



Winnebago Voter

March / April 2010

March / April Calendar

Monday, March 8, 6:30 – 8:30 pm
Winnebago LWV Board Meeting
1910 S. Westhaven Drive

Tuesday, March 9, 5:45 – 7:45 pm
DePere Kress Family Library, 333 N. Broadway
Transportation Choices for Green Bay and the Fox Valley (See page 2)

Wednesday, March 10 Noon
Food for Thought Lunch
Vitale's Italian Cuisine 215 W. Murdock Ave.
Justin Mitchell, Storm Water Management (See p. 6-7)

Monday March 15, 6:00 – 8:30 pm
State of the City, Oshkosh Convention Center (and)
Winnebago County Board Forum (6, 7, 28)
Menasha Public Library, 440 First St.

Thursday, March 18, 6:30 – 9:30 pm
Candidates Forum (see opposite column)
Oshkosh City Hall, 215 Church Ave., 4th floor

Wed. March 24, 6:30-8:00 pm, Public Forum
Appleton Public Library, lower level.
CENSUS-2010-EMPOWERMENT! (See page 6)

Thursday March 25, 6:00 pm
Neenah Mayoral Forum
Neenah City Hall, 211 Walnut St.

Monday April 12, 6:30 – 8:30 pm
Winnebago LWV Board Meeting
2033 Menominee Dr.

Wednesday, April 14, Noon
Food for Thought Lunch
Vitale's Italian Cuisine, 215 W. Murdock Ave.
UMOS United Migrant Services (See p. 4)

Spring Elections on April 6

Polls open 7 am to 8 pm

LWV FORUMS FOR NEENAH MENASHA AREA CANDIDATES

Mon. March 15: 6:00 pm
Winnebago County Board (Dist. 6, 7, 28)
Menasha Public Library, 440 First Street

Thurs. March 25: 6:00 pm
City of Neenah Mayoral Forum
Neenah City Hall, 211 Walnut St.

LWV FORUM FOR OSHKOSH AREA CANDIDATES PLUS WINNEBAGO COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

Thurs. March 18: 6:30 – 9:30 pm
Oshkosh City Hall, 4th floor

Oshkosh City Council: 6:30 – 7:30
Oshkosh Area School Board: 7:30 – 8:30
Circuit Court Judge Branch V: 8:30 – 9:10
Winnebago County Board: 9:10 – 9:30
(Dist. 12, 24)

The Oshkosh forums will be broadcast live
by Oshkosh Community TV (Citicable 10)
Oshkosh Community Radio 101.9 FM
and by video streaming at

www.oshkoshcommunitymedia.org

Questions? Call 231-4770 or 920-991-1293

Check out these web addresses:

www.lwvwinnebago.org

www.lwv.org

www.lwvwi.org

District Attorney: “We Have a Gang Problem”

Winnebago County District Attorney Christian Gossett described the issues facing his office and the county’s courts at the January Food for Thought lunch. His opening statement dealt with the state’s current budget which forces five furlough days for the assistant district attorneys. There is also talk of reducing the number of assistant district attorneys in the county. Currently there are ten, yet according to the Legislative Audit Bureau Winnebago County should have 15.



Next he pointed out that the number of felonies has dropped from 1,076 in 2007 to 889 in 2009. Likewise the number of misdemeanors has declined from 2,476 (2007) to 1,786 (2009). Nevertheless the District Attorney’s office is kept very busy.

After this opening, District Attorney Gossett answered questions. On how Minnesota’s prison population is only one-third that of Wisconsin, he said, “Minnesota spends its money keeping people out of prison. We spend our money putting people in prison.” However, he did point out some rehabilitation programs that are in the county or soon will be started. When money is tight, rehabilitation programs become popular and grow. The reverse happens when there is a lot of money.

To reduce the number of drunk driving cases and accidents he advocates legislation which would make sobriety check points legal in Wisconsin. In his opinion they have “proven to be effective” in other states.

