

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TOPEKA & SHAWNEE COUNTY



Marge Ahrens,
LWVTSC President

Prez Sez

“The Role of the Federal Government in Education” focuses on our national study of the history of that role in our nation, common core standards, equity and early education. For three months our Education Committee has studied and discussed this complex issue. This Voter refers you to summaries of the major topics included in the study, and consensus questions, all of which are found on our website at LWVTSC.org In addition, paper copies of the readings and consensus questions will be available at September Tuesday Topics and by request.

We are so lucky to have experts on the critical topic “in town”. In September we’ll meet Dr. Diane Debacker, Head of the Kansas Board of Education, and in October we’ll hear from Dr. Julie Ford, Interim Superintendent of Topeka Public Schools. It will be an intense and fast track to national consensus on the topic to be used for lobbying in Congress. Mark the dates for TT and Voice meetings to inform yourself and raise your questions. You will be amazed at some of the facts.

Voter registration, particularly in light of new Kansas more restrictive voting regulations, organizes us around events where we find citizens waiting to participate in their government. See Anita Epps’ article about the results of recent efforts, and plans for nine more registration opportunities. VOLUNTEER!

I spoke to the Topeka City Council twice in support of City/County Parks and Recreation consolidation following our position, and direction from the board. Watch carefully now as the unified programs develop, and step up to any opportunity to participate in the planning! A portion of our positions on local government is included in this Voter. See our entire local positions on our website. Just type in “LWVTSC” and you’ll find them all.

In the midst of this serious effort we’re in for some fun. On September 8 at 7:00 we’ll celebrate our League membership at The Eclectic Art Showroom, 900 N. Kansas with a wine and cheese party. Bring a friend. If you have a difficult time taking a break, concentrate on the fact that even this party reflects our local League’s position on ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT! I’ll see you there. Marge Ahrens



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Consensus Questions for the National Education Study

Please refer to your "Kansas Voter" of August, 2011 for presentation and discussion of the consensus questions.

We are also making them available on our LWVTSC ([lwvtsc.org](http://www.lwvtsc.org)) website!

Then make every effort to attend the Voice meetings scheduled for 5:30-7:30PM on September 22nd and October 20th at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library!

Make the discussion lively!

<http://www.lwvtsc.org/studies/fedgovpubed/>

Which country was the first to allow women to vote in the elections? Which was the last one?

Look for the answer on another page of this issue!!!

The LWVTSC has numerous positions which we use to inform and lobby for what we have determined to be a better form for our local government. You will find all of our local positions on our web site at www.lwvtsc.com. In regard to Shawnee County government, our positions follow:

League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee

County Public Policy Positions

County government (1989, 1999, reviewed 2009)

The League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County supports:

County Commissioners spending a greater amount of time on policy matters, including strategic planning, and less on administrative details;

*An appointed County Administrator
A three-member full-time Commission, if a County Administrator is appointed and the duties of the Commission become mainly policy-making;*

*Election by districts;
Elimination of elected positions, including the sheriff, with the appointment of a county-wide law enforcement officer with professional qualifications;*

Appointment of advisory groups broadly representative of the community to address specific policy issues;

A single metropolitan government as a long-term goal, with short-term goals of cooperation and consolidation of city-county government operations where feasible; and

Re-institution of the Inter-Governmental Council with a paid staff.

CALENDAR

September

6 Tuesday Topics, at Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Av., 11:30AM-1PM. Speaker is Dr. Diane DeBacker, Kansas Commissioner of Education, speaking on "The Role of Federal Government in Public Education." Menu: Chicken Salad sandwich on a croissant, pasta salad, assorted cakes for dessert . Water or Iced Tea to drink

6 Lowman Hill School election process: Voter registration.

8 Save the Date! LWV-TSC Membership Event Wine and Cheese Reception, 7 p.m. The Eclectic Art Showroom , 900 N. Kansas Ave. in the NOTO Art District.

13 LWV-TSC Board Meeting, at Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Av., 11:30AM-1PM. Check the schedule displayed in the lobby for assigned room. Food can be brought to the meeting from Millennium Cafe. All members are welcome.

