

The Voter

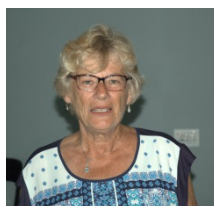
LWWUS MISSION

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.

JULY 2016

Volume X No. 1

From the President's Pen



Jane Lord, President

At our Annual Meeting last year, members adopted a two-pronged local program for 2015-17, focusing on voter issues and on sustainable communities. "Sustainability" is a great theme, because it encompasses so many of our concerns—

all things that are necessary to maintaining healthy communities. "Sustaining" is more than "maintaining"—or keeping things the way they are, doing things the same old way. Sustainability involves recognition that things change, or sometimes that things should change. Environmental

conditions change, economic situations change, demographics change, communities change. Sustainability requires more than simple maintenance; it requires action. First thing, it requires vigilance and awareness of what's going on around us.

Our Observer Corps has kept us vigilant. Janet Ambrose's observers keep their fingers on the pulse of the County Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission, and Martha Redmond's contingent regularly report on school board meetings. Our observers continue to act as the "eyes and ears" of the League.

Whereas many of the hot issues in Sussex County center on land use, our Land Use Committee is dealing with the concept of sustainability head-on. Most of our public forums this year have been planned and organized by the Land Use Committee, led by Sue Claire Harper. The committee's ongoing efforts have not only enhanced the League's reputation, they also sustain our mission—to encourage informed and active participation in government and to increase understanding of public policy issues.

While land use issues have been in the spotlight, we remain keenly aware of social issues that continue to plague our communities. Clearly, discrimination and injustice are not compatible with sustainability. We were proud to cosponsor "The New Jim Crow" Discussion Group, which led to formation of the Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice. Thanks to the initiative of Charlotte King and Jo Klinge, the League and the Alliance cosponsored a public forum featuring "Whispers of Angels" during Black History Month.

Thanks to Leslie Ledogar's initiative, we cosponsored a forum on Women in Politics with CAMP Rehoboth as part of their Women's Fest in April.

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In the broader political sphere, we are ever concerned about a sustainable democracy, a government by and for the people—which means limiting the power of money in politics. In the fall, our local League participated in a national study of the Constitutional Amendment Process, led by Esther Shelton, and this led to a broader study of Money In Politics, headed by Suzanne Hain. The consensus of local leagues across the country resulted in a position statement that will guide lobbying and action on both state and national levels.

Of course, government by the people only works if the people vote. And, a sustainable democracy must reflect changing demographics. Thus, our primary focus for the coming summer and fall will be on encouraging minorities to register and to get to the polls. Connie Jones and Janet Orlando are already in the throes of organizing a Get-out-the-vote campaign (GOTV) targeting minority communities in Sussex County. This is an exciting initiative with plenty of opportunities for all of us to pitch in and do our bit.

As we go into the fall, we are also going to need help organizing candidates' forums. As usual, we called on our faithful and dynamic moderator, Carol Jones, to preside at the Milton Town Council Forum in February; and, going forward, we need to provide backup to make sure that our ability to present candidates forums is sustainable.

Sustainability applies to our organization as well as to communities and to the issues we tackle. The crucial roles of our Secretary, Treasurer, and Membership and Communication Committee Chairs should never be taken for granted. They sustain us as a viable and vibrant organization.

- Martha Redmond's clear and comprehensive minutes have ensured continuity.
- Lorna Dempsey's efficiency and attention to detail have kept us on a firm financial footing.
- Janet Denman has diligently managed the ins and outs, ups and downs, of our membership rolls—a job that becomes more complicated even as technology is supposed to be making it more efficient.
- Advances in technology present on-going challenges to our Communications Committee. Under Jo Klinge's leadership, committee members have made significant improvements in processes and procedures. As Jo handed the

reins to Suzanne Hain, the transition appeared seamless, much to the credit of both Jo and Suzanne.

