



The Corpus Christi Area

Voter

August 2014

League of Women Voters
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Chris Davis Garcia

Celebrate Women's Equality Day! Learn about the upcoming Parks & Recreation referendum

The League's August luncheon meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 21, at the Del Mar College Center for Economic Development, Room 117. Have some educational fun with a quiz from the National Women's History Project and come hear some inspiring words on the history and importance of Women's Equality Day by our own Chris Garcia!

The League will also be hosting a presentation on the upcoming parks referendum presented by Mrs. Stacie Talbert Anaya, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Corpus Christi.

For those wishing to eat, a box lunch plus drink (cost \$10), will be served upon arrival. Please RSVP in one of the following ways by Monday noon, Aug. 18, to reserve your seat and lunch: By email to elenabuentello@gmail.com OR by telephone to Chris Davis Garcia, 991-2784 (recorder) or 244-4193 (cell phone). Please DO NOT leave a message on the League's phone this month!

We encourage "brown bagging" your lunch for those who prefer to not to RSVP or for those who are unable to RSVP by the Monday, August 18 deadline

LWV-CC Membership Tea on Saturday, Sept. 13

League member Jeanne Adams will host the League's Membership Tea on Saturday, Sept. 13, from 1-3 p.m. at her home, 215 Louisiana.

All League members are encouraged to submit as many names and addresses of men and women as they like (friends, neighbors, business colleagues, family members) who would enjoy receiving a printed invitation to join us at the membership recruitment event.

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 Message

By Sandra Heatherley



Sandra Heatherley

As the election news heats up along with the weather, LWV-CC is prepared to respond with information related to our theme of the "Power of the Informed Vote."

At this writing

candidates for the City Council are still filing their intentions to run for election in November. In the proposed calendar printed in the July VOTER the only action listed was the Membership Recruitment event which is scheduled for September 13. There is more about that in this newsletter.

At our July Board of Directors meeting, it was decided that we would have a membership meeting on September 18th with a program devoted to the various bond elections being proposed by taxing entities such as Del Mar, CCISD, and the City. So mark your calendars now and plan to attend.

If you didn't see our article regarding "The Power of the Informed Vote" in a recent Caller-Times Forum, you will find it reprinted in this issue of the VOTER. LWV-CC also had a booth

at the Nueces County Health Fair on August 2 to help engage voters by informing them regarding the voter ID requirement and offering an opportunity to register to vote. Photos at the bottom of this page show the action at that booth. A special thanks to members Ruth Falck and Judy Landress for all their help in arranging and staffing the booth as well as all those who volunteered their time.

Michele Villarreal-Kuchta was introduced as our new Board Secretary during the July membership meeting and attended her first Board meeting on the 21st. Also during the meeting those present had the opportunity to suggest the names and addresses of prospective members to be invited to the September 13 event. (See page 1 story.) There will be another opportunity to suggest prospective members at the August meeting.

Elena Buentello, Vice President for Program, is planning an excellent program for the August meeting which will include a celebration of Women's Equality Day (August 26) as well as the latest information regarding the proposed decommissioning of several parks in Corpus Christi. Members will also be invited to sign up for National Voter Registration Day (September 23) by selecting the time and location at which they can volunteer.



Voter registration was in full swing at the Aug. 2 Nueces County Health Fair. (Left) LWV member Barbara Vollmer pins a League button on fellow member Alex Garcia before he 'works the crowd.' (Right) Michele Villarreal-Kuchta and Peggy Duran provide bilingual assistance to an older woman registering to vote for the first time.



The Power of the Informed Vote

By Sandra Heatherley

Remember Bell, California—one of the poorest cities in Los Angeles County? In 2010 it came to light that the elected officials of Bell were making astronomical annual salaries.

The citizens were outraged to learn that the City Administrative Officer Robert Rizzo made \$787,637 a year, almost twice the salary of President Obama; Police Chief Randy Adams made \$457,000, 50% percent more than Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck; and Assistant City Manager Spaccia made \$376,288, more than the top administrator for Los Angeles County. In January of this year Mr. Rizzo was sentenced to prison for fraud and corruption. The press in general focused on the scandal from the perspective of the salaries being received and only made a passing reference to the legal election and re-election of these individuals based on a less than 3 percent voter turnout in past elections.

What process converts a citizen from registered voter to actual voter??? This is a question at the heart of making democracy work! Partisan and nonpartisan civic groups are seeking the answer and exploring various ways to motivate registered voters to actually vote. The recall election in Bell motivated 33 percent of the voters to “throw the bums out.” The entire scandal is an example of the Power of the Vote and the added boost to that power when the public is informed by a free press.