13 Lowman Hill School election process: Primary election.

20 Lowman Hill School election process: General election

20 VOICE meeting on the national education study will be at the TSCPL, 5:30PM-7:30PM

24 League Day. Capital Plaza Hotel, Emerald Room. 9AM-3PM

October

4 Tuesday Topics, at Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Av., 11:30AM-1PM. Speaker is Julie Ford, USD #501 Interim Superintendent of Schools, "The Role of Federal Government in Public Education." Menu: Build your own Taco Salad with chili, lettuce, salsa, sour cream, tomatoes, onions and cheese with corn chips. For dessert enjoy a Brownie. Water or Iced Tea to drink.

11 LWV-TSC Board Meeting, at Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th, 11:30AM-1PM.

Check the schedule displayed in the lobby for assigned room. Food can be brought to the meeting from Millennium Cafe. All members are welcome.

20 VOICE Meeting: "The Role of Federal Government in Education," Consensus discussion. Time and place: to be announced.

NATIONAL EDUCATION STUDY MATERIALS

The National Education Study Committee will bring paper copies of background study materials to Tuesday Topics on September 8 at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library.

They will also send them out to you on request. (Call Marge Ahrens at 232-1947 to request a copy.)

If you have computer access, you may also access the information on the LWVUS website.

State link;
<http://www.lwvtsc.org/studies/fedgovpubed/>

Local link; lwvtsc.org

Fall League Day, Capital Plaza Hotel 8:30AM to 3:30PM

Tentative Agenda;
Role of the Federal Government in Education Tax System in Kansas; Who Should Pay?

Membership and Leadership Workshops
Members and Prospective Members Welcome

Sept and Oct will be at the library and November will be at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Tuesday Topics are held in room JCM 101B, across from the Millennium Cafe at the Topeka-Shawnee County Public Library, unless otherwise indicated. Meals are available to the first twenty-five arriving, @ \$8.25/ea. Checks payable to the Millennium Cafe.

If you need a ride to any League event, contact [Betsy Rohleder](#).

VOTER SERVICE REPORT

By Anita Epps, Voter Service Chair

In an effort to register as many voters as possible before the new restrictions come into play (January 1, 2012, when photo identification has to be presented when voting and January 1, 2013 when proof of citizenship is needed if registering for the first time), many opportunities to offer this community service have been completed and others established.

At the July 29, 2011, naturalization proceedings, Honorable Dale L. Somers, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge, gave a rousing endorsement to the sixty-four new citizens from thirty-one countries about the importance of registering to vote and voting. There was also a change in distributing mementos from the various groups who welcome the new citizens which allowed face-to-face contact with each person, and again encouragement to register to vote. As a consequence, we *registered thirty-one citizens* and passed out forms to others. This was the highest percentage we have registered at a naturalization proceeding. Mr. Chadwick Taylor, Shawnee Co. District Attorney gave the address of welcome.

On August 3, 2011, we registered just *one* parent who was enrolling their child at Sheldon Head Start.

On August 6, 2011, we registered *thirteen* people as they attended the Back-to-School Fair at the Expo Center. Two gift bags containing school supplies were raffled off as well.

Scheduled registration opportunities are as follows: August 15, Scott Magnet School, Back to School Ice Cream Social; August 31, Meet the Teachers/Parents, Williams Magnet School; September 1, Chase Middle School, Open House; September 1, Lowman Hill Elementary, Open House; September 30, Naturalization Proceedings, Frank Carlson Federal Court House; October 6, Meadows Magnet School, Open House; and October 20, Eisenhower Middle School, Parent-Teacher Conferences.

Other registration events are being planned. Those include going to Topeka and Highland Park High Schools as it is shown that when people register when they reach voting age, they usually become voters for life. We have also been in contact with the NAACP to coordinate registration activities and are planning to contact Neighborhood Improvement Associations for ideas. We hope to again register voters at Hallmark.

In the last issue of the Voter, information was shared about requirements to vote at the polls which will be effective in January, 2012. These changes have occurred because of the new law called the Secure and Fair Elections Act (SAFE Act), HB 2067. In this issue, requirements to prove citizenship will be reviewed.

Do I need to prove my citizenship before I can vote?