When asked to list the three biggest problems facing his office, he was quick to answer: drugs, alcohol and gangs. “Every robbery comes back to people needing drugs,” he said. And the drugs are sold by gangs. There are 13 gangs with approximately 100 gang members in the county. There were three random shootings in the summer of 2009. “We have a drug problem,” he concluded. The gangs are not the movie stereotypes, he remarked. “[People] have romanticized gangs.” He dismissed the notion that certain high school students are merely flirting with gang action or are gang wannabes. There is no such thing. If they act like gang members, they are. He described the rituals teens go through to enter gangs. (Not a pretty picture.) He has taken on the task of dealing with gang activity in the county and is fighting to get the county to overcome the notion that “this could not be happening here.”



You are invited to Transportation Choices for the Fox Valley and Green Bay Area

At the DePere Kress Family Branch library, 333 N. Broadway, DePere, March 9th, 2010, 5:45 – 7:45 pm.

Come hear experts on public transit and transportation choices. Join the discussion and take action to bring a Regional Transit Authority and transportation choices to your community. Regional Transit Authorities in the Fox Valley and Green Bay Metro Area will:

- create jobs,
- spur development and economic growth,
- attract business and investors.

Please RSVP or for more information contact Brad Sauer, Green Bay Transit Alliance, 920-544-7453, brad.sauer@savegreenbaymetro.com This event is part of an effort by a coalition of individuals and organizations that want to increase mobility and transportation access in their communities. LWV Winnebago County is a co-sponsor.

Winnebago County LWV Hosts Candidates Forums for February Primary

Five candidates for Winnebago County Circuit Court Judge Branch V stated their qualifications and answered questions at a forum on January 21. The forum was held in Oshkosh City Hall council chambers and was broadcast on Citicable 10 and Oshkosh Community Radio 101.9 FM courtesy of Oshkosh Community Media Services and was also available via video stream at www.oshkoshcommunitymedia.org.

Questions were posed by the audience and David Jones, professor of criminal justice at UW Oshkosh.



Following that a ninety minute forum was held for the seven candidates running for Oshkosh City Council. Pictured below are the seven: from left to right: Burk Tower, Allan Siiman, Brian Poeschl, John Hinz, Steve Herman, Ron Hardy and Steve Cummings.



Questions came from the audience and panel member Elliott Garb. The moderator of both panels was Frankie Mengeling.

The primary election for mayor in Neenah brought forth a lively and interesting forum on Thursday, February 11, 2010. Four candidates: George Scherck, incumbent mayor and seeking his final four-year term, Todd Stevenson, Common Council president, Tony Belling, a barber and Scott Rosenow, college student at University of Madison were the candidates. The forum was held at the City Hall in Neenah and about 90 individuals from the public attended. The forum was broadcast on Time Warner Cable's public access channel at 1 p.m. Saturday, February 12, 8 p.m. Sunday, February 13, and 11 a.m. Monday, February 15. After the primary election another candidates' forum will be held for the mayoral position, a forum for the aldermanic race in Menasha, and the Winnebago County board districts in the Neenah/Menasha area will also be scheduled.

Our LWV electronic membership list is for disseminating information on League matters. If you hear of an event that you think League should know about, send this information electronically to Kathy at jkpropp@earthlink.net. She, in turn, can send it out to the full membership list.

School Board President Lists Options Facing Board

School Board President Ben Schneider II outlined the options the school board was going to face February 10 (the evening of our Food for Thought lunch) at its meeting. *(Pictured below left to right Mary Olson, former OASD board member; Mr. Schneider; and Susan Nuernberg, FFT lunch chair)* Anticipating a large crowd at the meeting, the school district had set the meeting in the Alberta Kimball Auditorium at West High School.

Mr. Schneider handed out the “Preliminary 2010-2011 Budget Reconciliation Options” and went through them one by one. These are the nine options as prepared by the Oshkosh Area School District administrators, briefly stated:



1. Reduce one west side middle school building (Tipler)
2. Reduce one north side middle school building
3. Move 5th grade to middle school
4. Change middle school teacher schedule to 6 teaching periods per day
5. Raise student teacher ratios at high schools
6. Reconfigure Activities Director positions
7. Co-curricular Academics/Athletics
8. Discontinue OEHS: put students in ONHS and OWHS
9. Discontinue/downsize all extended OEA contracts

He described the dilemma Oshkosh school district –indeed many school districts face— because of the three per cent reduction in state aid. OASD has a 120 million dollar budget. Eighty-five per cent of it is staff salaries and benefits. There is no way to “close enough schools to balance our budget.” Taxes will increase.

