

**LWVUS MISSION**

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan 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.

***In this Edition***

The League of Women Voters of Sussex County, DE (LWVSC) will hold its Semi-annual Member Meeting on November 16, 2018.



***Message from our president***

In this Thanksgiving season there is much to be thankful for. I wish to thank ...

**Connie Jones and the Voter Services Committee** on all the hard work they have done to register, engage and educate voters this election season. They have held voter registration drives, tabling events, canvased neighborhoods and held a phone bank to remind at least 186 voters to vote on election day.



**Martha Redmond, President**

**Pat Makos of VOTE411.org** fame and her group have worked tirelessly to get the website up and running and promote it thru press releases, posters, palm cards, bumper stickers and ads. She has been interviewed multiple times by local TV stations.

Our rock star **moderators Carol Jones and Janet Ambrose** have presided over 5 Candidate Forums. These have required a workforce of 50 volunteers to pull off. Thank you one and all.

Thank you to **Nancy Kassner and the Environmental Committee** which held an environmental expo. Voters were able to meet environmental groups as well as talk to politicians about their concerns.

In addition, we have submitted letters to the editor and local government. Thank you **Nancy Kassner, Sue Claire Harper and Tish Gulu**, who have written letters in support of improved buffers, workforce housing and improved transportation.

We would not be doing any of this were it not for the Suffragists who worked for decades to secure women's right to vote. As part of the kick off to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, Stacie Burton from the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial will address the League at our **Semi-annual Meeting Nov. 16, 2PM at**

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**the Rehoboth History Museum.** We will learn of the harsh conditions and abuse these women endured in order to get the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment. We will also vote on some changes to our bylaws. These changes will be emailed to all members prior to the meeting.

I like to think they would be proud of all our efforts to strengthen our democracy.

**Martha Redmond, LWVSCDE President**

***Membership Report Fall 2018***

The membership committee is undergoing a transition with the loss of Linda Owings who had to step down because of family obligations. Lorna Dempsey is serving as transitional chair. We currently have 141 members, 26 of whom are male. We have acquired 16 new members in the last 6 months. In addition to the towns along the coast, our members come from Laurel, Harbeson, Frankford, Dagsboro, Millsboro, Nassau, Lincoln, Selbyville, Milford and Georgetown. New members have joined through Candidate Forums, Fun Lunches, Water Expo and tabling events. Janet Ambrose is giving a presentation about the LWVSCDE to a Millsboro homeowners' association in this month. It is through events such as this that we hope to attract new members.

***Officers & Board for 2017-19***

- **Officers:**
  - President – Martha Redmond
  - Vice President – Janet Ambrose
  - Secretary – Suzanne Hain
  - Treasurer – Marge LaFond
- **Directors:**
  - BR Breen
  - Shelly Cohen
  - Lorna Dempsey
  - Sue Claire Harper
  - Connie Jones
  - Jane Lord
  - Michele Salvaneschi
  - Rain Tyler

Come to a meeting to see how the Board works. Contact Martha Redmond at [sussexlww@gmail.com](mailto:sussexlww@gmail.com)

*Keep up with league events. Visit [www.sussexlww.org](http://www.sussexlww.org) and check out our calendar.*

## Treasurer's Report

LWVSCDE accounts for the 2019 fiscal year, which is July 1 –June 30, are on solid financial footing. We currently operate as two funds –the Administration of the league is as a 501(C)(4) non-profit social organization engaged in enhancing community involvement in public policy and the Education Fund is incorporated as a 501(c)3 tax-deductible fund. The balances as of Oct. 2018 are:



**Marge LaFond**  
Treasurer

- \$ 11,437.57
- \$ 2,813.26

Paperwork for the State of Delaware amending our by-laws has been completed by our lawyer. We are now working on effecting change to our IRS status for all our funds to be 501(c)(3). Once complete all membership fees and donations will be tax-deductible. Look for an announcement on our website.

Annual membership fees remain \$60 for the Sussex County league. This automatically enrolls each member in both the state (LWVDE) and national (LWVUS) leagues. Each membership term is aligned with the league's fiscal year (June 30 – July 1). This year we introduced a special Student Membership with a \$5 fee for qualified students.

We thank all people and businesses who have contributed, particularly the generous contributions from All Saints Parish Thrift Shop. For questions, please contact Marge LaFond at [sussexlwv@gmail.com](mailto:sussexlwv@gmail.com).

