



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF McLEAN COUNTY**

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**League of Women Voters
of McLean County Bulletin
is published eight months
of the year.**

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**New web site!
www.lwvmclean.org**

Bulletin

Vol. 74 No. 8

May 2008

Chinese Journalist visits our League

Our League was pleased to host a day long visit with Ivan Zhai, a Chinese journalist, on May 6. Ivan is this year's Alfred Friendly Fellow with the St. Louis Post Dispatch and is from mainland China. He lives and works in Guangzhou. Ten journalists from around the globe are picked each year for fellowships with various U.S. newspapers and spend about four months in the U.S. It is quite an honor to be picked.

Ivan had expressed an interest in learning about our elections and "democracy". Knowing that, we packed a full day of informative meetings for him. He had an hour long meeting with Chuck Scott, who was elected to the Normal Council a year ago. Chuck was most informative in detailing just how he went about getting elected with had examples such as his campaign brochure and his budget.

The next stop was at McLean County Clerk, Peggy Ann Milton's office where she and her staff gave Ivan a good overview of the way voters are registered and the many elections we have in a four year cycle. Ivan got to try out a voting machine. He then met with former Normal Mayor Carol Reitan who gave him an excellent view of local government in Illinois. We had time to make a brief trip to our "wind farm" and he was fascinated. Ivan turned out to be a very enthusiastic guest and kept saying the day "more than exceeded his expectations." He is a very curious young man and asked many excellent questions. He was especially interested in which government levels did certain tasks.

Ivan spoke to League members in the evening, and expressed his gratitude for the Alfred Friendly Fellowship. His presentation dealt with the contrast of access to information for the media and citizenry in various parts of China. Ivan answered a wide variety of questions. He then asked the group to help him in his research by giving him further ideas as to what people in the U.S. want to know about China. The exchange was enlightening for speaker and audience alike.

Thanks to Laurie Bergner for arranging Ivan's visit and to her and her husband, Ray for hosting a barbecue for him at their home. Ivan said, "This is my first American barbecue!" Others who helped were League members Lee Rudolph, Gary Hoover and Judie Bey.

Sally Rudolph (for the Chinese Journalist Committee)

League of Women Voters of McLean County- 2008 Observer Reports

Bloomington City Council

The Bloomington City Council is composed of a Mayor elected at large and nine (9) Aldermen, one per ward. There are nine (9) wards of the City of Bloomington. Candidates for elected offices of the City of Bloomington (mayor and aldermen) may not run as candidates or be nominated or endorsed by political parties and are elected for four year terms. All members of the City Council elected at a consolidated municipal election upon qualifying, shall take office on the May 1 following their election.

The powers of the City Council are legislative, except as may be otherwise provided by statute. The Council shall approve for payment all expenses and liabilities of the City of Bloomington.

Regular meetings of the City Council are held on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers of City Hall in the City of Bloomington, IL. Meetings falling on holidays are held on the day following such regular meeting date at the same hour and place. The Council may set a meeting to complete the unfinished business of an adjourned meeting.

All reports, communications, ordinances, resolutions, contract documents, or other matters must be submitted to the Council no later than 12:00 noon on Wednesday preceding each Council meeting.

(Bloomington City Code)

[The following report on proceedings of the Bloomington City Council relies on news coverage by *The Pantagraph* as well as observation by your LWV observers.]

Since September 2007, much of the council's time and energy has been devoted to closing a \$3 million shortfall in its \$75.4 million budget. The \$2.5 million deficit is attributed largely to failure of the U.S. Cellular Coliseum operators to file regular financial reports and a projected \$1.6 million loss for the current fiscal year. Management group owners have maintained their 10-year contract with the city does not require them to pay for the bonds issued to build the Coliseum. Council members want to satisfy the bonding agent to pay down the debt service. Mayor Stockton's priority is to replenish city's monetary

reserves and providing basics of police and street maintenance, and he said Coliseum profits should help pay down the debt service.