This is a time of transition for our Board of Directors. Five of our 12 members are leaving because of their own transitions or changing circumstances:

- Carol Sommers, who served as chair of our Observer Corps for 5+ years, while also serving on many other committees and pitching in whenever help was needed
- Anne Riley, former president, stayed on as Sea-level Rise Committee Chair to organize several successful events, even while working in Maryland during the week
- Jo Klinge, who served as Vice President and Communications Chair, and who has been my rock, always standing by to lend her support
- Charlotte King, Past President of the state League, whose experience, wisdom, and insight have broadened our perspective and inspired action
- And, Marie Mayor, Vice President, who brought her wealth of knowledge of government agencies and political processes as well as her keen insight into local issues

We thank each one of them for enriching and sustaining the LWVSC.

And now we heartily welcome four newly appointed members to the board: Suzanne Hain, Marge LaFond, Connie Jones, and Janet Orlando.

In sum, the state of our union is stable. Our members, old and new, continue to be united around our common mission. While goodbyes are difficult, hellos propel us forward. *This is sustainability.*

Jane

Jane Lord
LWVSC President

Sunshine Report to County Council

On June 14, the Sussex County League presented its Annual Report to the Sussex County Council at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Sussex County Council in Georgetown. B.R. Breen presented the report on behalf of the Observer Corps. Fifteen League members were in attendance, demonstrating their support for the work of the Observer Corps.

The full report, as presented to the Council, is provided on pages 8-10.

Remember to Vote

- ✓ **Sat, Aug 20, 2016:** Deadline to register to vote for the Primary Election.
- ✓ **Tue, Sep 13, 2016:** Primary Election. Polls open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- ✓ **Sat, Oct. 15, 2016:** Deadline to register to vote before the General Election.
- ✓ **Tue, Nov 8, 2016:** General Election Polls open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.



Key Dates to Remember in 2016

Date	Event	Location
Jul 15 5:30 pm	WHYY Interview – Hispanic GOTV	"First" TV Show
Jul 29 Noon	Fun Lunch	Backyard, 211 Broadkill Rd, Milton
Aug 5 th 10 am	LWVSC Board Meeting	Esther Shelton
Sep 13 th 7 am – 8 pm	Primary Election – State & Local Offices	Polling Stations
Sep 21 st 7 pm	Land Use Forum – What Drives DelDOT- Part 2?	Council Chambers, Georgetown
Sep 30 th Noon	Fun Lunch	TBD
Oct. 5 th 7-9 pm	Land Use Forum – Sussex's Low Income Housing	Council Chambers, Georgetown
Oct 28 th Noon	Fun Lunch	TBD
Nov 8 th 7 am – 8 pm	General Election	Polling Stations
Nov 16 th 7-9 pm	Land Use Forum – Developer's Perspective	Council Chambers, Georgetown
Sep 30 th Noon	Fun Lunch	TBD

For more information see calendar on www.sussexlwv.org

Treasurer's Report

Lorna Dempsey, LWVSC Treasurer, reports that our financial affairs are in a good position. Our program activity expenses during this past year have been covered by the Education Fund, which has received several substantial donations from the All Saints Parish Thrift Store through the nomination of Sue Claire Harper. (Thank you, Sue Claire.) These include key programs like our current Get out the Vote (GOTV) campaign, the "Land Use" forums, and the "Money in Politics" and "Constitutional Amendment" studies.



Lorne Dempsey
Treasurer

I am happy to report that Marge La Fond as offered to be a back-up treasurer effective in July. New to our Board, Marge has jumped in with the financial work. Thank-you, Marge. If there are any other members who have skills in spreadsheets or finance, please let us know as we can use another person to run ideas by. We want to form a finance committee to manage our funds effectively and openly.

Lastly, if you are feeling flush and altruistic, both Sussex County and the Delaware State League appreciates your tax deductible contributions to their Education Fund.

Sadly, the McMurray Conference Room



in the Beebe Healthcare Center on Route 24 is no longer available for our use. We thank Beebe for making it available to us for all those years.