Some of the above items are “off the table,” he said. Items 2, 4, 6, and 9 (this is a collective bargaining issue) he skipped over quickly. He liked the idea of including 5th and maybe 4th grade students in the middle schools. He pointed out the low attendance rate and graduation rate at OEHS. At the time of our lunch, the idea of closing Tipler Middle School seemed almost a done deal. However, we all know that the board did not do that, instead going with item 5. There were many questions and comments about raising the student/teacher ratio at the lunch. People were concerned about the higher level math, science and foreign language classes in particular.

In sum, Mr. Schneider felt the board “has to make a better job of planning.”

UMOS Presentation Set for April Food for Thought Lunch

UMOS is a private, non-profit corporation established in 1965 to advocate for and provide services to Hispanic migrant and seasonal farm workers in Wisconsin.

Today, UMOS offers diverse programs and services to diverse populations. UMOS’ mission is to provide programs and services which improve the employment, education, health, and housing opportunities of under-served populations. The UMOS corporate offices are located in Milwaukee. Its programs operate throughout the state of Wisconsin, as well as in Minnesota, Kansas, Missouri, and Texas. (See web site: <http://www.umos.org/>)

WATCH YOUR MAIL BOXES

The 2000 Census Questionnaire Arrives in March

(Contributed by Ann Marshall)

This year every residence will receive a short census questionnaire of just 10 questions. Households are asked to provide key demographic information, including: whether a housing unit is rented or owned; the address of the residence; and the names, genders, ages and races of all persons living in the household. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share an individual's responses with anyone, including other federal agencies and law enforcement entities.

You are asked to complete the form as soon as you receive it and mail it back to the Census Bureau, in the envelope provided, by April 1. If you, or anyone you know, is "wintering" elsewhere, a census form may come to the vacation address as well. Because the primary residence is Wisconsin, the vacationer should put zero in the space asking for number of people in the household as of April 1 and should write across the form in large letters "usual residence elsewhere". It should be mailed back to the Census Bureau. The questionnaire from the Wisconsin address should be the form that is actually completed.

Households that do not respond by April 1 will receive a replacement questionnaire in early April. In May Census takers will begin visiting households that have not returned questionnaires to take a count in person.

Every year, the federal government allocates more than \$400 billion to states and for critical community services such as **food, shelter, education, transportation, etc.** The results of the census are also used to determine boundaries for state and local legislative and congressional districts.

It is important that Winnebago County gets everyone counted. A representative of our local League is participating in the Complete Count Committees of both the City of Oshkosh and Winnebago County. We will share in our next newsletter what action the League is taking to try to educate and encourage high participation in typically "hard-to-count" populations.

CENSUS-2010-EMPOWERMENT! Public Forum, *March 24, 6:30PM-8:00PM,* Appleton Public Library, lower level. A group of eight panelists will share important information and answer questions pertaining to the census count. How does four hundred billion dollars get dispersed by the government? Will we get our share? How are new districts drawn for equal representation? Who draws them? Why might Wisconsin be undercounted? **The panel includes** U.S. Census Bureau Regional Specialist, Dale McNamee, Lawrence University Assistant Professor of Government, Arnold Shober, Outagamie County Planner, Mike Hendrick, Seymour City Clerk, Susan Garsow, Shirley Strange, Appleton League of Women Voters, Debra Cronmiller Appleton Emergency Shelter Director, Kathy Flores City of Appleton Diversity Director, and a representative from the Appleton School District. Sponsored by the Appleton League of Women Voters and the Appleton Public Library. Open to all.

LWV Members Hash over National, State and Local Issues at Lively Issues

Winnebago County LWV members gathered at the Coughlin Center Saturday, February 20 to discuss national, state and local issues. The Lively Issues is a required session at all local leagues in late winter. After this session, the local issues suggested by the membership are discussed by the board and written up for the annual meeting. Local items appear for final approval by the membership at the Annual Meeting in May.

After a delicious brunch, the members spent fifteen minutes on two state questions:

Should the state study of State Supreme Court judicial selection be tabled, due to lack of committee volunteers? And, does our league wish to undertake a review of one of the LWV Wisconsin older positions? If so, which one? We chose to table the judicial selection item and not to engage in a review of an older position.

