



# *The Bozeman Voter*

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Bozeman Area

---

October, 2019

## **PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE**

**Rosanne Nash**

Our League is involved in two forums this fall. On Oct. 9 there will be a Bozeman City Commission and Ballot Initiative Forum at the Bozeman Public Library. We are a cosponsor with the Bozeman Business and Professional Women and the Bozeman Public Library. On Oct. 17 we will be providing volunteer help for a Belgrade City Commission Forum at the Belgrade Library. I hope everyone who is interested in the fall elections is able to attend these forums.

Gail Dillaway is working with an AP Government teacher at Bozeman High School to provide Birthday Bags to students when they turn 18 and are eligible to vote. The Birthday Bags contains some small gifts and a voter registration form. Gail will collect any completed registrations and turn them in to the Gallatin County Elections Office.

Jan Benham has lined up some interesting speakers for our fall programs. See below.

## **OCTOBER MEETINGS**

October 14: Brian Fadie, will be speaking on the Northwestern Energy rate case and in particular on how it relates to rooftop solar.

Brian is the Clean Energy Program Director for MEIC (Montana Environmental Information Center).

October 28: Casey Wagner, from the Justice Council, who will be speaking on the Diversion Program for Misdemeanors. He plans to bring volunteers who work with the program, so that they can speak, also.

## **SEPTEMBER MEETINGS**

### **September 9 - Law & Justice Center**

County Commissioners Don Seifert and Joe Skinner, Whitney Bermes, Communications Director and Stacy Wesen who is with Victim Services spoke at the September 9, meeting about the upcoming bond issue for a new Law & Justice Center. Commissioner Seifert took the lead explaining the need for passage of the \$59 million bond issue.

The current Law & Justice Center was built in 1963 as a Catholic high school. It was retrofitted to house law enforcement and courts in the late 1970's. The current county population of about 115,000 has stressed the county's ability to provide needed services. The new building will house the county's sheriff office, victim services, Justice Court, District Court, youth probation, the County Attorney's office, records and the Clerk of District Court. These do not duplicate services with the City of Bozeman. What's in it for county residents? Safety - this is the most emotional place in the county due to the issues they deal with. The courts deal with felony and civil cases and prisoners all in the same spaces. When the building was constructed there were no building standards. It does not meet current building requirements including seismic standards. All spaces are being used. Two of the District Courts are in the L&J. The third court is housed close by in a modular structure, sometimes called the Shed of Justice. The county needs two more district courts and space to house them. Cases are stretched out and are not addressed in a timely manner. This causes problems for businesses who are awaiting judgment for civil cases they are involved in.

Stacy Wesen, with Victim Services, works with victims of misdemeanors and criminal cases. Her office suffers from lack of space. They help about 3,000 people each year. These are victims who are traumatized by their experiences. As solutions to their cases are stretched out their stress increases. The floor plan of the L&J does not separate victims from their perpetrators and confrontations occur. This should not happen. The proposed building not allow this to happen.

The Coroner's morgue is located in the L&J. Bodies are brought through a corridor which the public uses. Ventilation in the building is inadequate and at times the odor from the morgue is noticeable.

The building is about 30% deficient now. Population growth in the county is averaging 3% each year or about 10 new people every day. Commissioners have been asked whether it's appropriate to remodel the building. If that were done the county would need to find other space to rent during the remodel. There is no space large enough to accommodate the current L&J services. Also asked is when the city departs for the new city facility, won't there be more room for the county? While that may be true, the current floor plan and structural and safety issues do not meet the needs of the county.

Why propose this now? Interest rates are at historic lows. The longer we wait the more construction prices will rise. The county will continue growing, so the need for a safer, more efficient building is not going away.

For a resident with a home value of \$200,000, the annual estimated tax would be \$34.10. That amount will decrease as the tax base continues to rise.

**September 23**

Our speaker was not available at the last minute so members enjoyed discussing program ideas and current activities.

Member Gail Dillaway reported on her activities for voter registration.

### **Voter Registration Committee Tries Something New - Gail Dillaway**

After researching past methods to register voters, it was decided and approved by the board of the League of Women Voters that a new approach would be tried to register voters. The idea was borrowed from the Billings League but has been expanded by our league. On Thursday Sept 26, 120 birthday bags were delivered to a government teacher at Bozeman High School. The bags themselves were donated by Honda and contain voter registration forms, the League's Guide to Government, and several small items and coupons donated by local businesses. The teacher is working with Gail Dillaway to make sure these 120 students get registered as they turn 18. This particular teacher will have an additional 120 students in the spring semester providing the opportunity for the league to register additional students. Help will be needed to approach businesses about donating something small, coupons or bags to be distributed to these students in the spring, as well as people who would be interested in filling the actual bags, or to transport the completed registration forms to the courthouse.

If you would like to help, please contact Gail at [gail.dillaway@outlook.com](mailto:gail.dillaway@outlook.com). This year we are considering this to be a pilot program but it has the potential to be very successful and to provide the league with a way to connect with young people and encourage them to register to vote and then to actually vote.

**BALLOT ISSUES DISCUSSED AT  
OCTOBER 9, CANDIDATE FORUM**

With little time for discussion, the following points were made at the ballot issues discussion.

### **Partisan v. Non Partisan Elections.**

County Commissioner Joe Skinner spoke in favor of nonpartisan elections saying that he was not passionate about the issue, but the previous legislature made it possible for local governing bodies to put the question to their voters. The county commission decided to let the voters decide their preference. He asked why the county elected row officers should be partisan. What is the difference between a Republican or a Democratic Clerk & Recorder, County Attorney, Sheriff, Clerk of District Court, etc.? Perhaps a stronger case could be made for electing partisan Commissioners as is done now. However, in his experience as a Commissioner for many years, it is local issues that are important, and the parties have not been important in their decision process. The commission tries to make decisions based on what is best for their constituents.