To offset these losses, the City Council voted 6 to 3 in February to raise the sales tax from 7.5% to 7.75% to pay all of the Coliseum bonds through 2015. At the same meeting, the Council unanimously passed an increase in package liquor tax, and garbage fees increased from \$5 to \$7 a month.

In March, the Council approved by a vote of 5-4 a raise for City Manager Tom Hamilton, his first raise in about two years. Hamilton received a total raise of 4.8%. The close vote on the salary raise was probably due to budget issues going back to the Council's 2004 decision to build the \$35.8 million U.S. Cellular Coliseum and public criticism of the City's management practices. Aldermen questioned whether any administrative pay raises should be approved during a budget crunch.

The Council also approved in March a four-year contract with Bloomington police officers for five salary increases; two retroactive raises and raises from May 2008-10. In response to a pending case involving a police officer, the contract added a clause that will allow the city to place any officer charged with a felony on unpaid administrative leave.

Late in March, Bloomington City Council approved a four-year plan which will increase water rates by an average of 7% a year and a \$2.9 million bid from Peoria Metro Construction for a new fire station, which will be build at Six Points Road and Mitsubishi Motorway. Mayor Steve Stockton said the fire station is the city's first construction project since 2005.

Expenditures for these necessary "back to basics" (water infrastructure and public safety) versus the urgency of making up for hefty budget deficits resulted in months of tense discussion as the Council considered a number of options to cut operating costs. These included use of city vehicles, cuts in staffing, and changes to the city's garbage collection and curbside recycling program. The Council is looking at an early retirement program for some city employees. Up to 93 employees, or roughly 25% of the city's full time, non-seasonal staff, could be

eligible for this program. The city manager was quoted as saying in the first year of the program; savings of \$740 thousand would be realized just saving the salaries of seven positions that would not be filled. If 40% of the eligible employees take the offer and the city pays out the costs over seven years, the savings could be about \$3 million. On April 1, *The Pantagraph* reported that in a work session the Council arrived at a balanced budget: "After a series of \$2.5 million in cuts and about \$2 million in increases in garbage fees and liquor and sales taxes, the city has a balanced \$76.6 million budget for the fiscal year that will begin May 1. The surplus income will help replenish reserves, city officials say" (A1). Spending in travel and training budgets, a staff awards dinner, supplies and insurance premium costs will be reduced.

The proposed budget will go before the City Council at the April 14 meeting. On April 7, Tari Renner, A budget must be approved before May 1.

McLean County Board member and IWU Political Science professor, officially announced he will run for mayor in next April's City Council election. Mayor Stockton has not officially announced his intention to run again.

Leaguers may keep themselves informed by attending the City Council meetings, reading local news coverage in *The Pantagraph* and approved prior minutes which are posted online at www.cityblm.org. On-demand audio of the Bloomington City Council meetings can be heard online at WJBC2.com; however, this requires installation of Apple QuickTime for Windows XP or Vista. Interest in having televised coverage has been expressed.

Submitted by Carol Baker and Kathy Tosh, Bloomington City Council observers

League of Women Voters Annual Meeting– May 20, 2008

Joni Painter, in her last official function as outgoing Co-President, presided over the LWV Annual Meeting held at the McLean County Government Center. Painter called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and presented:

LWV 2007-2008 Year in Review

- In November McLean County League was host to Russian visitors (4 delegates, a facilitator and translator). Anne Nadakavukaren, in charge of the visit remarked, "I was proud of this community".
- Painter reported the experiment to conduct the Con-Con study by email didn't turn out too well producing only 22 respondents. Co-President Maureen O'Keefe mentioned that the short deadline may have complicated it.
- High School Voter registration, administered by Barb Case, Voter Service, and conducted by many League volunteers, resulted in registering over half the senior class at Central Catholic, 33 students at Lexington High School and 30 at Normal Community High School.
- Judicial surveys were sent to attorneys.
- The Membership brunch with featured speaker, Paul Harmon, was good. Membership chair Phylis VerSteegeh reported that we have 127 members and 1 student member.
- League has observers for Heartland Community College, Bloomington City Council, Normal Town Council, McLean County Board, Unit 5 and District 87 School Boards. The League Observer chair Julie Sullivan is regarded as a strong leader.
- League Annual Dinner and Silent Auction made the most money ever.
- The website is getting better and better.
- Programs schedule was very good this year – Illinois prisons, Terrorism, State of Government, Mental Health in McLean County, Earth Day forum, Mayors Chris Koos and Steve Stockton.
- National Student Vote Day will be October 30. Votes are tallied with schools across the nation. Volunteers will be needed to work at the schools and updates will be provided in the coming months.

Treasurer's Report was given by Painter.

- Checking Account balance as of 5/19/08 is \$6,747.74 with an Education Fund balance of \$573.29.
- Judicial Grant account balance of \$3,142.35 will pay for Voter Guides.
- Russian Visitors Grant balance which originated from a private organization and was a 'pass through' grant from LWVUS is \$2,158.00.
- Terrorism program grant balance is \$166.00.
- Savings Account balance is \$4,808.19.
- Total in Jean's Fund is \$870.
- Balance in both Checking and Savings is \$11,555.93.

Painter reported that the PMP (per member payment) is going up – last year we paid \$50.80 for each member, though we collected only \$50. National and State Leagues raised dues at Convention and we'll lose over \$500/year without raising our dues. Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report was moved by Sally Rudolph and seconded by Carol Reitan. Motion carried.

Motion to increase the dues to \$60-member, \$30-2nd member in household and \$30-student was made by Phylis VerSteech and seconded by Gretchen Monti. The ensuing discussion proposed that the dues increase will be reviewed again next year. The policy now is to cover dues; an increase provides the advantage of spending money on speakers which increases the League's visibility, credibility and membership. Motion carried.

Proposed Budget for 2008-09 did not include May and June and therefore didn't have provision for the \$2,500 needed to cover cost of members attending the National Convention. A motion to reduce proposed budgets for Programs and Voter Service from \$2,000 to \$1,000 and put \$2,000 in for National Convention expenses carried.

By-Laws

Motion to adopt the proposed changes in the By-Laws carried.

Program Positions

Maureen O'Keefe moved that program positions with proposed changes in wording be accepted and the Consolidation of Election Functions be dropped. Motion carried.

Remaining program items either had no changes or were considered individually.

Local program items were presented as follows:

- Home Rule Form of Government for Bloomington-Normal: No change.
- County Government – County Board: Change in wording to "Production of a five year strategic plan required of all county department heads..."
- Alternatives to Jail: Change in wording to "Support for efforts to maintain a Drug Court Program..."
- Alternatives to Jail: Study Mental Health Court, Victim-Offender Mediation, etc.
It was moved, seconded and passed to table this position until we have sufficient information.
- Consolidation of Election Functions: Motion to drop carried. Rationale: County Clerk and Election Commission together is not a good principle, should be separate to prevent conflict of interest.
- Juvenile Justice / Child Welfare: No change.
- Local Mental Health: Motion carried to plan a study to review this program position.
- Public Recreation: No change.
- Local Education: No change.

- Solid Waste Management: Add “and a recycling and reuse program for the entire community.”
Motion to adopt an Energy Efficiency Study carried. Carol Reitan volunteered to work on this study in the upcoming year and report at a League meeting. It was agreed this could be one of our 2008-09 programs.
- Water Conservation: Change in wording to “Government action to promote water conservation and ensure a viable long-term water supply.”
- Public Health, Services: Change in wording to “High priority on services to low-income families and rural areas”.
- Emergency Health Care: It was moved, seconded and passed to table this position until we have sufficient information.
- Land Use: It was moved, seconded and passed to table this position until we have sufficient information.