As of January, 2013, the Kansas law will require voters *registering for the first time in Kansas* to provide proof of citizenship before they may be entered onto the voter rolls. (This is accurate that this time; however, the Secretary of State is hoping to push this date up to March, 2012 with legislative approval). If you have successfully registered to vote before that date, you do *not have* to prove your US citizenship in order to vote. The following kinds of ID will be considered to constitute proof of citizenship. (Applicants born in Kansas who do not possess one of the following are entitled to receive a *free* Birth Certificate copy by signing an affidavit affirming that the document is needed to meet the registration requirements.)

- Driver's license or non-driver ID card from any US state or district if and only if US citizenship is indicated on the DL or card.
- Birth certificate that verifies US citizenship to the satisfaction of county election officer or the Kansas Secretary of State.
- US passport or pertinent pages thereof identifying the applicant and passport number.
- US naturalization documents or certificate number (certificate number must be verified).
- Other methods of proof of US citizenship issued by federal government pursuant to Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952;
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs card number, tribal treaty card number or tribal enrollment number,
 - Consular report of birth abroad of a US citizen,
 - Certificate of citizenship from US Citizenship and Immigration Services,
 - Certificate of report of birth from US Department of State,
 - American Indian card, with KIC classification issued by US Department of Homeland Security,
 - Final adoption decree showing name and US birth-place,
 - Official US military record of service showing place of birth in the US,
 - Extract from a US hospital record of birth created at time of birth showing place of birth in the US.

In following VOTERS, information about advance and "absentee" voting, provisional ballots and upcoming election dates will be covered. At the December Tuesday Topics, an employee from the Secretary of State's office has been contacted to speak about the SAFE act.

Many thanks to all of the volunteers who are helping with voter registration!!!

August 12, 2011

Jan Waide and Mary Galligan to Co-chair League of Women Voters' Study



This week Jan Waide agreed to co-chair the two year Study of the LWV State Finance Position along with Mary Galligan, one of our new members. Mary will represent the Topeka-Shawnee County League on the State study committee which will develop materials for all the Kansas Leagues and direct and coach local League study committees on issues of finance and taxation options. Specifically, the LWVK will "undertake a two-year re-study of our current position on Kansas Finance and tax structure to consider the consequences of the current tax structure and the proposed state taxing changes and ascertain how the LWVK position needs to be changed or maintained to meet the values of the League of Women Voters".

Thank you all for agreeing to serve on the committee. Jan will be out of town during August, but the first state committee meeting, open to all of you, will take place on August 20th at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library. Please contact Liz Post at ksmeadowlark@cox.net for more details related to the first state committee meeting.

For your organization and future reference, here are the names, phone numbers and e-mails for those who have volunteered for the committee. It should be a great group!

THE COMMITTEE

Jan Waide 233-7008 jswaide1@gmail.com
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WEIRD KANSAS LAWS

Fog has been banned in the state since 1793

The League of Women Voters Topeka/Shawnee County Member Event: Wine and Cheese Reception

Please join us in welcoming new members and saying thanks to all the people who work so hard for the League.

Thursday September 8, 7:00 p.m.

The Eclectic Art Showroom,

900 N. Kansas Ave.

in the NOTO Art District.

New Zealand and Kuwait are the correct answers
September 1893: New Zealand became the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

2005: Kuwaiti Parliament grants women of Kuwait full suffrage.

SHAWNEE COUNTY HEALTH AGENCY LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

By Grace L. Wilson



Allison Alejos, Director of the Local Health Department

Alice Weingartner, Director of the Community Health Center

Recently, Allison Alejos and Alice Weingartner assumed the positions of Director of the Local Health Department and the Director of the Community Health Center, respectively, at the Shawnee County Health Agency. The mission of the agency is to promote and protect health in the community by providing prevention, education and health care services. At the League's August Tuesday Topics, Alejos said the agency wants to lead the way to better health in Shawnee County.

The health agency is the umbrella organization for the Local Health Department [Alejos] and the Federally Qualified Health Care Center [Community Health Center – Weingartner]. The Community Health Center is where patients receive primary care.

