

HEADLINES

January 2020



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President's Message

Late last year we asked you to show your support for the League of Women Voters of White Plains by making a donation to our annual fundraising drive. The response was impressive. It told us that you believe in the League's efforts to advance, protect, and defend voting rights and to promote an informed and engaged electorate.

Among other things, your donations make it possible to continue our youth programs. It means we will continue to produce and distribute the printed Voters Guides and maintain the companion website VOTE411.ORG for every primary and general election. The Guide is a hallmark of the League and we know that for years voters have relied on it to make informed choices when they vote. And last year we were able to overhaul the League of Women Voters of White Plains' website, LWWWP.ORG, thanks to your financial support.

Knowing we have all of you as supporters gives us a boost (dare I be corny and say you are all the wind beneath our wings?). Now, at the start of 2020 we are looking forward to another active year during which, in addition to our youth programs and voter service (calendars, information, registration, get-out-the vote) efforts, we will work as part of the Complete Count effort to get the word out about the 2020 Census that begins on April 1.

We are planning candidates forums for both primary and general elections for U.S. Congressional and NYS Legislature seats and possibly for WP school board elections. This year we will resume our annual review of the White Plains City budget with a presentation to the residents by WP Budget Director James Arnett. And the popular monthly Common Ground program will continue.

We look forward to using LWWWP.ORG as a means of keeping White Plains residents up-to-date on city government with our monthly summaries of the White Plains Common Council meetings. Information pages on the site will highlight some of

the many important community organizations that serve White Plains. This in addition to the website being *the* place to go for election information.

Behind the scenes our finance chair keeps the books in order and our membership chair works to keep up membership and encourage people to join.

Whew ... you can see we have a lot of balls in the air thanks to the work of a very few dedicated volunteers. LWVWP plays an important and unique role in our community. We want to keep all of these programs and efforts going and we want to expand what we do. In my time with the League I have worked with a truly amazing group of people (men AND women)—smart, enthusiastic, involved, caring, supportive, enabling, and intent on making a difference. We share a goal and a vision. If any of this interests you we encourage you to consider becoming an ACTIVE member of the League of Women Voters of White Plains—get involved. After all, *Democracy is not a Spectator Sport.*

In League,
Stephen Cohen
President

2020 ELECTION SCHEDULE

This year, you can exercise your right to vote several times.

- The Presidential Primaries (in NY State) take place Tuesday, April 28, with early voting available April 18-26.
- The White Plains School District Vote and School Board Election is Tuesday, May 19, noon-9 p.m. (no early voting).
- The Congressional Primaries are scheduled for Tuesday, June 23, with early voting June 13-21.
- The General Election is Tuesday, November 3, with early voting Oct. 24-Nov. 1.

2019 Year-end Fund Raiser - THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our year-end Fund Raising Appeal. We had a very positive response from members who either contributed directly to our White Plains League or who sent us tax deductible contributions addressed to the LWVNYS Education Foundation and earmarked for use by our White Plains League.

Thanks to your generous support we will continue to promote civic engagement, encourage an informed and engaged electorate and continue our vital programs in the community.



Vote 18 Underway

Vote 18 is one of the most popular activities of our League and plans are well underway for this year's high school registration initiative. League members will visit classes at Stepinac High School and Woodlands High School in early November to inform students about voting rights history and contemporary issues and to register them to vote. (White Plains HS handles voter registration through the social studies department.) Our Vote 18 program is earlier than usual this year because we wanted to make sure that students who will be 18 by the April presidential primary will be eligible to vote and then also to be able to vote in upcoming school board budget votes and in the Congressional primaries in June. New NYS legislation also allows for the registration of 16 and 17 year olds in an effort to expand those eligible to vote as they come of age. So we have lots to talk about with students.

We have 16 members signed up to do this important work and will report back to our membership about our experience and results.

Beth Kava

Vote 18 Coordinator

Census 2020 - Did You Know?

Census Day is April 1, 2020

The Census will be digital for the first time

The Census is available in 60 languages, Braille and large print.

For further information, [click here](#) for the City of White Plains's Census 2020 page.

LWVWP Winter Gathering

Save the Date! Join us on Sunday March 29, 3:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m. at our Winter Gathering where we will honor Jim Kenny, Executive Director White Plains Cable TV, and John Sheppard, TV Production Specialist White Plains Public Schools TV with the League of Women Voters of White Plains Civic Engagement Award. In a time of declining local news coverage by media of all kinds, Mr. Kenny and Mr. Sheppard and their respective teams continue to ensure that the White Plains community gets the information it needs to make informed choices in our important local elections. Invitations will be mailed in February.

White Plains City Budget Review—Save the Date

Plan to join us on Tuesday April 28 at 6:30 p.m. at the White Plains Public Library when White Plains City Budget Director James Arnett will discuss the proposed 2020—2021 city budget. The meeting by Mr. Arnett is open to the public and all are invited to attend. A consensus meeting open to LWVWP members will follow the report.



**COMMON
GROUND**

Common Ground, the community conversation where participants can express their viewpoints and listen to different perspectives in a civic environment will continue in 2020. The YWCA's Courageous Conversations, the White Plains Public Library and the White Plains League of Women Voter's are collaborating in continuing the Common Ground Conversations.

People of all viewpoints are welcome to participate, and we are committed to creating an atmosphere that is safe for everyone who attends. It will be a place to share experiences, opinions and solutions to understand how people in our area

are actually affected by the policies, issues and events that we hear about on the news and media.

