



VOTER

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CALENDAR

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Inside this issue:	
Board briefs	3
City Council	4
County Commission	5
July Program	3
August Program	3
Prez Sez	2
July Tuesday Topics	2
50 Year MEMBERS	7

JULY 2009

**7 Tuesday Topics -
YWCA, 11:30**

Speaker - Norton
Bonaparte, Topeka City Manager will speak on city consolidation issues.

MENU: Baked chicken on a bed of wild rice, chef's choice of vegetable & dessert, rolls and ice tea.

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

AUGUST 2009

**4 Tuesday Topics –
Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, 11:30**

Speaker, Vic Miller, Shawnee County Commissioners chairman will speak on county consolidation issues.

MENU: Fruit plate with chicken salad, roll, butter, and pie.

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
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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



Gwen Elliott
President LWVT/SC

Thanks so much to all the Leaguers who helped make our annual garage sale a success! Edith Bronson, Pat Stinson, Georgia Sandlin, Alta Morris, and Carol Yoho spent many hours sorting, organizing, and pricing items to sell. Lois Scibetta sent merchandise for the sale. Nancy Kindling, Lois Decker,

Betsu and Rpm Rohleder, Barbara McCandless, and Allyn Lockner made extra trips across town to deliver goods, and Nancy Wagner, Georgia Sandlin, Diana Siegal, Jan Waide, Betsy Rohleder, Barbara McCandless, Allyn Lockner, Maryanna Quilty, Georgia Sandlin, and Sue Gaither worked hard the day of the sale. Georgia and Teresa Stambough made trips to Goodwill and the Rescue Mission, respectively, with the leftovers, and Jan Waide drove back across town to retrieve her tables, which were very useful. We gave our customers some great bargains and still cleared \$345, about \$90 less than past sales in years when the economy was better.

The next challenge of the month is our League's participation in LWVUS's Virtual Council on June 13th, 2009. At

this writing, we have reserved the Marvin Auditorium, Room 101A at the T/SC Public Library, but it is not available until 1:30 p.m. The Council starts at 12:00 noon, so we are working out time and technological problems. Stay tuned and please remember that Carol Yoho makes every attempt to post the latest news on our web site.

Our faithful observers have been following the fate of the proposal to merge the Parks and Recreation Departments of Shawnee County and the City of Topeka. Future Tuesday Topics speakers may help us study the pros and cons of the proposal, which the City Council has just rejected.

Enjoy a little relaxation this summer if you possibly can!

July luncheon for Tuesday topics

PLEASE NOTE

We plan on at least 25 people at luncheon for Tuesday topics. We have a contract and guarantee that we will have at least 25 people at the luncheon. We must pay for a minimum of 25 meals. For July the cost is \$10.00 per person and the cost of the room is free if we have 25 people eating. Please plan to join us for a good program, a nice meal and great conversation.

July Tuesday Topic Program
Norton Bonaparte Speaks on Consolidation

In the “wake” of the refusal of the Topeka City Council to accept the most recent city/county parks consolidation proposal under consideration Norton Bonaparte, Topeka City Manager will address the LWVTSC at the **YWCA** at 225 SW 12th at Tuesday Topics on July 7. Mr. Bonaparte has 22 years of experience in city administrative positions, and has served as the city manager for Topeka since March, 2006. He oversees department operations and personnel functions, recommends the city budget, administers capital improvement programs, prepares City Council agendas, and acts as liaison for the city with citizens, businesses, community organizations and governmental agencies. He will talk about consolidation issues from the **point of view of the city** and answer questions which LWV observers have generated for the occasion. Come at 11:30AM for lunch or 12:00PM for presentation only and bring **your** attitudes and questions. See if they get adjusted!

August Tuesday Topic Program
Vic Miller Talks about City/County Consolidation Matters

The LWVSC has long stood in support of city/consolidation. (See your gold book for details). Vic Miller, Washburn Law School Graduate, former representative in the Kansas House of Representatives, Topeka City Council member, Deputy Mayor and now in his 4th term on the Shawnee County Commission will speak at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library at Tuesday Topics, August 3 on consolidation issues from the **point of view of the county**. League observers of city and county government are generating questions which Mr. Miller will answer to guide the discussion. Lunch is at 11:30AM followed by Mr. Miller’s presentation. Let’s refresh our views and deepen our reality on this tough issue!

