

LWV

the
VOTER

*League of Women Voters of
Greater Las Cruces*

September 2017

PROGRAM FIESTA

September 11 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Good Samaritan's Activity Room

Our September dinner meeting is a time of celebration and sharing for LWVGLC. Bring guests! This is a time to celebrate all that we do. There will be music by George Goedecke and friends. Chairs of the various committees will each give a short update. Come and celebrate with us.

Cost of the dinner is \$12. **If you do not plan to eat please indicate that when you RSVP** otherwise we will list you in the dinner count. Even if you don't want dinner we still need to know that you are coming so that we have enough chairs. **Please RSVP by September 3** to shoemaker714@gmail.com or call Kim Sorensen (541) 910-8449. If you RSVP and fail to attend or cancel your reservation, you will be billed for the cost that we must pay for the dinner.

President's Message

Well, I just got back from spending almost a month in Oregon and Washington and I'm trying to catch up with my emails, mail, laundry and appointments so this is going to be a short report.

At July's membership meeting, we had a discussion on how we as a League can be more relevant and increase our impact and outreach. I will present a summary of the discussion to the Board and we will work on an action plan which I will share at the Program Fiesta September 11.

As an Outreach effort on July 15, Gwen, her husband Tom, and I had a LWV table at the Girls and Boys Club Family Event where we talked to participants about what we do, handed out Who's Who, and stickers to the children.

LWVGLC was a sponsor for the Women's Equality Day Event on August 26. Vicki Simons and I had a table, distributed information about the league, and participated in the march. Dr. Bobby Green, President of the NAACP was the guest speaker.

Please plan on attending the Program Fiesta September 11 from 5-7 at Good Samaritan's and celebrate all that we do.

See you there,

Kim Sorensen, President



50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION UPCOMING

Submitted by Marjorie Burr

The team planning the celebration of LWVGLC's 50th birthday has come up with some exciting ideas. The anniversary year will be 2018, but some events will occur before and after that year.

We will begin with proclamations by the City Council and County Commission in December 2017 declaring 2018 the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces Year. **Johnnie Aldrich** is arranging this. We will end with a celebratory banquet in February 2019., fifty years after we marked with a celebratory coffee the acceptance by national League of LWVGLC as a Local League after a provisional year. **Gwen Hanson** is in charge of this event. In between are activities that mark our place in the community.

Here are some of our plans, still tentative. In May 2018 we will have a reunion picnic and tree planting in Pioneer Women's Park, inviting friends and former members of LWVGLC. We will conduct public forums highlighting some of our positions on local governmental issues, describing the original impetus for the study, the current status of the issue, and work to be done. These events are under the direction of **Win Jacobs**.

There will be a traveling exhibit on folding display boards showing graphically LWVGLC's history and our community involvement. The exhibit will be moved from public place to public place to be viewed by many residents at different sites. **Liz Taylor** is designing this and working out the logistics.

Kathy Brook is working on ways people - members and friends in the community - can show their appreciation of the Local League. Cathy Mathews has designed our very own 50th Anniversary logo. Its debut is at the top of this article. Look for it throughout the next year.

Barbara Goedecke, Christina Little, and Marjorie Burr are writing a history of the Local League.

Does this sound exciting to you? Would you like to help (work is in addition to your usual League activities)? Turn up at the next team meeting on Tuesday, September 12, 5:30 p.m. at Good Samaritan, Building #, 2nd floor lounge. Or contact me or any of the people mentioned above.

Marjorie Burr

burrmb@aol.com

522-2528

Logo for 50th Anniversary Celebration



Treasurer's Talk

Submitted by Steve Litts

May is the first month of our fiscal year at LWVGLC so it's time for me to provide you with a **1st Quarter Budget Report**. As you might expect, it's all \$\$ and Sense....

