeka High School Library.
2. The June, July and August Tuesday Topics meetings will be held at O'Dooley's Restaurant.
3. The Annual garage sale will be held at the home of Georgia Sandlin on June 7.
4. Georgia Sandlin is asking for a volunteer to serve on one of the city's Visioning committees and to attend the Safe Streets meetings the first Wednesday of each month at the Overland Station.
5. A committee will be formed to review all positions for any needed updates.
6. Members are asked to tell the president their good ideas for increasing attendance at the annual meetings.

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

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