



UPDATE

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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Website: www.lwvlosalamos.org

Volume 63, Number 6
February 2011

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Calendar

- February 10 Lunch with a Leader: Gene Schmidt, LAPS Superintendent, Central Ave. Grill, 11:45 a.m.
- February 15 Program Planning, 249 Rio Bravo, White Rock
- February 24 Board meeting, PEEC, noon
- March 8 Lunch with a leader: Magistrate Judge Pat Casados, Justice Center, 11:45
- March 8 Fundraising Party, 235 Kimberly Lane, White Rock, 7-9 p.m.

Lunch with a Leader, February 10, with Gene Schmidt

Something new is happening with the monthly Lunch with a Leader program. The day of the luncheon has been changed from the 2nd Tuesday to the 2nd Thursday of the month beginning in February. Thursday, February 10, LAPS superintendent, Gene Schmidt, and Kelly Myers (former teacher, currently with ReMax) will present the findings of almost a year-long effort on a long range planning report for Los Alamos Public Schools.

This will be an extremely important presentation as it addresses the cuts that LAPS WILL have to make because of the additional 1.5% cut to education that Gov. Martinez plans to implement. People attending this meeting will see the powerpoint program from the long range planning committee, have time for questions and answers, and will be given the opportunity to send written feedback as to what LAPS should cut from their budget. Possibilities are PE, art, nurses, counselors, teachers, principals, clerks, secretaries, instructional assistants, athletics, librarians, a shorter school year for students, etc. Unfortunately, it will take a combination of cuts to balance the budget. Just cutting one or two items will not be sufficient. This is why everyone's feedback and ideas are so important.

The lunch is from 11:45-12:45 at Central Avenue Grill. As always, you will be able to choose from a wide variety of items and the cost will be \$15 for the entrée, beverage, and gratuity. I will be out of town, so please e-mail Barbara Calef (*president(AT)lwvlosalamos(DOT)org*) or call 662-3825 by February 9 to let her know you are coming.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

President's Message

The forum for candidates for school board and UNM-LA Advisory Board gave the voters an opportunity to comprehend the difficult task that lies ahead for both organizations as they attempt to maintain high standards with diminishing income in the public school system and the college. Clearly all of the candidates had given much thought to addressing the budget shortfall. The League of Women Voters of New Mexico is very concerned about the impact of further cuts to education and is lobbying the legislature to support proposals for increasing revenue.

Speaking of elections, our local League will elect a new board during the annual meeting in April. Right now Carroll Thomas, Michael McKay, and Karyl Ann Armbruster, the members of our Nominating Committee, are looking for volunteers to fill positions both on and off the board. Please let one of them know if you are interested. Come to the next board meeting (PEEC at noon on Feb. 24) to see what is involved!

Barbara Calef

Welcome, New Members!

We may have lost track of the exact number of new members who have joined the League recently, but here's our current list. We hope we haven't missed anyone! But we're pleased to have all of you involved in League events.

Betty Gunther
Kristin Henderson
Debbie Gill
Eduardo Santiago
Ginger Young
Jake Turin
Joella Mortillaro
John and Marilyn Dienes
Judy McKenzie
Marilyn Doolen
Nancy Holmes
Susan Mack
Bruce and Debbie Cromer

Program Planning

On Tuesday, February 15 from 7 to 9 all League members are invited to gather at Renate Zinn's house at 249 Rio Bravo in White Rock for an evening of program planning. Our League will begin a new year after the Annual Meeting in April and on this evening we will discuss what we would like to accomplish during 2011-2012.

We will look at our League's current positions (on our website at <http://lwvlosalamos.org>) to see if there are any that need to be updated. We will also consider whether there are local issues that we would like to address, but for which we have no position.

Additionally this year we can propose an update of a state League position, or even a new study at the state level.

So bring your ideas and a dessert to share and come to the party!