- Total Revenues (not including meal receipts) = \$3,865, including \$3,180 from dues and \$685 in donations to the Operating Fund.
- Total Expenditures (not including meal payments to Good Sam) = \$137.60
- Bank Balance = \$7,903.37
- Anticipated Revenues (not including meal receipts) = \$7,761
- Anticipated Expenditures (not including meal payments to Good Sam) = \$10,175
- Current Bank Balance – Anticipated Expenditures = a Balance of (\$2,271.63)

As you can see, your League will require your financial support in the form of *Paid Dues – Donations to the *Operating and *Education Funds

Thanks to all who have recommitted their support for increasing voter participation and for informing the public about important local, state and national issues. Your willingness to participate and your financial support are crucial to the work we do in LWVGLC. **IF YOU ARE ONE OF THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SENT YOUR DUES YET, PLEASE DO SO THIS MONTH. DONATIONS TO THE OPERATING FUND AND THE EDUCATION FUND ALSO FORM THE FINANCIAL FOUNDATION NEEDED FOR OUR IMPORTANT WORK. CONTRIBUTE TODAY.** The League's address is LWVGLC, PO Box 8322, Las Cruces, NM 88006. I'll thank you in advance.

BOOKMARKS FOR EVERYONE

Thanks to Dale Yeo LWVGLC bookmarks are available! See samples below. The bookmark is filled on both sides with critical information.



Farewell to Sharon Shoemaker!

Sharon is relocating to Santa Fe. I want to express my appreciation for all her role as Vice President. She will be hard to replace. Best Wishes, Sharon!!

Welcome New Member Tom Hanson!!

OBSERVERS' POST

OBSERVERS' POST COORDINATION & REVITALIZATION

Submitted by Susan Schmugge & Vicki Simons

September 2017

To begin revitalization of Observer Corps our goal is to send observers to five entities: Doña Ana County Commission, Las Cruces City Council, Las Cruces Public School Board, Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority, and Southwest Solid Waste Authority. We are calling for volunteers to join with existing Observer Corps members.

Below are the meeting times and locations for the five entities:

- The **Dona Ana County Commission** meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays each month at 9:00 a.m. in Commission Chambers in the County Building. Currently Sue Lashley is attending these meetings; additional observers are needed.
- The **Las Cruces City Council** meets the 1st and 3rd Mondays each month at 1:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall; additional observers are needed.
- The **Las Cruces Public School Board** meets the 3rd Tuesday each month at 6:30 p.m. in the LCPS Administration Building; observers are needed.
- The **Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority** meets the 3rd Tuesday each month at 9:00 a.m. in MVPHA Building on San Pablo. Vicki Simons attends these meetings.
- The **South Central Solid Waste Authority** meets the 3rd Thursday each month at 9:00 a.m. at the Transfer Station on Amador. Johnnie Aldrich and Sue Schmuggee attend these meetings.

Some Observers are listed above but **additional volunteers are needed**. We need volunteers to attend **School Board** meetings, and at least one more each to attend **City Council** and **County Commission** meetings.

Sue Schmugge and Johnnie Aldrich are attending the LC Utility Customer Advisory Group and the Las Cruces Utility Board (water pricing), the 2nd Wednesday and 2nd Thursday respectively at the Utilities Office on Motel Boulevard. **They can use some help!** Erika Graf-Webster, Kim Sorensen and Gwen Hanson attend the Election Advisory Council.

TEAM UP! If you cannot go to every meeting, team up with someone to share the Observation Post. We need volunteers to attend school board meetings and at least one more to attend the City Council and County Commission meetings.

Reports will be published monthly in the VOTER. Observers are being advised on what to include and how long to make their reports. Contact Sue Schmugge or Vicki Simons to volunteer and for more information.

Vicki Simons 575-522-4813 or vrsimons@comcast.net

Sue Schmugge 575-522-4546 or sschmugge@gmail.com

SOUTH CENTRAL SOLID WASTE AUTHORITY REGULAR BOARD MEETING

OBSERVER REPORT Submitted by Johnnie R. Aldrich

Thursday, July 20, 2017 and Thursday, August 17, 2017, 9:00 a.m., Board Room, Transfer Station

Board Members: Olga Pedroza, Chair; Commissioner Ben Rawson; Dr. Jorge Garcia, LC Financial Officer; Chuck McMahon, County Manager; Patrick Peck, SCSWA Director. All were present for the July meeting. A quorum. Absent were Councilor Kasandra Gandara, Commissioner Isabella Solis, Mayor Ken Miyagishima, and Commissioner John L. Vasquez.

The August meeting was cancelled because of "lack of an agenda," the third such event this calendar year.

Both Sue Schmugge and I missed the July meeting because we were out of town that week, a rare occurrence. Draft minutes, kindly supplied by Administrative Assistant Elena Moreno, indicate that the meeting was a brief one, adjourning by 10:15 a.m. Two resolutions were approved, one regarding adjustments to the budget because of unexpected expenses; the other listing several tons of outdated equipment and allowing the Authority to dispose of it.