We believe that together, we can reach across what divides us to create Common Ground.

We will meet 3rd Thursday of every month January-May, 2020 (except for March, which meets the 4th Thursday)

6pm-8PM

Community Room

White Plains Public Library

February 20th- Economic inequality/affordable housing and the impact upon creating a larger community

March 26th-Immigration- How to be a welcoming community?

April 16th- Social Media- The impact of social media upon the interaction within a larger community

May 21st-Civic Engagement- How to encourage a political conversation based upon facts?

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JANUARY 2020 COMMON COUNCIL MEETING

by Clifford Blau

The White Plains Common Council held its regular monthly meeting on January 6, 2020. The new councilmembers were sworn in, and Nadine Hunt-Robinson was chosen as council president.

At this meeting, the council postponed a public hearing on a cabaret permit for Z Steakhouse to February 3, and set one for that date for Sunset Restaurant as well. It also took the following actions: Approved about \$84,900 in tax refunds due to reduced property assessments and accepted grants of \$189,000 for youth programs and \$190,000 for substance abuse prevention services.

- Decided to use a profit of \$42,000 from the sale of a foreclosed apartment for debt service.
- Lowered the speed limit to 20 MPH on a section of South Lexington Avenue.
- Approved the WP Hospital's walkway over Longview Avenue and extended several site plan approvals.

The council also held a special meeting on December 23, 2019, to approve eliminating the retiree's share of the cost of health benefits for retired firefighters who are over the age of 70, or can demonstrate financial hardship.

At the Citizens to be Heard session before the meeting, a citizen spoke about damage to her oil tank potentially caused

by city trucks.

The calendar of upcoming meetings for the various boards and agencies can be found at <https://www.cityofwhiteplains.com/853/Common-Council-BoardsCommissions-Mtgs-Ca>

Meetings and Citizens to be Heard can be viewed at <http://whiteplainsny.swagit.com/live/> or on your government cable access channel.

FUND BALANCES, DEBT UP IN WHITE PLAINS

by Clifford Blau

The City of White Plains's comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) covering the fiscal year July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019, has good news. The city's total fund balances as of June 30, 2019, were \$44.2 million, an increase of \$7.0 million from June 30, 2018. \$33.1 million of the total was committed or restricted for particular purposes, leaving an unassigned fund balance of \$11.1 million, up \$6.3 million from a year earlier. This despite debt increasing to \$161.9 million from \$151.9 million. An additional \$43.1 million of borrowing had been approved by year-end. Excluded from the debt total is \$667 million of post-retirement benefits accrued as a liability.

While that is plenty of long-term debt, in the short term things are much more manageable. Cash and cash equivalents of \$101 million as of June 30, 2019, was more than adequate to pay current liabilities of about \$38 million.

Revenue was up \$9.5 million from the prior year. Grants accounted for about \$1.7 million of that increase. Charges for services increased almost \$4 million, most of that being due to building permit fees, and taxes produced an additional \$2 million compared with 2017/18. Investment earnings increased \$1.1 million while sales tax revenue increased \$39,000. In comparison to the budget, General Fund revenues were about \$3,000,000 higher (excluding restricted sales tax). Again, that was largely due to building permits and interest income. At the same time, General Fund expenditures were \$9.1M below budget. They increased \$1.4 million from 2017/18.

The complete CAFR is available at <https://www.cityofwhiteplains.com/DocumentCenter/View/5541/2018-2019-CAFR>

White Plains City School District News:

Here are the [Highlights](#) of the January 2020 White Plains Board of Education meeting, courtesy of Michele Schoenfeld.

Important Dates 2020	
Annual Winter Party	Sunday March 29, 3:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.
Census Day	Wednesday, April 1
Vote 18	February 4, February 11; training Jan 29
WP City Budget Review and Consensus Meeting	April 28; 6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m.; WPPL
Presidential Primaries	Early Voting: April 18—April 26 Primary Election Day: Tuesday April 28
WP School Board Candidates Forum (if necessary)	Wednesday May 13, 7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
WPCSD Budget Vote & School Board Election	Tuesday May 19, Noon—9:00 p.m.
Annual Membership Meeting & Dinner	May 19, 6:30 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
Marge Davies scholarship @ WPHS Senior Awards Night	June 1, 7:00 p.m., WPHS
Candidates Forums for 88 th NYS AD Primaries	May 18, May 20; 7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
Candidates Forums for 17 th US CD Primaries	June 2, 8; 7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
Congressional Primaries	Early Voting: June 13—June 21 Primary Election Day: Tuesday June 23
Annual Picnic	June 23, 6:30 p.m.—8:30 p.m.
LWV National Convention; Washington, D.C.	June 25—June 27
Candidates Forum for 17 th CD Election	<i>October ?? 7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.</i>
Candidates Forum for 88 th NYS AD Election	<i>October ?? 7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.</i>
General Election	Early Voting: October 24—1 November Election Day: Tuesday November 3

LWVWP Board meeting schedule

Board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month from September through June. LWVWP members are welcome to attend. Meetings are held at the White Plains Public Library. If you would like to attend let Stephen Cohen know (lwwwp.president@gmail.com) so he can be sure to provide you the agenda and meeting material. Scheduled meeting dates are: 02/12; 3/11; 4/15; 5/13; 6/10.

2019-2020 Board:

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The League of Women Voters takes no position on candidates for public office or on political parties. The League works to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.