When the county went through some financial structural changes, they offered an early retirement program which 10 employees at the health agency took. More than 300 years of experience left the agency in six weeks time. The agency lost their director, deputy director and financial officer (CFO).

At that point, the question was “How to move forward while maintaining fiscal responsibility?” The Director’s position was abolished and Alejos and Weingartner went into joint management. A staff accountant was hired. They refrained from filling vacancies. Of the \$12 million budget, there was a \$150,000 cost savings as a result. While it is a very different structure, each employee has a primary supervisor. There is shared responsibility. Weingartner has primary oversight of finance, grants, compliance and public information. Alejos has primary oversight of the other activities and programs.

“We thought we would see if it would work,” Weingartner said, “and so far, it has.” Because they have worked well together for 10 years, they are able to sit down and work things out even when they disagree. The agency has 150 employees at six different locations, including three clinics. A new clinic will be opening in the old Rose’s Restaurant at 21st and California. There are four exam rooms at Hillcrest Community Center; there will be 12 exam rooms at the new location. They are planning an Open House at the new clinic.

The federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) has meant lots of changes. The agency is seeking accreditation which requires: 1) a community health assessment, and 2) a community improvement plan. Collaboration with many community partners will be a necessity. The ACA also may increase the number of patients eligible for Medicaid. Several thousand more in the community may come forward; it is challenging to plan and prepare for the unknown, said Alejos.

In addition to everything else, last year the agency implemented two new Information Technology (IT) programs. They are now using electronic health records at each location since the end of January 2011. While it was hard and they continue to work out the “bugs,” they are excited about the coordination of patient information. They also “went live” with KIPS (a patient management program), moved to a new location on 10th St., and are participating in a pilot project related to patient-centered medical homes. The home health service closed because of low usage, but they still have home care assistance which includes personal care and homemaking services. Patients who are insured use the health center; that helps to support care to the uninsured. A person in the clinic assesses patients for Health Access. There have been open positions for nurses for a couple of months. Applications have been slow.

Shawnee County was one of the first counties in Kansas to start a volunteer Medical Reserve Corps. These volunteers are trained to assist during emergencies or to serve as ambassadors for public health at flu clinics, health fairs, and other educational outreach.

The Board of the Community Health Center has 11 members, 6 consumers and 5 community partners. The Board sets the scope of service and hours; the County Commission handles personnel and financing. Meetings of the Board committees are on Tuesdays: 1st – Governance, 2nd – Executive Committee, 3rd – Finance, and 4th – Full Board.

Alejos and Weingartner would like to move from a service model toward a population-based model. This would mean looking at needs throughout the community and working for policy changes that would help implement healthy outcomes. Examples might be to improve school lunches or encourage more walking paths

For the 2012 budget, the agency has asked for a slight increase in tax support with a budget decrease to \$11.5 million. Their sources of income are about one-third each: tax support, fees and grants. The State is a pass-through for federal dollars, and there is no city funding except for Maternal and Child Health. There is a sliding fee scale directed by the federal government, but the local agency has control of child care licensing fees. There are always going to be people in need, Alejos and Weingartner said. Through Gatekeepers, anyone can call if concerned about a neighbor or someone who may need care. A nurse or social worker can visit.

How We Generate and Conserve Energy Is Important

By Grace L. Wilson

Craig Volland, technical advisor to the Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club and a Qualified Environmental Professional now retired, came from Kansas City to speak at the League's July Tuesday Topics. He thanked the League of Women



Voters for their support in opposition to the Holcomb coal-fired plant.

There has been some progress, as the state started out with three proposed Holcomb plants instead of the current one. The Sierra Club does not want to see any new coal-fired plants in the United States. They have been successful in that of the last 150 proposed coal-fired plants in the country, only one is currently being built.

While we need energy conservation and renewable energy, Volland said the main focus should be on climate change. At organized regional Sierra Club meetings, they examined the regional impacts of climate change.

They asked "What do we have to look forward to if we do not take action?" A mid-range prediction for our region: a) A 7 degree F. increase by the end of the century; b) More drought, but not less rain; c) More violent storms (more energy in the air); and d) Flooding and erosion.