George Gordon representing the County Board provided the following comments:

- Ad Hoc Committee on Water Conservation will be held May 30th.
- Budget policy proposals – in light of looming shortfalls, what’s happening in County government to justify expenditures? This is consistent with the addition of the words strategic plan in the League’s County Board program position.
- In reference to maintaining a Drug Court program, a grant application for \$350,000 has been approved by the US Dept of Justice. Gordon said the League was instrumental in keeping the flame burning.

The following **Slate of Officers** were elected to serve as the 2008-09 LWV Board of Directors:

Co-President – LeeAnn Hill	VP/Action – Sally Rudolph	Membership Chair – Phylis VerSteegh
Treasurer – Linda Stockton	Observer Chair – Julie Sullivan	Publicity Chair - Kathy Tosh (1 yr term)

***Outgoing president Joni Painter commented about her tenure in that position as being
“a great experience, learning so much about our government.
...impressed with League and how we come to decisions and study everything”.
With a heartfelt “Best of Luck”, she handed the gavel to new president, Maureen O’Keefe.***

Directions to the Board

Members were asked by O’Keefe if they had any directions to give to the 2008-09 LWV Board.

- One suggestion was to go to an electronic bulletin. After some discussion and about a 50% show of hands in favor, it was determined the entire membership could be asked if they want it.
- The studies adopted at this annual meeting must be sent to our Program chair, remembering that the State League adds studies also. It seems this will be a busy year.
- AAUW is sponsoring a meeting August 11 on “Women in Local Government and How to Get There”. Carol Reitan will be assisted by Gretchen Monti and Gwen Pruyne.

Motion to adjourn was made by Carol Reitan.

Leaguer of the Year!

Anne Nadakavukaren received Leaguer of the Year honor and a beautiful teapot from the League in appreciation of her work on the Russian Visitors program.

President’s Gift

Joni Painter was delighted with the wonderful Bird Feeder given to her by the League in appreciation of her leadership and work as President.



**THE LEAGUE
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OF McLEAN COUNTY

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Normal, Illinois
Permit No. 37

**LWV
of McLean County
2008
PROGRAMS**

Programs are held the
4th Tuesday of the month at
**McLean County
Government Center**
Front & East Streets
unless otherwise specified.
(Use Front Street entrance)
All meetings
are open to the public

Bulletin

YWCA WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARDS

Our League was pleased when League member Janet M. Hood received this year's Women of Distinction award in the Volunteer Service category at the YWCA's annual dinner May 22. Jan is an executive assistant for Planning and Systems Services at BroMenn. Besides her professional service, Jan has had significant leadership roles in a volunteer capacity with the McLean County Chamber of Commerce and its Women's' Division, Prairie Aviation Museum, Challenger Learning, Leadership Illinois and the Vladimir-Canterbury Sister City Association. **CONGRATULATIONS, JAN!**

Two other well-qualified League members were also nominated for the six awards given each year in the categories of Business, Creative Arts & Entertainment, Education, Professions, Social Services and Volunteer Service. Lee Ann Hill, a criminal defense attorney and newly elected League Co-President, and Mary Ann Schierman, Director of Volunteers at the McLean County Museum of History.

Each year the YWCA gives out its **WINGS** award or awards to **Women to Improve** their skills for a **Notable** purpose which allows them to **Grow** professionally and achieve **Success**. This year, one of the three recipients was League member Grace Foote-Johns. **CONGRATULATIONS, GRACE!**

Other League members among past winners are:

Marlene Gregor, Dr. Sandra Harmon, Judy Markowitz, Dr. Alice Ebel (deceased), Dr. Dixie Mills, Honorable Elizabeth Robb, Jana Edge, Karen Schmidt, Dr. Laurie Bergner, Carol Reitan, Cheryl Gaines, Judy Buchanan, Barb Stuart, Ruth Ann Lipic and Sally Rudolph.

Member Becky Hines, who is the CEO of the YWCA received a Special Recognition award at a previous banquet.