Emma Bode, a recent graduate from MSU, and currently employed by Forward Montana, spoke against changing to nonpartisan elections. She emphasized her science background and researched information regarding the topic. She based her conclusions on her research which indicated that having candidates without a party label has consequences. The party label is a policy guide. Many voters don't know which way to go without the label. Those voting in nonpartisan elections tend to be better educated voters. Electoral outcomes are less representative since lower income voters don't vote. She supports the partisan option.

### **Law & Justice 59 million Bond Election**

County Commissioner Don Seifert spoke about the bond issue. As an elected official he cannot legally advocate for it. The Catholic High School was converted to the L&J Center in 1979 when the county population was

47,000. The current population is estimated to be 112,000 and growing. The building has several structural problems. There are 60,000 square feet but 120,000 square feet are needed. It is failing structurally and functionally. An earthquake will cause the building to pancake. There is too much comingling with prisoners, the public and victims in common areas. The chance for an outbreak of violence is high as a result. Victim services is forced to conduct interviews in public corridors rather in a secure space. Facilities are not available for additional judges. Two more are needed, however the state won't fund their positions without courtrooms for them. This has caused delays in adjudication of cases before the courts, currently extending for 20-24 months. Justice delayed is justice denied. Even with the city police and city courts vacating when the new city L&J center is completed there will not be enough space for the county justice services. Why do this now? Costs of construction rise every year. This building represents liberty and justice for all county citizens. If not now when?

Rep. Tom Burnett spoke in opposition. He said there is never enough money to accomplish what government wants done. If passed it will cause \$109 in new taxes each year and raise \$3.9 million per year to pay for the bond issue. He quoted economist Thomas Sowell who said we should have options between choices for how to spend our money. Should we have to spend it on government projects or on our own current needs. The time now may not be the time to do this.

### **OBSERVER CORPS COUNTY COMMISSION 9/17/19 Faye Boom**

Of most immediate import, the County Commission meeting scheduled for September 24 has been cancelled due to the annual MACo Conference.

The next most interesting action was the passing of resolutions to grant an additional

\$6103 to Woosley I project and \$57,500 to Woosley II project. These are conservation easements near the old town of Sudan, about 10 to 15 miles past Bridger Bowl on Bridger Canyon Drive. The additional money was added to a "match" fund because the value of the land increased over the past 2 or 3 years. As described, Woosley I is primarily a wildlife easement and Woosley II is an agricultural easement but includes cutthroat trout creeks.

### **Faye Boom 10/2/19**

The only thing I thought was interesting was the Gadd-Kurland easement donation near Gallatin Gateway and along the Gallatin River. There is a front page story on it in the October 3, Chronicle so those who are interested will be able to read more than I know anyway.

The Commission also voted to dissolve the Middle Cottonwood Board of Adjustment and have the county take over that function in their consolidated Board of Adjustment.

### **CITY COMMISSION 9/9/19**

#### **Bonnie White**

A resolution creating the Bozeman Climate Team to assist with the development of the Bozeman Climate Plan. Volunteers are needed.

Public comment, a number of people including the head administrator for Petra Academy regarding the no left lane turn into Classical Lane which is the street into the academy and Bronken Soccer Fields.

There was a presentation by developers of the Bozeman Residence Inn. The commission approved the plans

### **Suffrage 2020 Committee Meeting**

#### **Charlene Krygier**

Join Barb Worthen and me on Thursday, October 23, 10 - 11:30 a.m. at 234 E.

Mendenhall when we meet with a coalition that is planning an event honoring the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. Interested groups who are participating include Montana State University, Bozeman Business and Professional Women, Museum of the Rockies, NOW, and Forward Montana.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

**Priscilla Dysart**

**9/30/19**

Checking Account	\$1,318.07
Savings Account	\$8,424.71
Education Fund	<u>\$ 188.18</u>
Total Assets	\$9,930.96



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF THE BOZEMAN AREA  
731 S. 12<sup>th</sup>  
Bozeman, MT 59715**

## **THE BOZEMAN VOTER**

### **October, 2019**

- Wed. 8      7:00 p.m. Candidate Forum at the Bozeman Public Library Community Room  
Discussion of two ballot measures plus City Commissioner candidates.
- Mon. 14      LWV Board Meeting, 10:30 a.m. Pilgrim Congregational Church.  
LWV Meeting, 11:45 a.m. Brian Fadie, Clean Energy Program Director for the  
Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC) will speak about the  
NorthWestern Energy rate case, and in particular on how it relates to rooftop  
solar.
- Thurs. 17      Candidate Forum at the Belgrade Public Library 6:00-8:00 p.m. for Belgrade  
candidates.
- Mon. 28      LWV Meeting, 11:45 a.m. Pilgrim Congregational Church. Casey Wagner, from  
the Justice Council will speak on the Diversion Program for Misdemeanors. He  
plans to bring volunteers who work with the program as well.

### **November, 2019**

- Tues. 5      Election Day
- Mon. 11      LWV Board Meeting, 10:30 a.m. Pilgrim Congregational Church.  
LWV Meeting, 11:45 a.m. Cathy Whitlock, will speak on Climate Change. Cathy  
is the lead author of the Montana Climate Assessment and previous Director  
of the Montana Institute on Ecosystems. She is an MSU Regents Professor in  
Earth Sciences.

### **December, 2019**

- Mon. 9      LWV Board Meeting, 10:30 a.m. Pilgrim Congregational Church.  
LWV Meeting, 11:45 a.m.