Get Out the Vote (GOTV) 2016 Campaign – “Be Our Voice”

By Janet Orlando and Connie Jones, Co-chairs

Our goal is to significantly increase voter registrations and voter turnout among Hispanics and African Americans in Sussex County for the 2016 Election. The voter registration rate in Sussex County is about 88% of the eligible-to-vote population, but it is disparate across cultural groups. Voter registration among Caucasians is over 90%, while African Americans and Hispanic populations come in at about 68% and 34% respectively. The actual voter turnout for the latter two groups in the 2014 election was even more disappointing.

With this understanding, the LWVSC has developed a multifaceted GOTV plan to increase registration and the rate of voter turnout within these two groups. To fully engage voters, activities focusing on voting and issues need to be continuous and repetitive but in an interesting and appealing way. LWVSC has:

- Partnered with cultural organizations such as the DE Hispanic Commission, NAACP, the Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice (SDARJ), La Esperanza, Sussex Unity, Pathways to Success and the Way Home, with others hopefully soon to be added, in order to build trust in the communities.
- Set up several teams that are focused on scheduling registration events for business, community and church locations; performing field work such as canvassing, phone banking and publicity; and maintaining the Voter Registration Event Kits that are used by event volunteers. Each team is led by two Team Leaders who schedule from our list of 60 volunteers.

With the Phone Banking Team we plan to continuously follow-up, not only with those we register, but also with ‘voter helpers,’ those who have offered to help in our efforts. This was initially conceived for the Hispanic community to engage those who cannot vote themselves, to assist those who can. These helpers will encourage and help friends and relatives to register and to get to the polls on Election Day. Our goal is to implement this facet of the campaign in all communities.

The idea is to hold voter registration events where these groups work, play and carry on routine activities. Since April, we have held 7 voter registration events where we have **registered 56 new voters** and/or completed address changes. We already have 13 additional events planned with many more to come!

In order to engage ethnic churches to message from the pulpit, and support voter registration and education, we have created a database of over 175 Sussex County multicultural churches. We are now in the process of sending letters to them, inviting their Pastors to meet with us to discuss how we can best reach their parishioners.

Our PR team is getting busy to create an interest in voting through radio, television and print media. We have a presence on Facebook and on our website as events come up. We are also hoping to sponsor an Election Expo where residents can interface with election candidates.

Stay tuned for lots more interesting developments in our 2016 GOTV Campaign! We will have many dedicated volunteers out working as they understand that to ‘Be Our Voice’ is a great challenge but the right to vote is so important. Our votes are our voices!

Land Use Committee Report

by Sue Claire Harper, Chair

Since January, 2015, the LWVSC Land Use Committee has focused on educating the public regarding the pivotal role the residents of Sussex County have in the drafting of the state mandated 2018 Comprehensive Plan. At a May 26, 2016 public meeting hosted by Senator Ernie Lopez, Sussex County administrator Todd Lawson stated that he had advised the County Council that the 2018 Comp Plan needs to be a completely new document, and not merely a redraft of the existing 2008 Comp Plan.



The LWVSC Land Use Committee met on 6/21/16 with Faye Blake, chair of Sussex Unity, (second from left) to plan our October 19th Forum which will focus on low income housing issues and the enforcement of Fair Housing Laws. Pictured (l-r) Betty Deacon, Faye Blake, Leslie Ledogar, Marie Mayor, Marti Austin, Charlotte Reid, chair Sue Claire Harper, Connie Jones, Nancy Kassner, Rich Holtkamp, and Sol Peltz..

Our September “Kick-Off” forum for the 2015-16 year, hosted environmental consultant Leon Billings, principal majority author of the 1970 Clean Air Act and the 1972 Clean Water Act. During his presentation, Mr. Billings acknowledged the pivotal role the LWV played in passing this monumental federal legislation. In October 2016, our forum “Drinking Water, Rising Water, Falling Water” featured four experts on this topic. State senator Bryan Townsend reviewed the challenges facing the state’s Clean Water and Flood Abatement Task Force whose final report on its year long findings is pending. In March 2016, our forum “Educating for Wise Growth in Sussex County” featured 4 panelists who discussed what it takes to create healthy, friendly, and efficient living environments for Sussex. A focus of this forum was Senate Bill 130: Healthy and Transit Friendly Development Act, which our state legislature signed into law on May 5th. Our 10th forum, held in April, was the well received “What Drives DelDOT?” led by Secretary Jennifer Cohan. Council on Transportation’s Ted Williams explained the significant role this governor appointed advisory group plays in DelDOT’s planning.