Nueces County has grown over the past decade; the number of registered voters has also increased. The total number of registered voters in 2012 (the last year for which the county has published election statistics) was 192,083. This coincides well with 55 percent of our total population of 347,691 in 2012 meeting the qualifications of citizenship and age in order to register to vote.

The question is, why do so few of these registered voters actually cast ballots on Election Day? Since 2008 more ballots have been cast

during the early voting than on Election Day. The League of Women Voters always publishes the VOTERS GUIDE in print and online at VOTE411.org prior to the beginning of early voting.

Candidate Forums are also publicized and held in advance of early voting, so time and information are available to voters. In 2008, 52 percent of registered voters actually voted in Nueces County. Elections in the six years since then have resulted in single digit voter turnout.

The opportunities to register to vote are plentiful. Pick up a voter registration card in any post office, and mail it to the County Courthouse free of charge. You will receive a voter certificate within 2 weeks. It’s the actual act of voting in which our county population is lagging.

A recent study entitled “How to Mobilize Reluctant Voters” conducted by a political scientist at Menlo College, Melissa Michelson, was posted on the Corpus Christi League of Women Voters Facebook page. In field experiments focused on communities with a history of low participation in elections, it was found that personal contact to encourage voting can be enough to cause many low-income minority people to see themselves anew, as voters who regularly go to the polls on Election Day. These field experiments also shed light on tactics that do not work. Perhaps the most interesting is that messages designed to appeal to ethnic or racial solidarities aren’t more effective than general appeals to “civic duty” or other broad concerns.

At this writing, candidates for U.S., Texas and county offices have been identified through the primary and runoff election process. Candidates for the Corpus Christi City Council are being identified and filing their intention to run for a Council Seat. The deadline for those filings is August 18. I am appealing to your “civic duty” to become an informed voter and encourage your personal contacts to do the same. Early voting begins October 20th. Exercise the power of the informed vote at the polls!

Christus Spohn holds meetings on closing Memorial

Dr. Hector P. Garcia Clinic would replace facility

By Peggy Duran

Christus Spohn Health System has held six public meetings in different parts of the city to explain its proposal to replace Memorial Hospital with a 40,000 square foot primary care health center named for Dr. Hector P. Garcia.

This will be a walk-in clinic with extended hours complete with laboratory, radiology, pharmacy, and behavioral health services. Christus plans to move the trauma center, residency programs, and psychiatric wing over to Spohn Shoreline which will involve a major expansion there while demolishing the aging Memorial buildings as well as some of the equally old Spohn Shoreline buildings.

Because medicine is shifting to more out-patient facilities where reimbursements are higher, Spohn is willing to invest \$325 million in this venture with no tax payer dollars involved.

It simply is difficult to say good-bye to what was once a great public institution.

One of several questions from the audience at one of the meetings involved the hiring of the current Memorial staff, custodians, and food handlers. Spohn Shoreline will absorb some of these positions, but not all.

Demolishing the county-owned hospital buildings requires approval from the Nueces County Commissioners Court and the Hospital District. Jonny Hipp, CEO of the Nueces County Hospital District laid out the cost of renovating and demolishing Memorial. There are still negotiations to come, but it is difficult to argue with the savings this takeover represents for the taxpaying public. It simply is difficult to say good-bye to what was once a great public institution.

Renewals,

Thanks

Barbara J. Clark

Alex Garcia, Jr.

Rene Haas

State Rep. Todd Hunter

David Perry

Donelda D. Sluyter

Kathlyn A. Sweeney

Barbara Vollmer

Marjorie 'Ricky' Walraven

Gaye White

Sylvia Whitworth

Roberta L. (Bobbie) Wood-Hughes

Thanks to these Sustaining Members:

Jane R. Bachman

Patricia (Pat) M. Eisenhauer

Sally Clark Farris

Sandra Heatherley

Thanks to these renewing VOTER advertising supporters:

Alex Garcia, Jr. (Mike Shaw Toyota)

Nelda Martinez

Mark Sept. 23

National Voter Registration Day set

Voter registration activities are year-round, but the National Voter Registration Day planned on Tuesday, Sept. 23, gives organizations across the U.S. a common day on which to focus on voter registration activities and voter awareness.

Your League is planning one or more activities on Sept. 23, with details to be announced in the coming weeks. Mark the date on your calendar, and plan to say “I’ll be there to help register new voters!”