## Voter Services Program

By Connie Jones, Chair

The 2018 Mid-term Election season has been fertile ground for Voter Services. In the Spring we kicked



**Connie Jones, Chair**

off our GOTV Campaign by educating Sussex residents about the political landscape, followed by many registration events and neighborhood canvassing through the summer and fall. VOTE411, launched on July 16, was actively promoted by distributing posters, flyers, and palm cards. In addition, these activities were supplemented by media interviews as well as digital and social media advertising.

The five candidate forums held across the county peaked public interest as the attendance level reached new highs. Complementing all our activities, timely

press releases announcing our plans were released to news media across the county. Our final effort for 2018 will be our Election Day Phone Bank where we will call all the eligible voters that we connected with over the months and remind them to go to the polls.

The committed Voter Services Committee members, Pat Makos, Martha Redmond, Jane Lord, Walt Trela, Maria Webb, Jack Young, Dianne Rogers, Lynda Dunham and Susan Rosenberg, who took leadership roles to manage these activities deserve special recognition for a job well done. In addition, many thanks go out to the scores of volunteers who offered their time and talent to participate in these functions, especially the ones who volunteered over and over again. These volunteers, both league members and non-league members, are the reason we can accomplish so much and make a real difference.



**Georgetown Neighborhood Canvas**  
October 1, 2018

One of the high points of the 2018 GOTV campaign was National Voter Registration Day, September 25, 2018. The Sussex league was chosen by LWV National to be part of their VOTE411 advertising campaign. The many photos taken at this Registration Event conducted at Del Tech Community College can be viewed on the Sussex League's website.

A newly formed committee, the Statewide Election Committee, is an offshoot of Voter Services and was initiated to review Delaware State Election practices. The committee met with representatives from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE, to discuss the Mid-term Election. This organization has been enlisted by the US government to oversee the 2018 Mid-term Election.



**National Voter Registration Day Del Tech**  
Community College,  
September 25, 2018

## Land Use Program

By Sue Claire Harper and Marti Austin, Co-Chairs

On August 21, 2018, our committee drafted a letter to DelDOT Secretary Jennifer Cohen regarding



Sue Claire Harper,  
Land Use Co-Chair



Marti Austin, Land  
Use Co-Chair

LWVSCDE's concern about inadequate bus transportation services in greater Sussex County. On 9/21/18, a copy of this letter was published in the

Cape Gazette's Letters to the Editor.

On September 11, 2018 co-chair Sue Claire Harper made a brief presentation at the Sussex County Council meeting expressing the LWVSCDE's support for Councilman IG Burton's proposed ordinance to amend Chapter 99 of the code to mandate that all forested and/or landscaped buffers along new subdivisions be increased from 20 ft. to 40 ft. Councilman IG Burton stated that since Councilman George Cole expressed his support for this ordinance, Council president Mike Vincent's vote is crucial in determining whether this ordinance will pass.

Regarding the need for a County ordinance to support the intent and goals of Affordable Housing under the 2018 Comp Plan, committee member Tish Galu drafted a letter to the Sussex Planning & Zoning Commissioners indicating our League's support for increasing workforce/affordable housing. This letter sent on October 9, 2018 was signed by both Tish and LWVSCDE President Martha Redmond and copied as a Letter to the Editor to the local news media.

This past summer our committee nominated LWVSC member John Austin for the 2018 Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Award in the environmental category. Although John was not awarded the recognition this year, based on the advice of Coordinator for the Volunteer Awards April Willey, John's name will be submitted again posthumously in 2019.

In addition to John's long list of contributions to protect our environment, he was instrumental in working with environmental groups, attorneys, and government officials on Federal Bill S.3021, 'America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018' signed by President Trump on October 23, 2018. Delaware Senator Tom Carper stated, "This bill will ensure that everyone, no matter what zip code they live in, can be confident that the water coming out of their tap is safe for their

families to drink". At a October 26, 2018 press conference, John was publicly thanked for his contributions in developing this Bill.

## Observer Corps Committee Report

by BR Breen, Chair

The Observer Corps, the eyes and ears of the League, attends County Council, Planning & Zoning Commission and School Board meetings to ensure that government transparency laws are followed. The Corps also keeps the League updated on issues important to our mission. After attending a meeting, Observers submit a report to the Corps coordinator. Each month, these reports are compiled and presented to our League Board. An annual report with key findings is presented to County Council each spring.