Our Committee of 16 members, led by chair Sue Claire Harper, is well into planning our 2016-17 forums. We will begin this year’s series on September 21, focused on the perennially “hot” topic of Sussex’s transportation challenges. The panel for “What Drives DelDOT- Part 2?” will again be headed by Secretary Cohan and DelDOT Director

of Planning Drew Boyce, who will present their department's proposed solutions. To round out this discussion, Sussex Administrator Todd Lawson has agreed to present the County's perspective. With a panel of 3 speakers, we hope to have additional time for the public Q & A period.

Melody Taylor, HUD Branch Chief for Region II, has agreed to participate in our October 19th forum which will focus on Sussex's Low Income Housing and Enforcement of Fair Housing Laws. Preston Schell, president of Ocean Atlantic Companies has agreed to participate in our November 16th forum entitled "The Developers' Perspective: An Effective 2018 Comp Plan". The remaining speakers for these two forums have yet to be finalized

All forums are to be held on Wednesday evenings from 7-9 PM in County Council Chambers in Georgetown. Working in tandem with the LWVSC Communication Committee, our goal is to provide access to all forum power point presentations on our League website.

The next meeting of the Land Use Committee is July 26th from 7-9 pm at Marti Austin's home. If you are interested in joining the Land Use Committee, please send Sue Claire an email at sussexlwv@gmail.com.

Membership Committee Report

LWVSC ends our 2015-2016 calendar year strong with 102 members.

The Membership Committee welcomes the following new members in 2016:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ Kathleen Baker | ■ Maurice McGrath |
| ■ Elsa Blum | ■ Rob Morgan |
| ■ Susan Brenner | ■ Tom Parkins |
| ■ Carole Groves | ■ Don Peterson |
| ■ Henry Gromada | ■ Charlotte Reid |
| ■ Ruth Gromada | ■ Susan Rosenberg |
| ■ Bette Brookshire-McGrath | ■ Michele Salvaneschi |

We are pleased that you have joined our ranks, become active on Committees and added your voices to the conversation. Let's keep the momentum going as we start our new 2016-2017 session beginning on July 1.

For more information contact Janet Denman, Membership Chair at sussexlwv@gmail.com.

Committee Report: Communication

The Communications Committee continues to monitor and support the various means by which the League maintains contact with its members and interfaces with the external world. After serving as chair for three years, Jo Klinge is moving to Wilmington. We will miss her wisdom and leadership.



Suzanne Hain, Communications Chair

With the Google Drive hierarchy and naming conventions approved, the Tech Committee continues to oversee the upload of LWVSC files to the

drive. In addition, the Communications Committee manages a wide range of media, including:

- Press Releases: Connie Jones
- Email eBlasts: Wyn Achenbaum
- Website: Janet Orlando (www.sussexlwv.org)
- Newsletter: Suzanne Hain (The Voter)
- Facebook: Janet Orlando ([lwvscde@groups/book.com](https://www.facebook.com/lwvscde@groups/book.com))
- Twitter: Janet Orlando (@SussexLWV)
- PA system and banners custodian: Martha Redmond

The process for submitting communication items for distribution is as follows:

- **Press releases:** Email to Connie Jones and Suzanne Hain *at least two weeks in advance*. Draft all press releases in MS Word and provide photos in JPG format. There can be no headings, headlines or authors.
- **Website updates & calendar notices:** Email to Janet Orlando and Suzanne Hain at least one week in advance. Provide attachments in PDF format.
- **Email Blasts:** Email to Wyn Achenbaum and Suzanne Hain. Provide subject line and body of the email. Advise on who should receive – Board, members, all.

For more information, contact Suzanne Hain, Communications Chair, suzannehain@gmail.com.