Turning out the vote is equally important. A look at local, state, and national statistics makes our hearts sink—low percentages of voter turnout is now the norm.

How would YOU convince fellow voters that their votes indeed count to “make democracy work?”

Membership renewals due

The League’s membership year is June 1-May 31, so it’s time to renew your membership. Dues remain at \$60 per individual member; \$90 for household (two individuals at same address); and \$30 for students and “Friends of the League” (non-voting members).

A new category authorized by the Board at the annual meeting in May is that of “Sustaining Member—\$100—which includes one \$60 membership plus a gift to the League to support the League’s projects.



At the July Art Walk held downtown, LWV-CC members Ruth Falck and Sally Farris wait for visitors to stop at the League’s table for voter information and registration.

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CARP

Cole and Ropes Parks Plan needs input from citizens; project seeks action to reduce bacteria levels in bay

By Sally Farris
s.farris@att.net; phone 210-313-7028.

Environmental Enforcement Action. Almost a year ago, the VOTER reported about the CARP jumpin' with the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation. The Bays Foundation continues to guide four citizen workgroups to reduce levels of bacteria in Corpus Christi Bay. The project is a regulatory action by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), acting as a designee under federal EPA to enforce the Clean Water Act.

The state's environmental regulator has enlisted citizens to design a Plan for improved water quality discharged through stormwater outfalls at Cole and Ropes Parks (CARP). At times, the flow from these pipes causes the receiving waters and the adjacent beach areas to become too polluted for safe recreational use.

LWV Members on the CARP. Your President, Sandra Heatherley, and a board member, Sally Farris, serve on the CARP steering committee and with various workgroups. Sandra and Sally represent homeowners. If you identify as a homeowner, please contact Sally or Sandra to register your support for or concerns about the Plan. As soon as the interim draft is complete, in August, Sally will request the board to allow her to email an executive summary of the draft to our full membership for further comment. Your comments are welcomed and needed NOW concerning this update. Sally's email address is s.farris@att.net; phone: 210-313-7028.

Here's the update through July 2014: These elements may change as the Plan is reviewed by environmental agencies and the City Council:

Local Work Plan. The Plan is uniquely and solely a local work product from folks who represent many stakeholders, construction and hospitality industries, environmentalists, academia, the health district and homeowners in general. The City of Corpus Christi also dedicates staff to

work on the Plan, particularly focused on the City's infrastructure for stormwater and sewage.

After two years of work, the draft Plan has had full CARP committee review and is almost ready to submit to TCEQ in August. TCEQ will then allow several more months to polish and present the Plan to the broader community for comment. Eventually, the Plan will go to the TCEQ Commissioners for endorsement. The City of Corpus Christi will be responsible for performing many tasks in the Plan, so the City Council must approve it.

Main Elements of the Plan. Bacteria Reduction. The Plan proposes community actions to reduce bacteria levels in the bay by reducing direct bacteria deposits and lowering the flow of wastes that grow bacteria in the stormwater system.

Update the Science. The Plan also identifies poor use of scientific data to measure and record events that lead to water quality violations. Thus, the Plan urges improvement in scientific methodology.

Public Health Advisements. Signage. Also, absent at this time is a timely (real time) public health advisement and permanent signage to warn users that rainfall events are universally responsible for highly polluted "first flushes" of surface waste at the problem outfalls. The Plan recommends a local government protocol to issue event advisements to avoid problem areas until the bacterial pollution is resolved by Mother Nature.

Targeted Smoke Testing. Pilot smoke testing in targeted neighborhoods is proposed to detect and correct damaged infrastructure, public and private, that leaks sewage into public gutters leading to the bay.

Development Code. Plumbing Tests When Property Is Sold. The Plan urges Code of Ordinances revisions to create more green infrastructure/environmentally friendly alternatives in the Development Code and among the various construction disciplines codes, such as plumbing

(Continued on next page)

and mechanical. One proposed amendment to the Plumbing Code would require a plumbing integrity test with each change in real property ownership to detect failed sewer laterals. Failing sewer laterals are often hidden defects that plague unsuspecting home purchasers.

The Plan proposes community actions to reduce bacteria levels in the bay by reducing direct bacteria deposits and lowering the flow of wastes that grow bacteria in the stormwater system.