Directions to Renate's house:

Turn left off SR 4 onto Monte Rey Drive South. This is the 4th street on the left after the Pajarito Road traffic light.
Turn right onto Potrillo Drive.
Turn left onto Rio Bravo Drive.
The house will be on the right.

Fundraising Event

This year Betsy Comly will host the annual fundraising party for League members on Tuesday, March 8 from 7 to 9 p.m. It's an opportunity to catch up with old friends and to make new friends while addressing letters and envelopes to prospective donors within the community. Refreshments will be served. Betsy lives in White Rock at 235 Kimberly Lane.

Barbara Calef

2011 Legislative Preview

Representative Jeannette Wallace reported that the Legislative Finance Committee and the Governor have each produced a plan to balance the budget through cuts, without raising taxes. The House Appropriations Committee will consider both plans while drafting their own version. When the committee has agreed on a budget, it goes to the full House for a vote.

Most of the General Fund goes to support public education and Medicaid.

The recommendations of the Government Restructuring Task Force, which met monthly during the summer and fall, won't affect the budget this year because the bills they have submitted must first pass the legislature and be signed into law.

Senator Carlos Cisneros reported that the 2010 census shows the population shifting from the eastern part of the state to the middle and from rural areas to cities. The New Mexico population has not increased sufficiently for an additional congressional district. Any changes in districting must be approved by the Legislature in 2012.

The senator said the legislature must restructure, streamline, and push for cost-containment. He felt there was no point passing legislation for any tax increase because Governor Martinez says she would not sign it. Cisneros hopes to be able to mitigate cuts to the judiciary and higher education after the financial update due in mid-February.

Dick Mason, League member and Legislative Chair of Health Action New Mexico, explained that the legislature must act now to create a health insurance exchange or cede the responsibility to the federal government. A health insurance exchange is a mechanism for the insurance companies in the state to give consumers (including small businesses) a listing of their provisions and costs. The state is being given \$1 million through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to do the necessary planning. Funding from the federal government for the

health insurance exchange will continue until 2015. After that the exchange will be paid for by the participating insurance companies. It will include two national plans and one state-based, non-profit cooperative. To govern the exchange and the various councils required by the federal law, the legislature needs to create a board capable of handling the technical requirements without any conflict of interest, one that will operate with maximum transparency. In other words, no insurance company representatives should serve on the board. Mason pointed out that the concept for this approach to universal health care was developed by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank. The enabling legislation has been introduced by Rep. Picraux, HB 33, and Sen. Feldman, SB 38.

Representative Brian Egolf of Santa Fe noted that budgets say a lot about priorities. The government is proposing to cut 8-10% of all oversight, including a 20% cut in the NMED that would benefit chiefly the oil and gas industry.

Egolf announced that he will sponsor 18-20 bills this session, including a bad actor bill that will pull permits from persistent polluters and a bill calling for Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to remove first amendment rights from corporations. He supports the 25% film program tax credit, saying that it created 10,000 jobs and that every dollar credited by the state pays \$1.50 in return.

Saying that the tax code has 106 loopholes, Egolf proposes to reduce the tax breaks to oil, coal, and gas by half, from \$400 million to \$200 million annually. He would use the revenue to reduce the gross receipts tax by ½%. He supports the Combined Reporting Bill that would require out-of-state corporations like Walmart to pay NM taxes just as NM businesses do. He also wants to move cash deposits away from Wells Fargo to community banks, and to create a state-owned development bank that would work with community banks to make loans.

Barbara Calef

Report of December 14 Lunch with a Leader: Ralph Phelps

Ralph Phelps, Los Alamos County Councilor, is a native of New York City who has also lived in California and Virginia. A former nuclear engineer, he decided to retire in New Mexico, where he had met his wife while stationed at Kirtland as a captain in the Air Force. When Jim West resigned from the County Council, at the end of 2008, Phelps responded to the call for applicants to complete West's term. Since he does not relish campaigning, Phelps welcomed the opportunity to serve on the Council without having to run for office.