Observer Corps Committee Report

Observer Corps volunteers attend meetings of School Boards, County Council, and the Planning and Zoning Commission. Martha Redmond is observing the Indian River School District. Volunteers are needed to continue our Observer Corps activities. To join our group, please contact Martha regarding School Board meetings or Janet Ambrose regarding County Government meetings at sussexlwv@gmail.com. *Our children are our future.*



Martha Redmond, School Board Observer Coordinator

Money in Politics Constitutional Amendment Positions

After two consensus studies last fall, LWVUS announced our new positions. In January the LWV board announced a new position calling for safeguards to govern the constitutional convention process.

Then in April they announced our new position on MIP. In summary it says, "The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should enhance political equality for all citizens." The full position can be found on: <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>

At the National Convention in June, LWVUS outlined its strategy for addressing this important issue. Our first step is to find a leader and to complete the Action Planning Guide. If you have an interest in supporting this effort, let us know by sending an email to sussexlwv@gmail.com with MIP in subject line.

2016 LWV National Convention

LWVSC selected Suzanne Hain to attend the 2016 National Convention held in Washington DC, June 16-19. The Delaware state attendees also included Letty Diswood, Patti Christopher and Chad Tolman of New Castle County. All materials are available for review. Here's a summary:



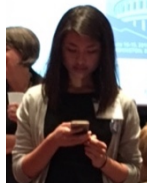
Letty Diswood, Patti Christopher, Suzanne Hain, DE Delegates

June 17 Plenary Session Votes:

- Approved the Program Adoption Process to retain all current LWVUS positions in the areas of Government, International Relations, Natural Resources, and Social Policy for the 2016-18 biennium.
- Approved the "Making Democracy Work" campaign, which includes:
 - Voter protection and mobilization
 - Election reform
 - Money in politics, constitutional amendment and redistricting

June 18 Plenary Session Votes:

- Proposal 3: Change Voting Members. [Citizens] PER-SONS at least 18 years of age ... This change to persons from citizens ultimately required a card vote to pass.
- Proposal 4: Persons at least [18] 16 years of age ... This change was the most contested vote of the session. Minnesota wanted all persons of any age to be voting members. Many people were concerned about safety and insurance concerns of underage people at our events. The age reduction took two card votes and the majority opted only to reduce it to 16 years.
- Proposal 5: The proposal on associate members was not voted on or discussed.



June 19 Plenary Session Votes:

- Keeping the PMP the same was approved by voice vote.
- Approved the budget. See note below on the discussion.
- Six resolutions were proposed and approved: Gun violence, CDC study on gun safety, DC statehood, Amicus Brief on Children's Trust (climate change), UN Paris Agreement (climate change), and EPA Clean Power Plan.
- Elected the new officers



Budget Issue

The proposed budget was very confusing to most members. This generated a lot of discussion on Friday (June 18th)

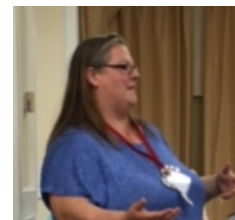
and resulted in the addition of a Breakout session, hosted by the Budget Committee, the new CEO and the COO.

Here's my summary of that breakout discussion:

- High costs were due to three things:
 1. In 2013/4 the LWV reserve fund lost a great deal of money, through bad financial advice.
 2. The CRM database was purchased and that cost took a lot of money, at a time when reserve fund was losing money.
 3. LWVUS took out a 10-year lease and have not been able to find tenants to help cover the cost
- Financial employee was fired and search for new CEO and COO was implemented.
- The new COO, Anisa Tootla, has restructured the budget to be more in line with approved financial practices. This is the reason that the line by line comparisons were confusing.
- To address the losses, the permanent staff was reduced to 14, from 30, the new CEO is actively looking for grants and funding, which is part of the reason she was selected, and the search for tenants continues.

League Easy Web (LEW) Issue

- The National group refused to address this in the full sessions, as ruled very abruptly by the president without discussion.
- The Breakout session was attended by more than 50 people and the concerns were. What is the National office's plans for a website? Should we stay with LEW? How do we learn to use it? California is optimistic.