Citizen Responsibility to Securely Pre-Bag Garbage. Another proposed amendment to the Solid Waste Services Department regulations urges clarification and enforcement of current requirements for secondary containment (pre-bag your garbage in substantial plastic bags) to avoid fugitive, flyaway waste when the City's automated trucks traverse your neighborhood. City employees get the misplaced blame for this citizen failing that puts loose and rotting garbage directly into carts. The Code currently requires secondary containment but lacks enforcement remedies. There has been no community education on this point and clarification in the code would empower the City to educate and enforce.

Source Track the Bacteria. One of the biggest challenges in devising a Plan has been the need to identify exactly what mammals are producing exceedances of the problem bacteria, enterococcus. This group of organisms are related to e-coli and are used to measure pollution events. Advancements in analysis and reduction in costs may soon enable the Plan to pinpoint problem bacteria sources as either human (sewer overflows and infrastructure failure) or as one or more of 12 domestic and wildlife sources. Exact identification (source tracking) will allow the Plan to prioritize and reprioritize the control activities.

City Role. The City's role in the Plan may be redefined when the Plan is presented to the City Council for approval or adoption. The CARP group has no authority to commit the City Council. Performance and enforcement of the Plan will eventually rest with our local elected officials.

You are a Stakeholder. Concerning the Plan, as it's developed so far, Sandra and Sally need

you to tell them what you think. If you identify as a homeowner stakeholder, let them know. When the Plan comes before City Council, you will have another opportunity to express your thoughts, for or against. Again, if you think you are not represented by a specific stakeholder group, your most appropriate representative is likely the Homeowner group, headed by Sally Farris and Sandra Heatherley.

Challenge to Homeowner Organizations. League to Become Umbrella? Sandra and Sally will eventually need the consent of homeowner stakeholders to continue to support the Plan. There are no reliable, up-to-date information lists for active, voluntary homeowner associations. Sally has solicited input from the Community Association Institute, an umbrella organization for mandatory homeowner organizations (condominium regimes); major private condominium organizations abutting problem outfalls; the Taxpayers Association; and the League of Women Voters. She will next target specific voluntary neighborhood associations in the CC Bay Basin drainage area.

There is no Neighborhood Association program supported by the City of Corpus Christi at this time. The question of support for a program and the prospect that the League itself may become a repository of data and coordinator for grass-roots associations is in the offing.

Future Consultation with League Membership. Sally will ask the board to allow her to poll the general membership for support of the CARP Bacteria Implementation [Reduction] Plan after an executive summary of the document is e-mailed to the membership for review. Sally will ask Sandra and the board to bring the Plan before the general membership to create a record of support.



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Portland (Ore.) Neighborhood Associations study may fit C.C.

After first endorsing Neighborhood Associations in 1973, the League of Women Voters in Portland, Oregon, did a third study to update its position. Some of the Portland proposals may fit Corpus Christi. The following summary is what the Oregon league recommended concerning Neighborhood Associations in 2007:

1. The LWV of Portland believes that Portland's Neighborhood Associations have the potential to serve the public good by providing important opportunities for civic participation and improving neighborhood livability. To meet this potential, Neighborhood Associations must be integrated into city networks of communication and decision-making and must be adequately supported by city funding and services. Neighborhood Associations need to consistently invite and include all residents in their operations.

2. Portland's neighborhood system structure:

Neighborhood Associations should continue to be autonomous entities separate from city government.

Because Portland's neighborhood system is grassroots in nature, diversity of NA character should be honored. A decentralized system of service delivery is appropriate.

District Coalitions, in their varied organizational formats, should remain in place as long as they are effective, with funding from the city.

Uniformity and equity should be pursued where possible but should not come at the expense of effectiveness.

3. The city's role in supporting Neighborhood Associations should consist of:

At the Council and Bureau level:

Informing Neighborhood Associations of city projects and activities affecting them

A willingness to solicit and receive neighborhood input

Consideration of neighborhood needs within city budgeting process

Funding that is adequate to maintain this system

Through the Office of Neighborhood Involvement:

Ensuring a neighborhood voice in city operations

Encouraging better communication between city bureaus and neighborhoods

The setting forth of healthy governance practices in guidelines for Neighborhood Associations

Support for neighborhoods and District Coalitions including assistance and adequate funding for communication, outreach, leadership training and technical assistance

4. Successful Neighborhood Associations should:

Be independent with the authority to set their own agenda

Have the ability to interact with all government and non-governmental entities

Work to engage the various populations in the neighborhood

Respond to neighborhood needs

Represent neighborhood interests effectively to the city

Utilize effective means to communicate with neighborhood residents at least twice a year

5. Neighborhood Associations should not be the only avenue for civic engagement with Portland's [Oregon] government. If resources are adequate, city assistance could be offered to groups other than Neighborhood Associations to increase organizational capacity. When Neighborhood Associations are functioning effectively, with both the resources to do their work, and city's acknowledgement of their role, encouragement should be given to other community groups to channel work on civic issues through the neighborhood system."