Board members also heard a report about the newly opened transfer facility in Chaparral. The report included several statements from residents there expressing their gratitude for the proximity and efficiency of the new station.

Director Peck reported that County infrastructure plans are still being developed; both Hatch and Sunland Park are slated for updated collection facilities.

Questions? Call the South Central Solid Waste Authority administrative staff: 575-528-3800.

CITY COUNCIL AFFORDABLE HOUSING WORK SESSION

June 26, 2017 Observer Report submitted by Christina Little

The Las Cruces City Council had a comprehensive discussion of Affordable Housing on June 26, 2017. Bottom line, the need is enormous:

- There is a need for 4,949 affordable rental units.
- There is need for 4,109 homeownership units.

During the past five years, the City has helped with the following housing needs:

- A total of \$4.4 million has been spent on Affordable Housing projects.
- Single Family Home Ownership – 64 homes
- Tenant-based Rental Assistance – 88 households
- Home Rehabilitation and Mobile Home Ramp Program – 105 households
- Shelter Plus Care Grant – 146 households

The City will soon be prepared to move forward on affordable housing. The Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) approved the Affordable Housing Plan in February 2017. It includes the following goals:

- Increase affordable rental housing
- Preserve existing affordable housing
- Expand homeownership
- Reduce homelessness
- Create innovative partnerships

The ordinances to utilize the Land Bank and Trust Fund are under review and should be approved within several months. The Trust Fund has \$516,000 in it (most coming from General Fund), and the Land Bank has several pieces of property. There is a 4.5-acre infill lot behind Sierra Meddle School that can be developed for either single family or multi-family units. There is 0.42 acres off Griggs, which would be suitable for two townhouses but which may have environmental issues. There are also a couple of other pieces of property that the City is looking at – including one on Mesquite Street which would be suitable for preservation.

Before developing these properties, the ordinances involving the Trust Fund and Land Bank need to be finalized. There will be a public engagement process to find out the views of the neighborhood, and a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be issued. Submissions will be evaluated and forwarded to the City Council for final approval.

There is considerable flexibility in the Trust Fund. It can be used in the following ways:

- Offset development costs (Sierra property would be an example)
- Leverage federal funding for success of tax credit projects (Pecos property would be an example)
- Purchase additional property (615-619 Mesquite would be an example)
- Open RFP process for affordable housing projects

DESERT HOPE APARTMENTS

The City staff, a consultant, Juan Olivera, Executive Director of the Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority (MVPHA), and Nicole Martinez Executive Director of the Mesilla Valley Community of Hope Hope approached the City Council with a plan to apply for tax credits to create 36 supportive housing units. The proposal would utilize the Pecos Apartments owned by MVPHA with supportive services provided by the Community of Hope. The Housing Authority would be able to attach vouchers to the property – thus assuring a steady income stream. The Community of Hope would provide supportive services including on-site case management and referral to other agencies. The total cost of this project is \$5 million.

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) is a federal program administered in New Mexico by MFA. These tax credits are extremely competitive. Points are awarded based on a Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). The City Council was told by the team and by an outside consultant, that there was little chance of the team being awarded these tax credits unless the City is able to contribute 10% of the total cost. This can be in the form of land, funds, or buildings. With this particular development, most of the contribution would have to be monetary.

The City has \$200,000 in HOME funds that were set aside for a tax credit project that was not funded by MFA. Additional funds can come from the Trust Fund. To fully support the Desert Hope Apartment Tax Credit proposal, additional funds would have to be allocated to the Trust Fund.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Several City Councilors noted that supporting the developments discussed would make only a marginal difference in tackling this problem. The staff agreed to develop a five-year comprehensive plan that includes specific goals for what the City can realistically accomplish. Options for funding the Trust Fund include yearly contributions from the General Fund and transferring more substantial funds on a one-time basis. There are other possibilities, including general obligation bonds and private donations.

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds from the federal government are diminishing and are threatened by more budget cuts. During the last fiscal year, the City received a total of approximately \$1 million in funding for the two programs.

The LWVGLC Affordable Housing Committee (Beth Bardwell, Jane Carter, Chris Little, Vicki Simons, Christie Sorg) will stay tuned. We also invite other League members to join us. This could be a time of much needed action.