



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF EVANSTON

THE INTERCOM

JULY - AUGUST 2010

Cook County “Lunch & Learn” Enlightens Members On Health & Hospitals System

by Elizabeth Hayford

A primary mission of the League is to inform members about vital government functions. The Cook County LWW fulfilled this responsibility at a July 28 Lunch and Learn presentation on the Health and Hospitals System. HHS is a major part of Cook County Government activities, comprising about 29% of County expenditures and almost one-third of County personnel, over 7000 employees. This is the third largest public health system in the country.

Details of the work of the Independent HHS Board and its new Strategic Plan were presented by Warren Batts, Chairman of the Board, and William Foley, CEO of the Health and Hospitals System. They pointed out that the system provides medical services to Cook County residents lacking other medical options, generally those without insurance. Currently the system includes three hospitals and a number of primary care clinics, receiving more than 600,000 patient visits this year. Total expenditures for health and hospital services are about \$1 billion this year.

The Independent Board was created in February 2008 to remove the system from oversight by the County President and put it under professional management. After gathering extensive information about how the system used its resources, the Board

developed a strategic plan to respond to an anticipated increase in patients through creating a patient centered system with more outpatient services. They are also committed to improving patient care and service in the system, reducing the long waits and becoming more efficient through better staff training and utilization of electronic records. The newly created and expanded clinics will provide better access to care, and the County will develop partnerships with other providers to coordinate primary and specialty care. Recognizing the value of this independent oversight, the County Board at the end of July made the Board, initially a three year experiment, permanent.

The proposed reorganization of Cook County health services has come about after a decade of effort to bring about reforms in County government and services. The Cook County League is part of this reform effort, observing County government activities and meeting with officials to support steps to make government more efficient and cost effective.

As well as observing and reporting on County Board meetings, the League has observers at the meetings of the Independent HHS Board, organized by an interest group reviewing Board discussions and plans. Anyone interested in working with the Cook County HHS interest group would be welcome and should contact the County League at cook@lwwil.org.

Let Your Voice Be Heard In Springfield!

If you are a resident, taxpayer, worker (employed or unemployed), student or retiree in the State of Illinois, you have reason to be concerned about the state of our state. The same is true if you are a client, employee, volunteer, or board member of an agency or organization that is reliant on state funding. How bad is the budget crisis in Illinois? Will it get worse before it gets better?

Hear what our elected officials have to say about the Illinois budget crisis at the League's legislative luncheon on **Friday, August 27, 12 noon –1:30 p.m.** The event will be held at the Unitarian Church of Evanston, 1330 Ridge Ave (corner of Greenwood & Ridge).

Our guests will be State Representative **Robyn Gabel** (18th District), State Senator **Jeff Schoenberg** (9th District), and State Representative **Lou Lang** (16th District).

We will be having catered box lunches from Food for Thought and the charge will be \$20. To make a reservation, please phone the League office 847.866.7844.



Mission Statement

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

President's Letter

Taking on the responsibility of leading the League of Women Voters of Evanston aligns well with creating my own personal legacy of civic engagement. I was raised in a family where, even though we lived in a small community, the role models created by my parents demanded giving back to the community. When I was quite young in the 1950's, my father was the mayor and he then proceeded to serve as chair of the local planning commission a few years later and a host of other roles in local government. The problems faced during that era are so far removed from the challenges faced by local governments across the country today, it leaves no choice but to roll up one's sleeves and do what is necessary to educate the public and encourage civic engagement.

I joined the League knowing very little about its rich history but - simply put - recognized it as an organization that looked interesting to me. Up to that point, I had volunteered with the Evanston Police, served briefly on the Commission on Aging and had been a long-time volunteer for First Night Evanston. I was in search of an organization where I could dig in and make a difference. That was in March 2007. Fast forward to today and I don't believe I could have envisioned then that I would be serving as president of the second-largest League in Illinois.

I normally start new ventures in a "hit the ground running" mode and this time is no exception. You'll notice that we have returned to the practice of sending out *The Intercom* by snail mail. I realized how much I missed having a hard copy vs. the electronic copy and among board members the feeling was mutual. I hope you will enjoy having this convenience once again.

By now you will also have received the first of our new email blast communications brought to you by MailChimp (it was said I could go bananas as President) so knowing it put a distinctly new face on how members learn about upcoming events, I found it appealing (puns are totally intentional as my sense of humor will become apparent). I am extremely grateful for the assistance of Janet Kittlaus and Julie Winsberg in launching the use of MailChimp. I don't believe members fully realize sometimes how many hours are spent in the course of a year by Janet Kittlaus in her role as membership database coordinator. It is a time-consuming responsibility and she carries it off seamlessly. I always feel one can never thank others enough for their tireless efforts on behalf of our league.