Soil moisture is important to crops and the further west in the state, the worse the problem. The higher temperatures will affect farm animals. Any positive fertilizing effects of CO₂ are limited, because the crops still need rainfall and nitrogen. Most plants grow in a narrow temperature range, so there will be a northern migration of flora and fauna. Plants will move more slowly, animals faster. Because such climate change is serious business

build just one plant, because Parkinson got in exchange the establishment of a future 18 percent renewable energy standard for the state.

Unfortunately when permitted, the coal-fired plant will be about as big as a plant can be, Volland said. This should have been a completely non-political process, he added. The employees at KDHE had to work extra hours before January 1 in order to avoid the new standards being put in place then.

Now it is in the courts and the national Sierra Club has been to Kansas many times. The lawsuit says that the proposal did not take into account: a) the hourly standard of sulfur dioxide, b) the best available control technology, and c) that the plant is not needed, because more than 80 percent of the power is going to Colorado. Using the words of those proposing the plant to answer the public's questions instead of unbiased answers being written by KDHE was pretty blatant, Volland said.

Tri-State submitted plans even though they do not need a plant until 2026. They have asked for an extension, because they are required to build the plant within 18 months of the permitting. Tri-State has \$40 million invested into this project. Perhaps Wall Street will decide its fate, Volland said. Growth and demand for the first plant (Holcomb I) was overestimated and they still owe quite a lot of money to the federal government.

Why not build a natural gas plant instead, Volland said. Still, with weak state regulations or none at all, fracking is a concern. Vice-President Cheney encouraged exempting fracking solution as a hazardous waste. Companies do not have to disclose the ingredients in fracking fluid, such as benzene. In some places, companies are allowed to pump the fluid back up to the surface to put in unlined ponds.

Energy conservation is the one thing individuals can do to help the cause, Volland said. He made a big investment in his home over five years and has cut his electricity bill by 50 percent. They replaced their old refrigerator, replaced all the light bulbs, put in more insulation and sealed it up.

They have a front-load washer and dry clothes on a line in the garage.

It takes 4 to 5 years to bring a coal-fired plant online, 2 to 3 for a gas plant, and less than 2 years for a wind plant. A good thing about wind power is that if one turbine fails, the others keep going. Water to cool the coal-fired plant is small compared to the 8 billion gallons a year used for crops (corn was never meant to be grown in Kansas), but the big concern about coal-fired plants is the air pollution, Volland said.

Some new rules should be coming down in the next year favorable to the environment. Because it does not make sense to retrofit old plants, Volland hopes these new rules will shut them down. There continues to be a battle over what the Clean Air Act standards really are.

The Sierra Club is encouraging wind farms. Just four years ago, there were no utility-scale wind farms, because of a lack of transmission lines. There is extremely strong public support in Kansas for wind power. It is cheaper with federal incentives; however, coal is also federally subsidized.

China is now the world leader in renewable energy, because they are so large and have needed to address a huge problem with air pollution. We need to quit buying new gadgets and wasting electricity because the rates are so cheap, Volland said. We also waste water. One bright spot is that battery technology is getting better and better.

Distribution of power generation is best with solar panels. Net metering (giving power back to the utility company) is attractive to individuals generating solar power, but utility companies do not like it. Solar is still a little expensive, but coming down. For now, plug-in electric vehicles are not good, because the electricity is still coming from coal.

Volland also wanted to talk about grass burning on the prairie and whether the incidence of asthma is going up because of it. Unlike in years past, burning is occurring every year instead of every three years. With intensive early stocking, ranchers fatten twice as many cows per season at twice the rate. The Sierra Club does not believe we should preserve the prairie at the cost of public health. The burning is killing off

birds and endangering the prairie chicken. Absentee investors are involved. The solution is "patch burning" where you burn one-third of the land every year, leaving some high grass for the birds.

Never expect corporation to take into account the public good, Volland said. They are designed to be greedy. That is why you need reasonable, but strict regulations.

Board Briefs

by Lea Billinger, Secretary

August 9, 2011 LWV Board meeting at the library, 10 board members were present.