Board Briefs by Mary Kopp, secretary

June 9, 2009 LWV Board meeting – 10 board members were present. Diana Siegal also came, and spoke about an upcoming event: Paula Doress Worters, who edited the book Mistress of Herself, the Letters of Ernestine L. Rose, will speak at Temple Beth Shalom October 26, '09. Rose was an early women’s rights leader.

The LWV garage sale was June 6, it made \$345 (which was less than last year.)

Virtual Council will take place June 13 starting at noon our time. We will connect with our national group by computer from Marvin Auditorium at the Topeka Public Library. This should last about 4 hours, all are welcome and can come and go. (Our leadership formerly traveled to Washington D.C. for this event.)

City-county consolidation was discussed. City Manager Bonaparte will be Tuesday Topics speaker July 7, and may be asked to speak on consolidation. Tentatively, Vic Miller may be invited to speak from the county’s point-of-view in August.

The lunch fund is very low. When we meet at the YWCA, many don’t eat; we lost money in June. The library and the Y increase charges periodically. The board moved to secure \$50 to cover the emergency.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE TOPEKA CITY COUNCIL BY JOE SARGENT

On April 14th the new city council elected council member Richard Harmon as deputy mayor and elected other council members to various other posts.

The council early on needed to start evaluating a proposal passed by them on March 17th merging the county and city parks and recreation departments since the county commission was seriously considering the offer. The plan supported by the county commission called for the city to transfer 80% of the parks and recreation budget [slightly over \$5.7 million] in 2010 to the county followed by 60% in 2011, 40% in 2012, 20% in 2013, and 0% in 2014. The county would not assume any of the city's debts associated with its parks and recreation department and the Cypress Ridge Golf Course. The deeds to properties owned by the city would be turned over to the county but contained a clause stating that if these properties were not used for park and recreation purposes they would again become city property. All city employees affected by the merger would become county employees on January 1, 2010. On May 18th Topeka's parks and recreation director, Terry Bartels, recommended that the council reject the proposal. The council postponed a vote on the merger for one week to June 9th.

In April the Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority board stated that it needed a capital infusion in order to prevent cuts in services. Council member Swank on May 5th introduced a proposed charter ordinance to raise the Transit Authority's current mill levy cap of 3 mills to a maximum of 5 mills for one year. In order to accomplish this at that late date, the council had to suspend the rules so that the charter ordinance could have two readings by law which occurred on May 5th and May 12th. Legally after the two readings, it was necessary to allow 61 days for protest petitions before July 17th, the city's deadline for publication of its 2010 property tax levy. On May 12th, at the time of the second reading, the city's governing body passed the charter ordinance by getting the necessary seven votes after much debate. There was considerable public testimony by users of the bus service in favor of the charter ordinance. The council will determine in July how much of the cap that they will give the Transit Authority.

Also on May 12th the council ratified the two ballot questions passed by Topekans on April 2nd—the half-cent sales tax increase and the override of a mayoral veto by the council.

The council on April 28th approved the creation of a tax-increment financing district that comprises the area south of S.W. 37th Street along

Both sides of Topeka Boulevard plus the White Lakes Mall. However, the County commission rejected the creation of this district because the city failed to notify two school districts which had property in the district and they would be affected by the creation of the tax-increment financing district. A city spokesperson said that it was an oversight by the staff and another draft of the proposal would be circulated.

Once again the council will be asked to authorize the purchase of the \$3.75 million Larson Enterprise Resource Planning Software System. Mayor Buntin was unhappy when he learned that he was not eligible to veto this request since he cannot cast a veto on measures that require his vote as a member of the governing body.

Council member Alcalá is presently looking for five council votes in favor of firing city manager Boneparte. The local NAACP chapter is supporting the city manager.

The city's administration is currently working on the 2010 budget which will be made more difficult because of a drop in the city's assessed property valuation.

NOTES ON COUNTY COMMISSION MEETINGS

BY GEORGIA SANDLIN

April 20, 2009

The clothing-free facility in Shawnee County appeared again under "Unfinished Business" and was, what do you know, deferred again for more information from the health agency.

Out-of -state travel was approved b for use by someone the DA's office.

The announcement that Topeka will host the Kansas Kids Wrestling was met with smiles as this event will bring lots of money to Shawnee County. Wichita was the main competition.

Commissioner Buhler reported that a meeting on the Highway 24 corridor resulted in another study being requested. The first plan was very unpopular with business owners because the access to their businesses was diverted from the more visual frontage road to a road not easily visible from Highway 24.