BR Breen, Observer  
Chair

There's been enthusiastic participation this year as new members have joined our group of seasoned Observers. Newer members, - Carol Conroy, Gwendolyn Miller and Lynda Dunham - have joined Corps members Marie Fletcher, Pat Petchel, Mary Ellen Monos, Walt Trela, Jack Young and BR Breen in attending and reporting on meetings.

Becoming an Observer is a great way to learn about and keep up on the issues facing our county. This past year the Corps reported on county meetings and public hearings covering the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, right-to-work laws, the Overbrook Town Center development, and the revisions to forested/landscape buffers and land density ordinances.

On September 12, 2018, we presented our Annual Report to Sussex County Council. See page 5 for a copy of the report, known as The Sunshine Report.

All levels of participation are welcome, whether you can attend meetings occasionally or regularly, so consider becoming a member of our Corps! Contact [observercorps@sussexlww.org](mailto:observercorps@sussexlww.org).

## Environmental and Natural Resources (ENR) Program Report

by Shelly Cohen for Nancy Kassner, Chair

Environment and in particular Clean Water are priority issues all around our country, especially in Sussex County DE. Our ENR Committee made a commitment to educate the public by hosting 3 environmental events in 2018. The first Water Forum in March, featured local grassroots environmentalists from Sussex County. Their presentations and the video are available on our website.

On August 8, 2018 we hosted the 2nd environmental forum titled, “Safe Drinking Water?? Everyone’s Concern” Part 2. There was a record turnout exceeding 120 attendees. Both of these events were at the Sussex County Council Chambers.

Although subject of safe drinking water is receiving attention in the papers and other media, people are still seeking pertinent information to address health concerns, including:

- What is in their drinking water?
- How can they protect their children and other vulnerable family members?
- What regulations offer protection?
- Where can they go for help and information?
- What can be done to stop industrial pollution?
- Who is accountable?

It is a fact that all water in Sussex County is sourced from aquifers via wells which can be private, municipal or through a for profit water company. Another basic fact is that pollution enters those same aquifers from spraying industrial wastewater on farm land or direct discharge of wastewater into waterways. All the water is interconnected. Pollution does not go away - it accumulates.

The three guest speakers provided a presentation and answered questions. Keith Mensch, Program Administrator, Delaware Division of Public Health, Office of Drinking Water explained the differences of public versus private water sources and how to obtain information and/or lab tests. The DNREC Deputy Secretary, Lisa Borin Ogden offered an overview of services provided by her state agency. Dr. Mohammed Akhter, retired former Director of the American Public Health Association explained the long-range costs of water pollution include serious public health problems. He offered a comprehensive plan for both immediate commonsense solutions and long-term planning to remediate industrial pollution in the county. His view is that “everyone is in this boat together” and changes are necessary to provide safe drinking water for everyone. A healthy environment is essential for future generations.

The third event was the Water Warriors Expo at the Milton Fire House on October 6, 2018. It was an enthusiastic gathering of many environmental groups partnering to offer information and help to the public. The League provided water test kits for attendees who source water through private wells.

We would like to recognize the many organizations whose participation contributed to the success of the Expo, including: Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP); Keep Our Wells Clean (KOWC); Protect Our Indian River (POIR); Sierra Club; Marine

Education, Research, Rehabilitation (MERR) Institute; Delaware Center for the Inland Bays (CIB); DE Interfaith Power & Light; Milton Sustainability Committee; Lower Sussex NAACP Youth Council 2719; SERCAP and the Citizens Climate Lobby. This event would not have been possible without the many wonderful volunteers who want to make the world a better place!

In this election season, several candidates were at the Expo. It was open to any and all candidates, however, no speeches were allowed. Instead, they met the public on a one to one basis to answer questions and explain their environmental platforms. Candidates present were David Baker for State Senate of District 6; John (Jack) Bucchioni and Harry Smouse, both competing for State Representative of District 20.

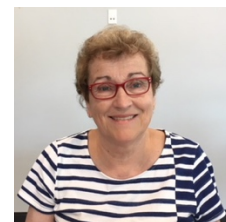
Aside from those events, the Sussex County League’s ENR Committee participated in several conference calls organized by coastal LWVs. The purpose of this effort is to produce a letter opposing the expansion of gas and oil drilling in public waters off the U.S. coastline. It will be directed to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM).