Anita Epps said that LWVTSC registered 30 new voters at a naturalization ceremony in July, and 13 at the Back-to-School fair. More voter registration opportunities are planned, some dates still need volunteers. This will be an especially important activity for the rest of the year.

The board reviewed the League's non-partisan policy. With minor grammatical changes, the board voted to approve the policy for LWVTSC. (Only the most visible officers are required to refrain from all partisan political activity.)

Georgia Sandlin has the new calendar for the rest of this year through next April almost ready to go to print. It will be distributed at the membership event September 8 in the NOTO (North Topeka) Arts district, along with a new directory. Georgia also brought copies of the LWVUS Impact on Issues booklet; a few are still available at \$9.

Five LWVTSC representatives will attend LWVUS Membership Training in Manhattan late in August.

Nancy Wagner is moving ahead with plans for a fund drive letter in November. An anonymous donor has offered an additional \$10 for every \$40 or greater donation.

The State Study on Kansas Taxes will hold a meeting August 20 at TSCPL. Look for it at ;

LWVK.org/studies/KStaxes.

Next board meeting will be September 13 at noon, TSCPL.

County Commission Meetings— Notes by Georgia Sandlin

June 20, 2011

This meeting was very brief.

The commissioners approved the consent agenda and voucher payments 3-0.

Two other items were approved. One was contract with the City of Topeka for billing of non-residential solid waste customers. The other was to reward a bid for the Adult and Juvenile Detention facilities.

June 23, 2011

Shawnee County Treasurer Larry Wilson tried again for assistance in paying an invoice to the architects that did preliminary work for an annex. The commissioners remained mute on that item. While Mr. Wilson was at the podium Commissioner Miller questioned him about his request for an increase in his budget. Mr. Wilson reported that some workers are doing work for the state (motor vehicle) and the county (taxes) and that is why an increase was needed. Budget items are not expected to be acted on until August.

There is hay to be cut at West Lawn Memorial Gardens. Instead of soliciting bids Commissioner Miller suggested that the county ask for proposals for anyone willing to do the work. The commissioner suggested 10 acres of hay may be more trouble than what it is worth to most people to bid on it.

On the third try Rich Davis, Facilities Management, came back to the commission with (we think) the most cost effective proposal to replace some parts on a fountain pump at the Capitol Plaza Hotel. It was approved 3-0.

June 27, 2011

The same question as to what to spend the money on comes up at almost every meeting now that revenues are down.

Commissioners Buhler and Ensley approved Dick Kline's request to fill a vacant position at the front desk of the Juvenile Detention Center but Commissioner Miller dissented..

There was no action taken on the request to solicit bids for the installation of shade structures at Lake Shawnee. Manpower is down due to budget cuts so they saw no reason to hire more for a project..

The commissioners scheduled public hearings for Aug. 15 for property tax exemptions for Allen-Bimbo Bakeries, Del Monte Foods, and Hill's Pet Nutrition.

June 30, 2011

This meeting started with a presentation to theacknowledged the acceptance of Shawnee County into a rating system provided by FEMA. To be accepted required reams of paper work that was completed by Barry Beagle and staff of the Planning Department. This allows Shawnee County residents a decrease in flood insurance. Commissioner Miller praised Mr. Beagle's efforts and noted the plaque should hang in his office.

There was concern that, with the budget cuts, the county would

be unable to provide the child care licensing program. Grant money from KDHE, plus a home rule resolution proposed by Commissioner Miller ensures the continuation of the program. This morning was the first reading of the resolution.

Commissioner Miller took a few minutes to praise Elwaine Pomeroy as a leader and as a man of character. He noted that Mr. Pomeroy seemed to ignore party lines while working for his constituents. A man we would want all our elected officials to emulate

July 7, 2011

The second reading and final vote (3-0) on adoption of Shawnee County childcare licensing regulations opened the meeting this morning.

Other resolutions, requests and contracts were approved with few questions and a vote of 3-0.

