



# UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

**League of Women Voters of Los Alamos**

**P. O. Box 158, Los Alamos, NM 87544**

**Website: [www.lwvlosalamos.org](http://www.lwvlosalamos.org)**

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## Calendar

October 21 Lunch with a Leader, Bonnie Gordon, Mesa Public Library, 11:40 a.m.

October 22 Education Study Meeting, UNM/LA, Building 2, Room 230, 7 p.m.

October 23 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon

**November 4 Election Day**

## ***Lunch with a Leader October 21: Bonnie Gordon***

Kurt Steinhaus discovered he had a conflict this month, so instead he will be the speaker in November. On October 21 Bonnie Gordon from the LA Daily Post will be our speaker. Longtime Los Alamos resident Bonnie Gordon joined the Los Alamos Daily Post staff in January 2013. She covers lifestyles, arts, education, business and “whatever else comes along.” Previously she worked as the *Monitor's* Community Editor, leaving there nine years ago to work at UNM-LA as the public affairs representative, graphic artist, marketer, and web master.

Gordon grew up in Boise, Idaho and attended Reed College, where she received a degree in English. She lived for several years in a socialist-feminist collective in Santa Barbara, California. During that time, she started working for the US Postal Service (USPS). She later moved to Austin where she continued to work for the USPS, serving the entire time as a shop steward. “The union makes us strong,” Gordon said.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## **President's Message**

The forums are over. Attendance was high, with the Pajarito room filled for all but the Structure of Government meeting. Now it's time to vote. For the vote center schedule and a sample ballot, go to the County Clerk's website <https://www.losalamosnm.us/clerk/Pages/Elections.aspx>;

I recommend that before you head to a vote center, you fill out a sample ballot. That way you will be sure to have the information necessary to respond to each question. You can consult the League's Voters' Guide, which arrived at your door on October 1 (also available on line at [lvwlosalamos.org](http://lvwlosalamos.org)) and the County publication on the Charter amendments that was delivered the following week. If you missed one or more of the forums, they were recorded by PAC 8 and the DVDs are at Mesa Public Library. Ask in the reference department.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Code of Conduct for Council**

The Charter Review Committee recommended a new Code of Conduct for County Council, employees, and Boards and Commissions members. A new ordinance will be introduced at the Council meeting on noon Friday, November 14, followed by a public hearing during the Tuesday, Nov. 25 Council meeting. You can read the new code by linking here:

<http://www.losalamosnm.us/news/Pages/CodeofConductPassesPersonnelBoardReviewandHeadstoCouncil.aspx>

The text is in a variety of colors. Here is the explanation from the County Attorney: Blue is current LA County Code Language from various chapters and sections within the Code. Green is NM state statute language from the Governmental Code of Conduct Act. Red is new language that's been added by the County Attorney.

Send comments to Council at [countycouncil\(AT\)lacnm\(DOT\)us](mailto:countycouncil(AT)lacnm(DOT)us) or plan to attend the meeting on November 25.

## **Observer Corps Report**

At the September 9<sup>th</sup> County Council meeting, a citizen's petition was submitted requesting that the County install some form of safe crosswalk from the south side of Trinity Drive to Ashley Pond. The Trinity crossing is especially dangerous for people with disabilities. The County has long considered this crossing a hazard and welcomed the petition. The Council directed staff to investigate whether to recommend a traffic light or high-intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) beacon for this location.

The County Council meeting on September 16<sup>th</sup> was held in White Rock. The Board of Public Utilities gave a status update to the council that included a discussion of electric rate increases. The current rate structure is not keeping pace with infrastructure replacement needs, and thus the rates must increase. In addition to replacement costs, there is a need to build a second subsystem to provide redundancy in order to prevent outages in the case of subsystem failure. The gas rates have already been updated to cover replacement costs. Sewer costs will also need to be increased to pay for replacement of the White Rock sewer system.

At the same meeting, Councilor Berting asked if the Los Alamos electric grid was as vulnerable to failure as the United States grid as a whole. The somewhat scary answer was that Los Alamos is at the tail end of a fairly weak transmission system, and so we are indeed vulnerable to failure of our system if just one or two transmission lines fail.

At the September 30<sup>th</sup> County Council meeting, the agenda included a public hearing on the proposed new Animal Code ordinance, which proved to be highly controversial. Many dog owners objected to the duration of barking considered objectionable in the ordinance. After considerable public input and debate among the councilors, a compromise was reached that probably didn't satisfy anyone, but only because there was going to be no meeting of minds between the dog owners and their neighbors who

object to barking dogs. If a dog barks continuously for 10 minutes, that qualifies as an "unreasonable animal noise."

The new Animal Code ordinance also prohibits inhumane trapping of animals on all lands within Los Alamos County that are controlled by the County. It does not apply to lands under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service.

And last but not least, at the October 10<sup>th</sup> County Council meeting, the Council approved a contract for a Los Alamos County logo design and implementation plan. Council did not commit to the actual implementation of the logo. This is going to be controversial within the community, and letters to the editor are already appearing; but do keep an open mind. Wait to see the suggested implementation before deciding whether or not this will work for our community.

*Lynn Jones*

# **Education Study Public Meeting**

The Education Study Team met on September 11 to review our research and talk about next steps. We made several refinements to the study based on our experience to date:

1. We'll focus our research and recommendations on communication between School Boards (the community's elected body) and citizens (voters).
2. We're only focused on high level information that facilitates the education and engagement of the public on issues such as: how the district will evolve over time; how it will address district-wide problems and opportunities; and how the district is spending tax dollars. Examples of this type of information include a district's strategic plan and budget and other financial information. This study is not focused on communication between parents and teachers, classroom or student specific information, or day-to-day activities.
3. We'll also evaluate the effectiveness of the distribution of information. For example, is it easy to find information on the district's website? Is the information presented to the public in a format that makes it easy for a citizen to understand?

## **Next Steps:**

We'll hold an Education Study Meeting for the entire League of Women Voters membership and the public on October 22 at 7 p.m. at UNM/LA in building 2, room 230.

We'll incorporate the feedback received at the October 22 meeting into our thinking and then begin the League of Women Voters consensus process. Consensus questions will be created by a subcommittee of the Education Study Team; a consensus meeting will be held with membership; and we'll advance this study forward to conclusion. Any questions or suggestions can be sent to Susan O'Leary at [susan.oleary\(AT\)yahoo\(DOT\)com](mailto:susan.oleary(AT)yahoo(DOT)com).

*Susan O'Leary*



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS
MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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

Check here if you wish to receive friendly reminders of upcoming events by e-mail.

Membership Categories

Single membership: \$45

Household membership (two+ people at the same address): \$65

Single Sustaining membership: \$75

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

Note: Membership checks should be payable to LWV-Los Alamos

Additional ways to support the local League

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

LWV Education Fund (tax deductible): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Checks for tax-deductible contributions must be payable to LWVLA Ed. Fund and not combined with any other payments.

Interests (check as many as apply)

- One-time activities (unit meetings, fund-drive mailings, etc.)
Affordable Housing
Election Reform
Fuller Lodge
Land Use
Local Government
Medically Indigent Fund
Public Transportation
Sustainability
Water Issues
Not sure (I 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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