New CEO and COO

- CEO: Wylecia Wiggs Harris. Her main message is that we have a new three-pronged plan – Impact, Relevance, & Visibility. She said, "We must evolve to be relevant to the future change environment." Mostly appears to be a fundraiser.
- COO: Anisa Tootla: The new COO mostly spoke through her new Budget and Internal Financial Statement. Both have been turned over to Lorna Dempsey for review. My impression is one of relief that a trained professional with no agenda is now in charge of the money.

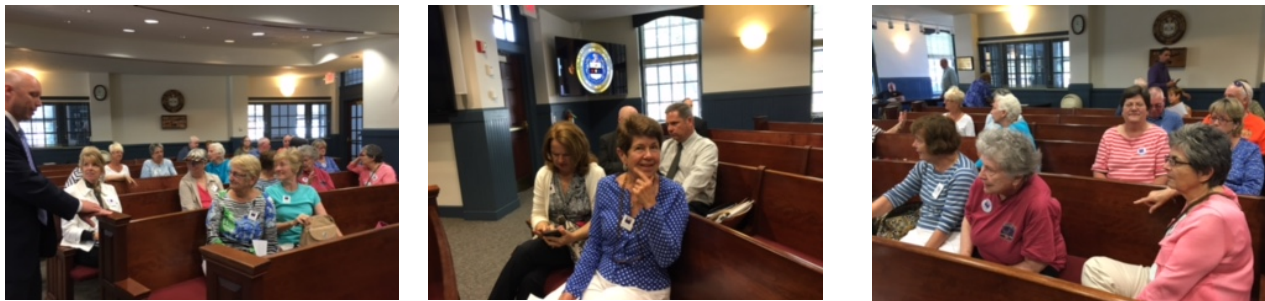


There were several very moving speakers that made the conference more exciting. Two that stood out were Joe Goldman of the Democracy Fund and Ari Berman, author of "Give Us the Ballot: The Modern for Voting Rights in America."



Candid Shots from 2016 LWVSC Events

Sunshine Report to the Sussex County Council, June 14, 2016.



LWVSC Membership Meeting, May 2016



Women in Politics Forum at Camp Rehoboth, April 2016



LWVSC co-sponsored a forum on **Women in Politics** with CAMP Rehoboth as part of their Women's Fest in April. Pictured from left to right are: Moderator, Leslie W. Ledogar, Esq., a retired environmental attorney; Marie Mayor, co-owner of the Lavender Fields Farm at Warrington Manor, Milton, DE;

Donna M. Dolce, former Municipal Councilwoman and Council President of the Council of Fanwood City, New Jersey; Louisa Watrel, former Councilwoman on the Council for Bridgewater Township, New Jersey and the Honorable Pamela J. White, trial judge on the Circuit Court for Baltimore City.

League of Women Voters of Sussex County

Report to County Council

Sunshine Day – Spring 2016

As part of the League of Women Voters' support for openness in government, its Observer Corps monitors the activities of governmental bodies for issues of importance to the League and the county. The Observer Corps of the League of Women Voters of Sussex County was organized in January of 2009. We have now completed our seventh year of activity. Observers attend County Council and Planning and Zoning Commission meetings. Reports from Observers are compiled into monthly reports and submitted to the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Sussex County (LWVSC). The annual report to the Council is developed by compiling the major issues and concerns noted during the past year as viewed by Observers and as they relate to positions of the League of Women Voters. The League is proud to report that Observers have been in attendance at 100% of Council meetings during the past year.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Water

- Clean water is of the highest priority for citizens. We urge the co-operation of the Council with all relevant government agencies to ensure that water quality is protected for present and future generations.