Encouraged by the productive 2018 year, the Committee is planning events for 2019. Contaminated water is an ongoing issue which requires more attention. Future ENR events may focus on the Rights of Nature, changes in state and local laws to remedy contaminated water and environmental damage. We will continue to focus on the ongoing problems of Federal deregulation leading to Offshore Drilling and the downgraded Affordable Clean Energy Act. Future events may be held in partnership of one or more of the groups who participated in the Expo.

### ***Website & Social Media Report***

**by Rain Tyler, Webmaster**

The new website was launched a year ago and has been well received (Visit us at: [www.sussexlww.org](http://www.sussexlww.org) ). We’ve received a lot of positive feedback. The new design has proven to be easier to read and faster to scan for content. The front or landing page has slideshow photos that often provide links to relevant information (i.e. VOTE411.org, committee pages, voter resources, etc). The captions under those pictures were recently expanded to include more information. The landing page also provides views with links to current news articles, events, press releases, and action alerts. The content of the landing page is



**Rain Tyler,  
Webmaster**

updated regularly to help keep it current so that our members and other readers can be informed.

Over the past six months, changes have been made to make more effective use of the sidebar content. Prior to the midterm elections, a graphic link (“widget”) for VOTE411.org was located there to allow viewers to access that site directly. Other graphic links include ones to our Facebook and Twitter pages. Recently, LWFUS Facebook feed was added.

The front page was recently revamped when a new top navigation menu theme was made available. With the change from the side menu to top, related pages were combined under main links. The result is a cleaner, less cluttered landing page which is, hopefully, more readable. Revisions were made to committee pages to update them according to activities held, such as forums, launching of VOTE411.org, etc. A new Voting page was added to make information for voters more prominent and accessible.

Each month new articles are added to the News/Press Releases/Notices page. The articles center on league events and concerns, updates from LWFUS and LWFDE, etc. When the General Assembly is in session, action alerts and articles on legislative priorities are posted. The most important articles are shared to the front page. League events are posted on the league calendar page while non-league events are shared to the Community Events page. Events and articles related to the environment are added to pages that are linked from the Environment and Natural Resources committee page. New members are regularly added to our website league roster.

To remain current, the website requires regular maintenance such as removing articles that are no longer timely from the front page, deleting out-of-date events from the calendar pages, revising articles, adding new slideshow items, unpublishing old action alerts, etc. We now get automatic feed from the LWFUS on action alerts and policy positions. We utilize our webhost (MyLO) support for occasional issues with the website and for any major changes in the format. An account with Eventbrite was set up so that reservations can be made for league events online. We are currently waiting on the completion of our transition to 501(c)(3) status before we can begin to use PayPal and the webforms needed for online membership and donations. In October, new member Jan Benjamin took over posting to the Community Events and Environment & Natural Resources calendars. The website is ever changing and evolving to meet our league’s needs.

**Social Media.** We have dramatically increased our social media presence in recent months. Facebook

and Twitter can be accessed from the website or directly (<https://facebook.com/www.sussexlwf.org> and <https://twitter.com/sussexlwf.org>). Reports from Facebook indicate that we are reaching more people every month. Facebook posts have varied between about 25 to 50 per month over the past six months. Monthly tweets have increased each month to a high of 40 in October. Events, articles, and action alerts that are posted on the website are often shared to Facebook and Twitter. Important posts from the LWFUS and LWFDE are also shared on our social media pages. The Facebook and Twitter pages of the LWFUS, LWFDE, and those of voting related and environmental organizations, are monitored for posts and tweets that might be of interest to our members.

*We hope that you’ve checked out our website and what it has to offer. And please like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter! If you are having difficulty accessing our webpage or have suggestions for posts on it or Facebook and Twitter, please don’t hesitate to contact me at [rain.tyler@mchsi.com](mailto:rain.tyler@mchsi.com)*



## **League of Women Voters of Sussex County, Delaware Annual Report to Sussex County Council Sunshine Report Day 2018**

The League of Women Voters of Sussex County is a non-partisan political organization that encourages active participation in government through education and advocacy.