The item that brought the most discussion was a claim against the county for a sewer backup. The counselor's office investigates claims and makes a recommendation to the commission. The homeowner reported that the sewer line was not maintained and caused major damage when the sewage backed up into his home. The counselor's office recommended denial of the claim. The home owner was at the meeting and it was apparent the commissioners were in sympathy with his dilemma. After some questions by the commissioners we learned that the City of Topeka is obligated to maintain the line and there is no evidence that it has been maintained. The vote was deferred until it was determined whether the city had done any maintenance. Commissioner Miller also suggested the homeowner investigate whether there was full disclosure when he bought the home.

July 11, 2011

Sheriff Barta attended the meeting to introduce the recently selected Undersheriff Herman Jones. The Sheriff explained the background and service of Undersheriff Jones and expressed his pleasure working with him.

Other business was not as genial.

The budget from the Extension Council for 2012 was presented and denied 3-0.

The request from Steve Bolton to award a bid for Motorola radios and equipment was denied. Mr. Bolton spent some time explaining why the radio system was less expensive then cell phones, but, apparently that wasn't convincing enough.

The appointment of Pam O'Toole to the Washburn Board of Regents was approved 2-1.

July 21, 2011

There was good news from Stacey Woolington, Audit/Finance. She reports monthly to the commission with an update of revenues and expenditures. She reported that the county has spent less than what was budgeted, from the revised budget, for the first half of the year. She also reported that revenues are coming in as expected. There were smiles all around.

On the subject of revenues: representative from the Parks and Recreation department reported that the Kansas State Water Ski Championship and the Youth Baseball World Series competition are being held at Lake Shawnee this weekend.

July 25, 2011

The extension Council presented a 2012 budget to the commission, previously, that was rejected. This morning the extension Council returned with another 2012 budget, that included no increases, and it was approved.

The Health Agency was faced with a similar response this morning. They requested personnel increases and reclassification of employees. Alice Weingartner reported that the agency had been functioning without positions that were eliminated and found they were not able to serve clients appropriately. The commissioners preferred to complete the budget first and then make decisions on personnel.

An interpreter's position in the Health Agency, funded through a grant, was approved.

Other business included an approval on a plat for Soldier Township Fire Station, an approval for purchase of landscape blocks and an approval regarding a contract amendment to a workers comp contract

July 28, 2011

Two presentations were the first agenda items. First the Southwest Topeka Bible Church donated money to the scholarship program for the Day Camp of Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Foundation. Next, was the presentation by the family of Deb Flint to the Friends of the Ted Ensley Garden's Endowment Fund. The money was raised by an annual Walk/Run.

Tom Vlach, Public Works, requested funds for a Phase III design for the Willard Bridge. Mr. Vlach emphasized the need for a plan that is ready to go if and when the funding becomes available. The commissioners had to be convinced to spend the money before the start-up date for the project was set but did approve the request 3-0.

August 1, 2011

Commissioner Miller noticed the Sheriff's Department's vouchers for key rings and hand sanitizer and would not approve them. The other commissioners agreed. Since these items are distributed to the public it appears to be a difference in priorities as to what is most important in effective law enforcement.

Discussion of the legal issues regarding the resolution and contract for consolidation of the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Departments was clearer to this observer. The cemeteries owned by the City of Topeka by default cannot be transferred to the county. Maintenance of the cemeteries can be transferred and the change was made. The contract with this change was to return to the city council for approval. Commissioners Miller and Ensley repeated that this change is no big deal while Commissioner Buhler did not appear as certain

August 4, 2011

The big event this morning was the approval of the consolidation of the Parks and Recreation Departments of Shawnee County and The City of Topeka. There was a feeling of celebration in the

room. Councilman Bob Archer took the microphone to thank the commission and Commissioner Buhler specifically.

He also noted the essential work done by Jim Ogle of WIBW and Interim City Manager Dan Stanley. He stated he believed a new era of cooperation between the governing bodies of the city and the county was apparent. Commissioner Miller agreed and also mentioned that Terry Bertels, of the city Parks Department, put the welfare of the community ahead of his own interests with his cooperation and expertise.

Also of interest to League members were requests by some social service agencies (Health Access Prescription Program, Safe Streets, Success by 6, Drug Court, Keep America Beautiful) for money from tax revenues. The commissioners voted the guest tax money to the ExpoCentre. They deferred the other requests until budget time.