April 23, 2009

Steve Bolton, Refuse/ Recycling, was back before the commission for a request to create two new positions in the Recycling Department. According to Mr. Bolton the prices for materials are creeping back up at the same time that the county is collecting more material. His request was granted.

Tom Vlach, public

works, was next. There was some discussion about awarding a bid for a 7-year capital equipment lease package. The discussion seemed to involve big equipment. Apparently, when bids come in they always don't match the specifications requested so the choice involves different variables from each bidder. A decision was deferred until the commissioners could talk to an attorney in executive session.

Residents in the Lake Sherwood area had some issues this morning. One issue was the silt that runs off construction sites into the lake, or on the roads, or both. Currently, the means of enforcing the violations take up to 30 days and then fines are assessed per day. Commissioners would like to shorten the number of days and restrict building permits to violators. I believe the issue went to the counselor's office.

The second issue troubling the Sherwood neighborhood is the proposed new construction to handle sewage. Will the pipes go under the lake or around it? They are requesting another public meeting for information. A meeting was set for Monday at 7:00 pm.

April 27, 2009

This meeting moved quickly as resolutions and requests were approved with few

or no questions from the health agency, public works, Expocentre, and corrections. When Chad Taylor, Shawnee County D.A. stepped to the podium questions were raised. The district attorney is requesting that his assistants be allowed to carry firearms. The commissioners seemed reluctant to grant the request but decided to defer the decision until they could study a proposed plan put together by the DA, judges and other courthouse staff.

Anne Freeze reported to the commissioners the current status of the Swine flu outbreak and how it relates to Shawnee County health. No reported cases so far but information is being distributed to agencies and public entities throughout the county.

April 30, 2009

This morning Bob Perry, Shawnee County Bond-Guy, came before the commission with two resolutions. One had to do with Valeo's lease and pharmaceutical services. The other had to do with Midland's Health Care facilities.

The bridge on Maple Hill Road that goes over the Kansas River needs some repair. Wabaunsee County will share the cost of repair. Pottawatomie County cont-

Commission continued on page 6

Commission continued from page 5

tends they are too far from the bridge to help with the repair. The commissioners are not arguing the point now but Commissioner Miller stated that does not mean they agree with the stand taken by Pottawatomie County.

Anne Freeze reported that there are no identified cases of the H1N1 virus in Shawnee County. The health agency is educating citizens with the information the KDHE has made available.

May 4, 2009

The planned round-a-bouts in the vicinity of NW 46th and Hwy. 75 have been moved to the fast track in anticipation of proposed stimulus funds. Resolutions were brought before the county commission to approve stop lights and eminent domain proceedings. The public works department needs to do in five months what usually takes 30 months according to Tom Vlach, head of public works.

Another tax exemption came before the commission today. This one is for Frito-Lay Inc for property involved in expansion.

Anne Freeze reported that there are no known cases of the H1N1 strain of virus in Shawnee County. She also explained the health agency's involvement with Summer camps relative to the virus.

May 11, 2009

Commissioner Ensley missed this meeting so missed the announcement by Steve Bolton that two of the county's "rear load" drivers won first and second place in a recent Trash Truck ro-

deo. Apparently, the drivers are required to back up those monster trucks with inches to spare in each side.

The two commissioners present followed the recommendations of the Planning Commission on four issues. The first involved a request by Baby Dolls to change property lines. That was denied. The second was a resolution to allow Waste Management to operate a facility to convert landfill gas to energy. It was approved with an amendment. The third was a resolution to permit establishment of a highway maintenance and storage facility. It was passed with some conditions. The fourth was a resolution to permit a sand-extraction operation on the Kansas River. Three citizens spoke in opposition, stating that the City of Topeka owned some of the land in question, but it passed.

The other issue that brought citizen testimony was during the request to solicit proposals for the Lake Shawnee Sports Complex. Larry Hill, a Ken Berry representative, took issue regarding policies determining who can use the facilities at Shawnee Sports Complex. His concerns were not addressed because only the expansion proposals were on the agenda.

May 18, 2009

Since there was no commission meeting on the previous Thursday the consent agenda contained thirteen items. Those items were quickly approved and other requests and contracts were approved with few questions until Randy Speaker addressed the commission.