As a councilor, Phelps enjoyed the interactions with regional institutions, state agencies, and the federal government. He felt that he and his colleagues functioned as a "pretty good team" without compromising independent opinions. He has enjoyed learning about the culture of Los Alamos - history, impact on technology, importance to defense. Phelps's philosophy of government is that there is no perfect solution in politics, no such thing as win-win. The politician's role is to try to identify what will work. He believes that it is important to combine leading with governing despite the difficulty of communicating with the public. Referring to the topic of the recent forum on the structure of government, Phelps expressed a preference for campaigning in non-partisan elections.

Speaking about the Trinity Site, Phelps said he was a proponent of terminating the agreement with Boyer because they were not as straightforward as they should have been. He feels that North American, the new developer, will serve the community better. In response to queries about why the anchor store will be another Smith's, he said that Kroger is "the only game in town" and the company has agreed to renovate Mari-Mac.

Referring to the petition to hold an election about

whether the original Municipal Building should be rebuilt on the original site, Phelps felt that governing required the Council to accept the initiative despite the County Attorney's warning that it might be illegal. He recommended that the Charter Review Committee review the section on initiative and referendum in the County Charter.

In closing, Phelps announced that he would run for a position on the UNM-LA Advisory Board.

Barbara Calef

Report of January 11 Lunch with a Leader: Steve Watts

After five years of hard work, the Los Alamos Cooperative Market (LACM) is set to open in February. Steve Watts, the Coop Manager, explained the "triple bottom line" to the 40 people gathered for Lunch with a Leader in January. Watts said that in the corporate world the bottom line is profitability. While that is a vital element for a successful coop, there are two additional objectives: success for people and for the planet.

LACM did not secure a bank loan, but has raised \$1.2 million from members. Another \$50,000 is still needed for working capital for the next 3-5 years. After that period, the store should begin to generate profits which will be used to fund additional projects and to return a share to the owners. A 2 to 4% net profit is considered good for a coop. Owners can expect a rebate equivalent to one week's worth of groceries.

Success for people refers to implementing fair business practices, operating transparently, treating the staff well. It means providing an atmosphere where employees feel invested, where they are asked for input and given benefits. At the LACM they will be paid a living wage, offered product discounts, given sick leave and days off. Full-time employees will be provided with health care insurance. Coop members are not allowed to work as volunteers in the store; that is forbidden by law because it would displace workers.

However, other opportunities for volunteer service, such as providing educational programs in the schools, giving cooking demonstrations or musical performances, will be available and will be rewarded with discounts.

Watts has already hired three staff members including the deli manager (who is a good baker) and the produce manager, who formerly worked at La Montanita. The store will have a total of 28-30 employees, half of whom will work full-time. The store will generate about \$600,000 in wages.

To promote a good bottom line for the planet, the coop must be a good steward of the environment. LACM is designed to conserve water and energy with the installation of R-20 insulation, insulated pipes, instant hot water, hot water re-circulation, and a white reflective roof. In the future there will be a system to divert rainwater to flush the toilets. In addition, the waste stream will be composted and the landscaping will include raised bed gardens planted with herbs. Everything that can be re-cycled will be including #5 plastic.

LACM will use the La Montanita distribution center and local producers for pasta, meat, and produce and will educate the members about how the food got to the grocery. Pricing will be similar to that of La Montanita. Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be served 7 days a week.

Barbara Calef

March Lunch with a Leader

In March, we ARE going to be meeting on Tuesday, March 8, at the Justice Center for a personal tour by Magistrate Judge Pat Casados. This had already been scheduled for Tuesday and could not be changed. So write this on your calendars!

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Observer Corps Report

Route 502/Trinity Drive

On January 25 the County Council directed the MIG Consultants to proceed with the detailed analysis of Option A2/A3 for the 4-mile section of N. M. 502/Trinity Drive from the Los Alamos County line to Diamond Drive. Option A2/A3 includes a mix of signalized and roundabout intersection treatments. The three-lane road design features a single through-lane in each direction with protected turn bays as needed. The A2/A3 alternative also includes striped bike lanes and bus pullouts. The wider bike lane would accommodate the passing of emergency vehicles.