There were two presentations: one from Sonoco and one from Deffenbaugh, regarding transfer stations for the county's recycling program. Three other companies will present at a later meeting.

August 11, 2011

Commissioner Miller once again removed vouchers from the Sheriff's department before approving the list of vouchers, usually routinely approved. This action was approved 2-1 with Commissioner Buhler dissenting. The purchases in question are promotional items to instill goodwill between law enforcement and the public. Are we facing another stand-off?

Other items of business were approved 3-0.

A contract between the coroner and Bryan College to provide training. Any CSI fans?

Awarding a bid for de-icing salt. Boring.

A \$3,500 repair of a lektriever. I have no idea what that is.

A resolution establishing the Shawnee County Tax System Committee. Related to reorganization because of replacement of the mainframe.

New appointment to the Juvenile Corrections Advisory Board. Ruth Santner.

The last part of the meeting was a presentation by Waste Management. Using a power point they explained what Waste Management had to offer Shawnee County if chosen as the company to receive the county's recyclables. Four companies are competing for this contract.



Reflections on the Proceedings of the Topeka City Council

(submitted by Joe Sargent)

This reflection covers the period from early June, 2011 to early August, 2011.

At this time the council is engaged in its most important function, determining the city's budget for the upcoming year (2012).

On August 9th the council held a public hearing on the 2012 budget and there was a great outpouring of testimony to keep the city's funding at the 2011 level for the social services agencies. In the city manager's proposed 2012 budget these agencies, plus the Topeka Performing Arts Center, Downtown Topeka Incorporated, and other non-profit entities, would receive 33% less (\$286,650). All these entities took a 25% cut in 2011. The amount proposed in the 2012 budget to cover all these organizations is \$575,000.

The Topeka finance director at that time, Jim Langford, stated that property taxes were the only way to adjust revenues in order that the city could meet its rising operating expenses at a time when other types of revenue have remain flat. Thus, Boneparte's 2012 budget suggested raising the property tax by 3% (a 3.15 mill increase) to keep city services at the present level.

Council member Archer on July 16th at a budget session that included council members and city administrative officials requested the city interim manager, Dan Stanley, and the city finance director to develop an alternative 2012 budget that would not increase the mill levy. The budget will be scrutinized on August 16th and by state law it must be finalized and certified by the city clerk by August 25th.

The city's self-insured health plan faces significant increased expenses due to the increased cost of medical claims. At the end of 2011 its balance is projected to be \$1.5 million with a possible deficit of \$1.7 million in 2012.

The proposed budget included an approximately \$1.8 million increase in employees' salaries and benefits which contained contributions to the retirement and health insurance plans.

Also the city has an aging fleet of vehicles, 23% of which are urgently in need of being replaced. The police department is in a crisis situation with regards to its vehicular fleet.

Consolidation of the Topeka and Shawnee County park and recreation departments became a reality when the Shawnee County commission approved a contract merging the two departments. Two days prior to that the contract was approved by the council on a six to four vote.. This matter has been under discussion since the 1980s.

On June 14th council the passed an ordinance that calls for city parking personnel and police officers to immobilize a vehicle with a boot fastened to a tire if the owner has three or more unpaid parking tickets. Four hundred persons have accumulated \$400,000 in unpaid parking fines.

The council on June 21st rejected a proposed three year pay contract for police officers with the rank of sergeant or below. This contract was based on a contract negotiated with the firemen one year previously and was approved by 99% of the affected police officers The council members opposed to the contract questioned the city's ability to afford in its present economic condition in giving raises to the officers.

The selection of Topeka by Mars Chocolate of North America, maker of Snickers and M and M's, as a site for a new \$250 million plant was greeted with great excitement. The plant could create as many as 974 jobs. In order to get Mars to come the state, county, and city gave Mars incentives worth \$9.1 million.

Boneparte's last day work was July 1st and Stanley was chosen to be the interim city manager on June 28th and started working on July 17th . Jim Langford, the city finance director, retired on July 22nd.

On July 12th the council after much discussion passed by a five to four vote the expenditure for one million dollars to complete the first phase of a plan to revitalize downtown Topeka. It was already in the 2011 capital improvement budget but needed the council's authorization to spend the money.

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