As part of our mission, we regularly attend and observe government meetings to ensure that transparency in government and open meeting laws are followed. We also monitor government meetings to track the progress of issues that are of importance to the League, including voting, sustainable communities, social, fiscal and environmental issues. Each year we present a report to County Council, our “Sunshine Report”, that highlights our findings.

For the past nine years, the “Observer Corps” of the League has attended the meetings of Sussex County Council, Planning and Zoning and School Boards. Here are our findings for this past year:

### **1. Citizen Participation, Access and Right to Know**

- The public comment period at the beginning of Council’s agenda and the enforcement of the three-minute public comment time limit worked well.
- Public hearings, even the largely attended ones, have been fair and opened to all views and comments. Perhaps some consideration, if legal, should be given to a time limit on public hearing comments so citizens and council members can hear all viewpoints in a reasonable amount of time.
- We are extremely grateful to Administrator Todd Lawson for offering County Council Chambers as an ideal venue for us to hold our ongoing public educational forums on issues related to the 2018 Comprehensive Plan and clean water. Clerk of the Council Robin Griffith and IT Support Specialist Amanda Hollis assisted us in laying the groundwork to ensure that our forums proceeded smoothly. Our focus continues to be public engagement with knowledgeable professionals with whom the citizens can interact on vital issues such as smart land use and the environment. We look forward to holding more forums in the year to come.
- The addition of security at County Council Chambers, a positive safety improvement, has not impeded public access. The new ordinance prohibiting firearms in county buildings, except for special use permits, is welcome.
- Under the direction of Sussex's Director of Planning & Zoning, Janelle Cornwell, the County has made every effort to involve the public in the drafting of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan through its interactive website <https://sussexplan.com/> and in community meetings. This intent was reflected in both the lengthy deliberations of the Planning and Zoning Commission, and in the discussions subsequently held in County Council meetings.

### **2. Clarification in County Procedures, Policies and Ordinances**

Over the past year, positive improvements have been made in the clarification and uniformity of county procedures, policies and ordinances. Examples are the additional commercial zoning classifications, rewriting of county ordinances, reapplication for conditional use amendments, clearer water and sewer regulations and fees, detailed signage ordinances and special events clarifications.

### **3. Land Use Decisions**

- The League supports Council’s consideration of consistency with surrounding fixed growth areas in the County’s decisions on land use – specifically the decisions on Overbrook Town Center and the fitness center on Savannah Road.
- Council’s suggestion that setbacks and other conditions in the health care developments along King’s Highway be compatible with the Lewes Scenic and Historic Byway Plan is a welcome and crucial step in future planning.

- Recent land use decisions seem to be influenced by and consistent with the forward thinking of the new Comprehensive Plan under development.

#### 4. 2018 Comprehensive Plan

- Since ordinances relevant to the 2018 Comp Plan are crucial to making the Plan a meaningful document, the League maintains a keen interest in seeing which ordinances are drafted and subsequently adopted. We agree with the concern Council has expressed that the drafting of these ordinances proceed without delay so that the concepts contained in this new Comp Plan will carry the Force of Law.

#### 5. Concerns

- To protect the welfare of our citizens, the ongoing expansion of the poultry industry and the proximity to residential areas continues to need the attention of Council and Planning & Zoning.
- The issue of road connectivity between adjoining properties – both residential and commercial neighbors - is important for public safety. We support the commitment of the Planning & Zoning Commission to continue to enforce this policy.
- The council chambers audio and video system available on the county website is excellent. However, we continue to hear complaints about the clarity of sound within chambers.
- Affordable and available housing requires creative thinking and coordinated policy. As Council and the Comp Plan draft have recognized, there are many challenges facing this issue.
- We urge Council to keep the public informed on the progress of the Sussex Sports Center Foundation sports complex to assess the success of public/private partnerships.
- Agenda item descriptions have greatly improved in recent years. Public hearing items are fully described. However, when those items come up again under Old Business, much of the description is lost and not easily identifiable for the public.
- Planning & Zoning meetings have one only agenda available for attendees. It would be helpful if additional printed copies were available at the meetings.

#### In Conclusion

The Observer Corps of the Sussex County League of Women Voters appreciates this opportunity to present these findings to Council and we will continue our activities this year. We share with you the goal of continued open and good government for the citizens of Sussex County.

***B.R. Breen***

Observer Corps Coordinator, League of Women Voters of Sussex County, DE