In this issue you'll find details about the Legislative Lunch on August 27. You'll learn how you can become involved with the local program issues under discussion this year (foreclosures in Evanston and the challenges of the Evanston city budget) and many other ways you can dig in and make a difference.

In her opening remarks as the incoming president of the LWWUS, Elisabeth McNamara urged us all to go out and get in the way and make our voices heard at every level of government. We certainly can do this in Evanston this year and feel a strong sense of satisfaction and perhaps continue building on our own personal legacy.

Wishing you the very best, Susan



League of Women Voters of Evanston

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THE INTERCOM

July - August 2010

THE INTERCOM is the newsletter of the
League of Women Voters® of Evanston.

LWV Observer Corps Keeps Eyes & Ears On Local Government

— by Jessica Feldman

Are you new to the League or to Evanston? Have you found yourself with extra free time? A good way to get to know what is going on in Evanston is to become part of the League's Local Government Observer Corps. League members volunteer to attend at least one of the twice monthly meetings of the City Council or one of the Council's Standing Committees—Administration & Public Works, Planning & Development, and Human Services—or the once monthly meeting of the Rules Committee. A report is written based on the League members' observations. Summaries of these reports are shared in the Intercom. The Observers also meet monthly to discuss issues that may arise out of the meetings. If you are interested, please contact Observer Coordinator Jessica Feldman at 847-864-2199 or jessief@sbcglobal.net .

Highlights from Observer Reports: 2009 - 10

Planning & Development Committee

Compared to prior years, there was no development happening in Evanston. This was reflected in the agendas of the Planning & Development Committee (P&D), which did not deal with any development issues, except extending for one year several planned developments for which approvals were set to expire. Instead, the Committee was making decisions about other city activities, such as:

- Approval for seven sidewalk cafes and ordinances granting special use permits for seven restaurants. There were also special uses granted for a convenience store (Vinic Wine), an animal hospital, a child daycare center, a church, and a sheltered care home.
- Requests for rent subsidies for Connections for the Homeless Families in Transition Program (FIT) and matching funds for the Homeless Management Information System.

Among the applications approved for submittal for Federal and County funds, were the following:

1. an application to the U.S. Dept of Housing and Urban Development for \$39,400.00 under the Neighborhood Stabilization II Program; (City received \$18 million)
2. a \$500,000 proposal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a grant to establish a business loan fund for energy conservation
3. an application to Cook County for funding under the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP1) for approximately \$4,000,000
4. a Certified Local Government Grants-in-Aid application to survey one-half of the Historic District

The Committee also dealt with various affordable housing issues and received regular updates on foreclosure activity in Evanston. Lastly, there were numerous minor amendments recommended to be made to the zoning code, including removing Membership Organizations and

Religious Institutions from the list of permitted and special uses in the I-1 "Industrial/Office," I-2 "General Industrial," and I-3 "General Industrial" districts; one related to Townhouse Orientation, requiring condominium and townhome associations and/or management companies to identify rental units and provide owner and tenant contact information to the Property Standards Department, and one affecting zoning fees to reduce the cost to both applicants and the City by changing the technology and procedure by which public meetings and hearings are recorded.

Human Services Committee (HS)

The Human Services Committee agenda items over the past year of particular interest to the League include the Evanston Township budget, Mental Health Board funding, and discussion of the mission and future of the Human Relations Commission. Other items on the Committee's agenda included: citizen review of police complaints, backyard chickens, idling motor vehicles, feral cat hoarding, and public nudity.

Administration & Public Works (A&PW)

- Continued close review and oversight of payroll and bills.
- Continued maintenance and repair of roads and sewers including Isabella Street.
- Actuarial Report for Fire and Pension Board was given 9.29.09. This issue has been a hot topic for several years and will continue to be a financial problem for the city as the city tries to find additional funding to meet the deficit in pension funding.
- Renovations of boiler and roof at Robert Crown Center. This building has needed repairs for quite awhile.
- Change in trash collection to include a new sanitation service charge fee structure of \$6.95 for a 65-gal carts and \$10.95 for a 95-gal cart, a \$1.75 for yard waste stickers to be affixed to yard waste paper bags and/or tree trimming bundles or alternately an unlimited collection of yard waste from a wheeled cart purchased from the City at a rate of \$25 per year, and an additional cart fee of \$6.95 per cart.
- Revisions to the street sweeping schedule reducing the number of times each street is swept.
- Contract extension with Groot, Inc. for recycling collection.
- Sheridan Road Signal Upgrade Project: Chicago Avenue to Central Street. Sheridan Road traffic signal at Northwestern University parking lot entrance, south of Garrett Place.

Rules Committee

The responsibilities of the Rules Committee are to assign aldermen to various committees and appoint chairs to standing committees, determine jurisdictional disputes between committees, revise Council rules, prepare a list of mayors-pro-tem, coordinate City Manager Review, and any other matters referred to it by Council or Mayor. The Committee meets from 6 pm until about 7 pm on the first Monday of the month.