Mr. Speaker was speaking, as a representative of the City of Topeka, in favor of establishing an

area along SW Topeka Blvd as a "redevelopment district". It was apparent that the area, with proposed tax-incentives, was not going to receive a quick approval from the commission because plans for the area were vague. This observer has noticed that the commissioners will give tax incentives if the return is cost effective. Both Topeka Public School District and Shawnee County would need to approve this proposed district since both would lose the tax revenue. Mr. Speaker indicated he would seek a plan so the county and city would both need to approve projects in the area.

May 21, 2009

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has some concerns that the lead in the hill where the former firing range was located may constitute some health issues. So the county must see that the proper testing is completed. Steve Bolton, of the refuse department, reported this development to the commission but the Sheriff's department may foot the bill because they were doing the shooting.

The commissioners approved the resolution that would prevent the establishment of a redevelopment district along Topeka Blvd. that was discussed at the previous meeting.

Randy Speaker indicated by a letter to the commission that the plan needed more work.

Barry Beagle, Planning Department, reported to the commission that the citizens who came before the commission concerning property along the river were actually correct when they contended the city

owned part of the land in question. The commissioners had approved a conditional use permit for sand extraction believing that the county had jurisdiction for this land. Commissioner Miller wanted to know how the county records could have reported otherwise and expects the answer on the agenda in 30 days.

May 28, 2009

The county will buy property at 2115 SW 10th for the County Health Agency. Anne Freeze reported that clients sometimes have a 3 month wait because of the lack of space. Hopefully the added space will enable the agency to see more clients and in a more timely manner. Commissioner Miller pointed out that the agency brings in revenue which will help pay off the debt.

A contract with Willis of Greater Kansas City, Inc. was approved. Willis will help craft a plan with Blue Cross and Blue Shield for county employees. Apparently, health plans are becoming so complicated consultants are hired to obtain the most efficient and cost effective plans.

Dick Kline of corrections reported that the Corrections Annex is ready for occupancy. Rich Davis of facilities reported that the facility was completed under budget. Happy faces all around.

District Attorney, Chad Taylor, returned to the commission and received a no to his request that county prosecutors be allowed to carry weapons into the Shawnee County Courthouse.

June 1, 2009

There were 13 resolutions, requests and contracts before the commissioners this morning but two issues took the most time.

The first concerned a change of zoning for the southwest corner of US 40 and Croco Road. Although the planning commission recommended the zoning change and Commissioner Buhler indicated she would agree with the planning commission Commissioners Miller and Ensley disagreed. Several citizens from the area spoke to the commission in opposition of the zoning change as they felt it would not be an improvement. As one gentleman put it, "It doesn't look good now, but this would make it worse."

The county emergency siren system was the second issue to bring forth a variety of comments. Dave Sterbenz, Emergency Management, made his recommendation as to which bid to accept for replacement of sirens. Representatives of other companies were present and took the opportunity to present their spiel to the commissioners. At about the time this observer was getting glassy-eyed from the explanations of the pros and cons Commissioner Miller moved for an executive session. It was determined at the executive session that the county counselor would negotiate and recommend which bid to accept.

June 4, 2009

This meeting was short as only 5 requests and contracts were on the agenda after the consent agenda was approved. Commissioner Ensley then asked Ann Freeze of the health agency to comment on the report in the Capital-Journal regarding the health of Shawnee County.

Shawnee County received a poor ranking. Ms Freeze explained that the criteria for this data collection included areas outside the perimeters of the health agency. She suggested that data more relevant to public health might be more helpful and scientifically reliable.

June 8, 2009

When the commissioners learned that \$30,000 of a \$350,000 culvert replacement project was the cost of a temporary traffic signal, they instructed Tom Vlach, Public Works, to look into the cost of having our own signal.

They approved a contract for actuarial services with the same company the City of Topeka uses. They approved a bid for the irrigation controllers for the Lake Shawnee Golf Course and approved a contract for armored car service.

Commissioner Miller announced that the commissioners would be invited and would attend a meeting of the whole of the city council this evening. Discussion regarding consolidation of parks and recreation is on the agenda.

50 YEAR MEMBERS

The league would like to recognize anyone who has been a member for 50 years or more. If you have been a member that long please call or e-mail Gwen Elliot (785-267-4037) or Lois Cox (785-267-5458).

**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.

_____ \$85 for a 1 year Sustaining Membership.

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_____ I am unable to join the League at this time, but enclosed is a tax-deductible
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Please make check payable to league of Women Voters Topeka Shawnee County and

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