Of the many people attending the meeting, the majority in the audience spoke in favor of Option A. Those who preferred Option A did so because they said it best improved the safety and access for all users including drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. Several supporters described how Option A could create an opportunity for enhancement to the aesthetics of Trinity Drive and improve business. A number of residents from homes adjacent to N.M. 502 and Trinity Drive spoke in favor of Option A2/A3 because they felt it best addressed the liveability issues that have been a rising concern in their neighborhoods.

After much discussion, the County Councilors voted 5 to 2 in favor of continuing the analysis and design development of Option A2/A3. Councilors Selvage and Chiravalle voted against the motion.

Janie O'Rourke

Other Local News

We have a new Los Alamos County Council. Sharon Stover was elected Council Chair, and Jim Hall was elected Vice Chair. The other council members are Fran Berting, Vincent Chiravalle, Geoff Rodgers, Ron Selvage, and Mike Wismer.

We also have a new County Administrator, Randy Autio. Both our County Administrator, Tony Mortillaro, and Assistant County Administrator, Diana Stepan, were fired recently. Since these are personnel matters, no explanation was given for the firings.

The Municipal Building project has taken a great leap forward. The County Council settled the lawsuit with local attorneys George and Chris Chandler. This meant there would be no special election to decide if the Municipal Building should be built on its original site to its original specifications. Following this action, the County Council approved the contract with Jaynes Corporation to design and build the Municipal Building at the former L.A. Apartments site. Included in the contract were add-ons for a County Records Center, a Historical Archive, I.T. expansion space, and Iris Street improvements. There will be public outreach on the design of the Municipal Building in the months ahead. Watch for it and participate.

Construction of the Los Alamos Dam is once again moving forward with a contract for construction being awarded by the County Council at their December 21 meeting. The bureaucratic back and forth with the state held the process back, but with all the paperwork in order, the construction should happen this summer.

In a special session on December 15, 2010, the County Council reviewed the Capital Improvement Project proposals for moving forward to Phase 1. After much discussion, they moved forward six proposals: the Ice Rink project, the Ashley Pond improvements, the White Rock Civic Center, the Teen Center, the Golf Course improvements, and the nature center (PEEC) proposal. The Oppenheimer/Central intersection has been referred to staff for inclusion in the 2012 budget plan.

Lynn Jones



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF LOS ALAMOS
MEMBERSHIP FORM 2010-2011**

Mail to: LWV Los Alamos
P.O. Box 158
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Check payable to LWV Education Fund
enclosed (separate check please):

_____ Tax-deductible contribution: \$ _____

Name:

Address:

Phone:

e-mail:

_____ Check here if you do NOT want to receive
electronic notification of upcoming
League events

_____ Check here if you are willing to receive
our local newsletter Update as an
electronic file, saving us postage.

Check payable to LWV - Los Alamos enclosed
to include:

_____ Sustaining membership: \$75

_____ Regular single membership: \$45

_____ Household sustaining membership (two+
people at the same address): \$95

_____ Regular household membership (two+
people at the same address): \$65

_____ Unrestricted contribution (not tax
deductible): \$ _____

Interests (check as many as apply):

_____ One-time activities (unit meetings, fund-
drive mailings, "Lunch with a Leader,"
etc.)

_____ Affordable Housing

_____ Membership

_____ Arrangements (refreshments, etc.)

_____ Newsletter

_____ Budget

_____ Observe County meetings

_____ Public Relations

_____ Election Reform

_____ Sustainability

_____ Fund Drive

_____ Voter Services

_____ Voters Guide

_____ Local Government

_____ Website

_____ "Who's in Charge" publication

_____ Not sure (just support LWV)

_____ Other (please suggest)

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.

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