City developing PlanCC, a 20-year strategic framework

The City of Corpus Christi is developing a new comprehensive plan to guide decisions that affect our quality of life and support the city's continuing prosperity. PlanCC will create a 20-year policy and strategic framework for the entire city. Planning efforts to date include a significant public outreach campaign. June was the month of PlanCC. The city held seven district workshops and a citywide forum to create a shared destiny or vision for the city's future. Additional guidance for plan development is

being provided by the Citizen's Advisory Committee of residents, property and business owners, representatives of institutions, and others with a stake in the future of our city. Chris Garcia, one of the League's former presidents, has been asked to serve on this committee.

The next wave of public participation will be in November and will include Public Open Houses. These drop-in sessions will provide a chance for

See Plan, page 9

Neighborhood Associations might work for 'here and now'

By Sally Farris

Please see related stories, pp. 6-8

Perhaps only two or three neighborhood associations in Corpus Christi are recognized as strong. The most visible and viable has been the Del Mar Neighborhood Association. Our local League of Women Voters may opt to cultivate or promote neighborhood associations through the City of Corpus Christi. We may even consider becoming the data repository and coordinator for community groups.

Here's some information to consider. After almost a decade of negative migration, Corpus Christi is growing. One political commentary in the Caller-Times suggested that ways of doing things in the past may not serve us in the future because Corpus Christi is entering a "big" city stage of development. A different, more communitywide approach, anchored in individual neighborhoods, may be required to muster the political will of the people. A Neighborhood Associations program, to catalog and coordinate transparent forums, could provide the platform.

On page 8, opposite, there is a summary of a study and update on Neighborhood Associations done by the League of Women Voters of Portland, Oregon.

How could such a transparent Neighborhood Associations program help Corpus Christi make decisions for the benefit of the community? How can Neighborhood Associations facilitate democracy in the here and now?

A "here and now" example of immediate help could come from a Neighborhood Associations program to resolve a persistent and expensive community problem: excessive levels of bacteria at some Corpus Christi bay beaches.

An immediate project comes to mind: the CARP, Cole and Ropes Parks Plan to reduce bacterial levels in the bay. Homeowners are official stakeholders in that scientific and political effort. Yet, there is no single, easily accessible repository for current, correct contacts enabling education to and feedback from neighborhood leaders to the people who are making the mitigation Plan.

A Neighborhood Associations program, centered in but independent of the City of Corpus Christi, could provide contacts, forums, and feedback on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis to fulfill the regulatory and political requirements of the TCEQ process to reduce bacteria.

All neighborhoods in Corpus Christi could be said to have a stake in the Plan to clean up bacteria because we all use the parks; however, neighborhoods that have an obligatory stake in actually performing the Plan are those within the drainage basins that contribute flow to the outfalls at Cole and Ropes Parks. The area reaches generally from Corpus Christi Bay at Cole and Ropes Parks into the Molina neighborhood on the westside to SPID as far south as Everhart.

It's huge.

Plan ————— From Page 8

everyone to react to the potential scenarios for Corpus Christi's future and the plan's emerging recommendation. In February 2015 a Citywide Forum on the Draft Plan will be held for public review and comment. The plan will then be presented to the Planning Commission for review, feedback, and recommendations. After those hearings, it will be submitted to the City Council for more public hearings and, eventually, a vote on final adoption in the Spring of 2015. The website link is plancc2035.com.



At the July 17 LWV-CC meeting, members received information from Nuri Rodriguez of Nueces County on voter registration and duties of registrars. Several members were deputized as voter registrars.



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LWV Corpus Christi
 Renewal / New Membership Application
*Join now and help in the effort to promote
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Type of membership: New ___ Renewal ___

Individual \$60 ___ Student \$30 ___ Household \$90 ___

Friend of the League \$30 ___ Sustaining \$100 ___

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Household Member's Name _____

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I prefer to receive my mail at: home or work.
 (Please circle your preference above.)

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Work or Cell phone _____

Fax number _____

E-mail Address _____

**Please return this form to: League of Women Voters
 P. O. Box 8276, Corpus Christi, Texas 78468.
 Membership is from June 1 through May 31.**

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 Executive Director

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