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League Addresses Local Issues

- by Elizabeth Hayford

Each year the League identifies important local issues to achieve its primary goal of developing active and informed citizens. We address topics of local concern to educate ourselves and the community about what Evanston residents and our city government should be doing. Each year we form working groups to investigate issues, learn more about what people and groups are working to solve problems, and bring recommendations to our members and city representatives.

The two issues adopted at the Annual Meeting in May reflect economic concerns here in Evanston that can be found throughout the country. Housing Foreclosures in Evanston bring together many questions, including: What caused the foreclosure crisis in Evanston? What is the City doing and what should the City do? How will the recent federal grant of \$18 million be used to relieve family disruptions? Are there different perspectives on the topic that might be presented by the Mayor, the City Manager, bankers, or real estate agents?

The second topic brings together economic and political perspectives. The Evanston City Budget: the Current Crisis and Longer-term Options includes looking into the impact of tax-exempt properties on the city budget; the impact of budget cuts on human services; understanding the most important sources of revenue and areas of expenses; and how Evanston residents can have input into budget priorities.

The city budget currently is severely impacted by the need to fund pensions for Evanston fire fighters and police. Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl has asked the League to help Evanston residents comprehend how the pension shortfalls developed and what options exist for putting the pension funds on a sound basis. The League might want to link this into the broader budget study or address it separately.

League members are encouraged to express interest in working on either or both of these topics. Working groups will meet in the fall and winter to review the scope of these concerns, identify knowledgeable individuals or groups already working on them, and determine how the League can support or contribute to these efforts. One goal will be to better inform our members through a program, an Intercom article or other means. Developing a new position or urging action by city officials might also result from our efforts.

Please let me know if you would like to help plan activities related to these issues, and if you know of individuals or groups who might be good sources of information.

Betty Hayford, ehayford@gmail.com

LWVE Calendar of Events

All programs are free unless otherwise noted.
For more information, call 847-866-7844 or visit
Calendar updates at: www.lwve.org

Friday, August 13 ~ 10 am - 12 Noon **Celebrate Social Security's 75th Birthday**

North Shore Retirement Hotel

1611 Chicago Avenue in Evanston

Special guest: **The Honorable Jan Schakowsky**

More information: 847.864.6400

Presented by Alliance for Retired Americans and NCPSSM

Thursday, August 26 ~ 5:30 - 7:30 pm **Celebrate Women's Equality Day**

O'Briens Restaurant 1528 North Wells in Chicago

Special guests: **Julie Hamos & Louise W. Knight**

Information & registration: ChicagoAAUW@hotmail.com

Presented by Chicago AAUW, Inc. & the League of Women Voters of Chicago. (Admission: \$30)

Friday, August 27 ~ 12 Noon - 1:30 pm

2010 Legislative Luncheon (more details page 1)

Unitarian Church of Evanston 1330 Ridge Avenue

in Evanston (corner of Greenwood Street & Ridge Avenue)

Speakers: 18th District State Representative Robyn Gabel

9th District State Senator Jeff Schoenberg

16th District State Representative Lou Lang

Cost \$20. Reservations: 847.866.7844 (by Aug 8.24)

This event is open to LWVE members and their guests only.

Monday, September 13 ~ Save the date

Evanston City Council Meeting

Current Pensions Crisis: What It Means to Evanston

Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center

2100 Ridge Avenue in Evanston

Speaker: **Professor Josh Rauh**, NU Kellogg School of Management's pension expert. Check website for update.

Wednesday, September 15 ~ 6:30 pm

Dinner honoring State Rep. Beth Coulson

Wagner Farm 1510 Wagner Road in Glenview

Presented by Glenview League of Women Voters

Cost \$17.00 per person

Information: Pam Petersen pbp46@aol.com

RSVP's help us plan.

Please call us at 847.866.7844 to reserve
your spot for upcoming presentations.

LWVE Membership News

– by Karen Hunt, Membership Chair

Membership renewals for the 2010 – 2011 year are underway! The Evanston League's fiscal year began July 1. Consequently, the sooner members renew their memberships, the easier it is for the League – both in terms of administration and liquidity. This year the Evanston League increased its membership dues to \$70 for individuals, \$105 for families and \$65 for seniors. The increase was necessitated by the collective increase in per-member-payments (PMP's) made by the County, State & National Leagues. Every member of every local league is automatically a member of these other levels of LWV. And, as frustrating as the email volume may become at times, these additional memberships offer all members the chance to be informed about their government at all levels.