The second phase of the meeting was a discussion of nine topics suggested on a national convention list serve by leagues around the country for National study and action. We are permitted to choose only one item for study, concurrence, or updating. Other topics could also be considered. Briefly listed, the nine items were:

- ☆ Adopt a study on the establishment of a cabinet level Department of Peace
- ☆ Comprehensive study of the election systems
- ☆ Study the role of the federal government in public education
- ☆ Concurrence: LWV US supports the lifting of travel restrictions to Cuba
- ☆ Civic literacy
- ☆ Redistricting: develop best practices for non-partisan redistricting
- ☆ Access to Clean Water Supply
- ☆ Concurrence: The LWV US supports significant strengthening of the regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties with regard to the development of fossil fuel resources and the mining of hard rock.
- ☆ Other?

Our League chose the redistricting topic. The LWV US Board will compile results from all leagues to recommend appropriate topics to the June national convention.

The bulk of the morning meeting was a discussion of possible local items. Some of these amounted to editing current positions, revising wording in current positions as well as new items. What these local items are and how they will be phrased will appear in the May & June newsletter.



Members Discuss Issues

March Food for Thought Lunch Speaker Expert on Environmental Issues

Justin Mitchell, vice chair of the Sustainable Oshkosh Advisory board, is the March lunch speaker. His presentation is titled "Oshkosh and Water Stewardship." Overview: Water has been identified as one of the most important resources for our city and is a focal point of our identity - Oshkosh on the Water. The community is transitioning into a time in which sustainability has become a high priority. This presentation will examine the issues surrounding

water stewardship within the city while reviewing effective programming that other communities have implemented.

As vice-chair of the Sustainable Oshkosh Advisory board, he works with city staff, community partners, and residents to help move Oshkosh towards a more sustainable future. In 2010, he also began participation with the Oshkosh Area School District Sustainability Committee. Justin's environmental projects include: water quality and protection programming, development of inner-city community garden options, development of bicycle-friendly city routes, home-safety programming including lead abatement, and natural urban landscaping.

Justin lives in Oshkosh with his wife and two daughters. He works as the family housing coordinator for the Oshkosh Housing Authority, helping lower income families access safe and affordable housing.

League Makes Statement on Park Pumping Station at Feb. 23 City Council Meeting

My name is Lurton Blassingame, 1926 E. Murdock Ave. Oshkosh. I am speaking as a member of the League of Women Voters of Winnebago County. The League of Women Voters of Winnebago County is committed to sound planning practices in all aspects of municipal government. We continue to ask why there is no comprehensive planning for stormwater management.

What does comprehensive planning for storm water management mean?

First, it means the city looks at the several (50-60?) smaller watersheds on the east side of the city in the context of the entire area. It then assesses, prioritizes and offers options for resolution. It does not propose a \$3-4 million pump station as an isolated incident, without an understanding of how adjacent neighborhoods will address the same issue in the future.

Second, it looks at the amount of stormwater being generated and examines ways the flow can be reduced. In the instance of East Melvin St., storm water became a priority because of street reconstruction. In the reconstruction effort, is the impervious pavement being reduced? Is the terrace being expanded? How many trees are being planted? Is there any effort to enlist residents in installing rain gardens or rain barrels?

Third, it looks at the area into which the water is being discharged and assesses water quality. In this case, Miller's Bay is already a disturbed ecosystem. Are there better options that could address the water quality issue?

Fourth, it looks at the impact on land use. The East Melvin St. pump station is being located in Menominee Park. Protecting our park land for open space and recreational use is typically a mandate of city government. This type of encroachment is a slippery slope sometimes difficult to stop.

We are not saying the East Melvin Street pump station should be a no go. We are suggesting this decision be delayed for a few weeks or however long it takes while the city assesses the multiple watersheds on the east side of Oshkosh and determines potential impact. We are saying the city should be looking at storm water management in a comprehensive fashion, not only making an assessment of watersheds but looking at best management practices for storm water reduction, improving water quality, and addressing the concurrent land use issues that arise. Then, within this context, look again at where the East Melvin Street pump station fits into the big picture and decide at that time if this is indeed a good decision.