2. Planning

- The need for improved transportation systems and options are at a critical point due to the rapid development of the county. We urge follow up with the recommendations of DELDOT regarding the development of a Transportation Improvement District for the Lewes/Rehoboth area. We note that a presentation from DELDOT included the information that funds to support the comprehensive approach to transportation issues are available to Sussex County at this time. We are concerned to note that since the presentation of this information in December of 2015, no further discussion or action has been taken by the Council.
- When considering transportation matters in the development of the new comprehensive plan, we urge the Council to address road standards for developers.
- We are pleased to note the much-needed increase of staffing for Planning services. It had been stated that part of the job of new planning personnel was to oversee a carrying capacity study. No further action has been reported on this matter. We believe that the public should now be apprised of the status of this study.
- We note that the process for approving time extensions for expiring land use applications was changed to allow for short term, case-by-case approvals, as opposed to blanket approvals which had been used in the past. Under this new approval process, a July 1, 2016 deadline was imposed, at which time applicants would need to meet specific criteria related to completion of the projects. We urge vigilance of the Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to ensure that applicants meet all stated criteria.

- We look forward to the Council's leadership in the development of the new comprehensive plan for Sussex County. We view this plan as critical for the future of the county. We anticipate the close co-operation of the Council with citizen groups and municipalities, as input is sought from all stakeholders. The League of Women Voters has sponsored five countywide workshops, one in each of the councilmatic districts, and five countywide forums to inform and involve the public with the various aspects of this planning process. Such activities will continue during the upcoming months. We invite your participation in these sessions.

3. Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation

- Agenda items related to land use matters contain limited information about the project under consideration. It is difficult for the public to ascertain the nature of the project unless additional descriptive detail is provided. An example of this is to be noted on the agenda of August 18, 2015 which indicates that a report would be presented regarding "Change of Zone No. 1770, application of TD Rehoboth, LLC." This project is known to the public as the Overbrook Town Center. It is suggested that the generally recognizable descriptor for the project be included on the agenda so that the public is clearly informed about what matter is under consideration on that day.
- The published agenda for Council meetings informs the public of actions to be taken and provides stated times for public hearings of interest to citizens. We believe it is most important that every effort is made to adhere to the published schedule. We note with concern the Council activities of the meeting of August 4, 2015. The Council convened on that day at 10:06 AM. The agenda for the meeting was promptly amended and the Council voted to go into Executive Session at 10:09. The Council remained in Executive Session for two hours. At the conclusion of this session, it was announced there would be no report or announcement regarding the Executive Session. The public meeting then resumed, to be concluded in approximately 20 minutes. We also note that the published agenda for the December 1, 2015 meeting stated that Public Hearings would commence at 1:30. At that meeting, which began at 1 PM, the Council adjourned to Executive Session at 1:30, returning approximately 50 minutes later. Citizens wishing to comment on matters to be considered during the Public Hearings were required to wait this considerable amount of time. No prediction was offered as to how long the Executive Session would last on either of these dates, requiring citizens with other time obligations to wait indefinitely. We feel that this type of scheduling is unfair to the public and does not conform to the spirit of open government.
- Accessibility to members of the public who require reasonable accommodations to participate in Council meetings is paramount. It is to be noted that assistive listening devices, while cited as available, sometimes are not. Amplification is available in the chambers to ensure that the comments of Council members are heard by the public. We acknowledge that some Council members diligently use this amplification when making their remarks. We urge all Council members to use this amplification so that their comments can be understood and evaluated by the public.
- The technology upgrades made to the Council chambers have significantly added to the ability of the public to understand material being presented during meetings. We commend the Council for these excellent improvements.

- The enhancements made to the County website, which enable citizens to research land use decisions regarding specific properties, are commendable. The County is to be complimented for these much needed improvements.
- We note the orderly and respectful process utilized by the Planning and Zoning Commission for including public input in its decision-making process.

4. Additional Comments

- In the past, we have noted our concerns regarding the appropriateness of the practice of the Council in awarding grants from their individual accounts in response to requests from various groups. We have noted efforts to revise the application process so that additional information is required of applicants. We still, however, remain concerned about this process as the purposes for the grants, and the amounts in taxpayer funds awarded to groups, seem arbitrary.
- Staff members are consistently respectful and helpful in responding to questions from us and from the public. We compliment them on their professionalism in handling the duties of their positions.

IN CONCLUSION:

The Observer Corps of the League of Women Voters will be continuing its activities this year. We share with you the goal of ensuring good government for the citizens of Sussex County.

Dr. Janet Ambrose
Observer Corps Coordinator
League of Women Voters of Sussex County