After payment of PMP's, the balance of each member's dues covers the local League's operations – publication of the Intercom, office rent, honorariums for guest speakers and operational expenses. This year, the Evanston League has decided to return to a paper publication of the Intercom for all members. Over the last two years, we have been uploading the electronic version to our website and advising members of its availability. League members without access received a paper copy. Several members mentioned that the paper publication results in a closer reading and an additional reminder for upcoming events. So the Intercom will be published bimonthly and all members will receive a hard copy. Hopefully, this will help keep all members better informed. Regardless of your tenure with the League, I am sure you will find that being a member keeps you better informed and involved as a citizen. **Please remember to renew at your earliest convenience!** I look forward to seeing and meeting you at upcoming events

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Inspiration Abounds At LWWUS Convention

– by Susan Black

Experiencing living history was a magnificent way to start the ball rolling at the League's national convention in Atlanta from June 11-15. We had the distinct privilege of hearing Congressman John Lewis from Georgia as he presented welcoming remarks. Knowing what he had endured as a civil rights leader and hearing his fiery rhetoric set the stage for making this a memorable convention. The following day we had the honor of hearing from a panel of past presidents of LWWUS starting from the early 60's to the present time. Their remembrances of the challenges they faced and their achievements were an outstanding testament to their leadership of the League in times that had many unusual obstacles. For the keynote address on the evening of June 14, we heard from Robert Cooney, author of a new book telling the remarkable story of Carrie Chapman Catt and the other suffragists whose fervent passion and determination gave women the right to vote. Mr. Cooney cares deeply about getting this story into the hands of young people and he is working on a new book that will be more reasonably priced and accessible for use in schools around the country.



Voula Moragiannis (left) and Susan Black (right) as part of Illinois delegation to the LWWUS Convention in Atlanta, GA

For more about the daily proceedings at the Convention, please check out these links to the LWWUS website: www.lww.org

For June 13 Proceedings go to: www.lww.org > For Members > Council & Conventions > Report of Convention Action for June 13

For June 14 Proceedings go to: www.lww.org > For Members > Council & Conventions > Report of Convention Action for June 14

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LWV Observer Corps

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So what did they actually do this year? At eight of their meetings there was some type of discussion on the LWV-City Analysis and Report on Boards, Commissions and Committees (BCC). In April, Jessie Feldman with co-chair Elke Purze, presented the Report to the Rules Committee. Discussions about the Report continued over the course of the year, and it continues to be more frequently identified with the League than the City. City Manager Wally Bobkiewicz (whose first meeting as Manager was at the August, 2009 Rules Committee meeting) took over the main responsibility for a staff review of the Report, drafting a City BCC policy, and directed the discussion process during which he provided a list of potential mergers of BCCs to "reduce the workload on the diminished City staff and the need for so many volunteers". After much discussion, during which several suggested mergers were dismissed, the Rules Committee agreed that the Arts Council and Public Art Committee should be combined and the Stationary Engineers Commission should be abolished (both recommended in the BCC Report). In addition, the Energy Commission is to become a Utility Commission, adding issues on water and sewers, but not until after the ComEd franchise is finalized. The Report's challenge to review the mission of commissions is being heeded with several taking a serious look at what they are charged to vs. what they should be doing in 2010. To this end, the Rules Committee has specifically given the Human Relations Commission six months to come up with a work

plan for restructuring itself.

The committee also changed the timing of the Mondays with Council meetings. It was determined that A&PW will kick off at 5:30 pm, P&D will begin 15 minutes after the close of A&PW, and Council 15 minutes after the close of P&D, but not before 7 pm. One motivation for this was to begin Council meetings earlier so that Aldermen are not making important decisions at 10 or 11 pm. The time change is to be revisited in six months (Although convenient for Aldermen, the lack of a set time schedule may not be consumer-friendly. Your Observer Corps is tracking the start and ending times.)

In addition, the Rules Committee voted to ban video gaming in Evanston, discussed how to make Council meetings more accessible (you can see them now on YouTube but won't be able to call in your comments as that technology is still too expensive), developed a brief statement that people speaking during the public comment time be civil, discussed the lack of even distribution of AT&T cable boxes (i.e. redlining?) in parts of the City and put off a review of the Manager since he is a "credentialed manager."



Do You Want to Register Voters for the 2010 Election?

If so, you must be trained and deputized by the Office of the Cook County Clerk. Any LWV member interested in becoming a registrar should attend the 90 minute training session on Wednesday, August 18 at 7:00 pm.

The training will be held at the Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton Street. (approximately two blocks west of intersection of Lincoln Avenue and Niles Center Road). Plenty of free parking.

If you are interested in attending, RSVP by August 14 to Judy Hoffman, judhof@aol.com. In your e-mail, please confirm your name as it appears on your voter registration and also your current address.



League of Women Voters® of Evanston

2100 Ridge Avenue in Evanston, IL 60201



July - August 2010

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