



Warehousing Impacts on Our Environment: Local Concerns

by Colleen Foster

Our League's January Program Planning meeting resulted in recommendations for three issues for education and advocacy for our 2023-24 League year. One of them is Land Use, with an emphasis on warehouses and air quality. This recommendation will be brought to our membership at the Annual Meeting on June 24th. A recent Sierra Club program in February highlights why this issue has come to the fore.

Retired City Planner and Sierra Club leader Eric Parfrey reviewed why warehousing is a concern: warehouse truck trips adversely impact air quality and have been shown to increase cancer risk, jurisdictions are failing to include adequate air quality, greenhouse gas, and other mitigation measures when they approve warehouses, and warehouses are usually placed in areas zoned for industrial development which are often in poorer neighborhoods with mostly ethnic minority residents, which is an environmental justice concern.

Tracy residents Dotty Nygard and Karen Moore are concerned that by the time the community is alerted to opportunities to comment on land use applications, many decisions have already been made by city staff who believe that the economic benefits of warehousing growth outweigh any community impacts.

Mantecan Bill Barnhart said the proposed Manteca General Plan includes "metastasizing" growth of warehousing. He warned that, based on the Manteca experience, what the community is presented is not necessarily what will be built and that conditions of approval may be changed by the Planning Commission and city staff without input from the public.

Mitigating measures are possible: adding solar panels to account for future electrical demand, using light duty trucks and forklifts that are Zero Emissions, and transitioning to Zero Emission heavy duty trucks with sufficient charging stations.

If this topic is adopted by our membership, we will learn much more about this issue next year. But this is a glimpse of why people are concerned.



Homeless in San Joaquin County: What's the Real Story?

by Colleen Foster

On March 11th, four presenters from St. Mary's Dining Room put a human face on the plight of homelessness in our county. Following meeting convener Gretchen Newby, who gave some statistical background from Point in Time surveys, each speaker highlighted some aspect of the challenges facing those experiencing homelessness and the services that St. Mary's provides to help them with those challenges.

Tim Matsumoto, Guest Safety Manager, said guests coming to St. Mary's are homeless, hungry, and looking for help and support. St. Mary's provides three hot meals per day; clothing, showers, medical and dental services; Head Start and a library; help with applying for IDs, Social Security benefits, or immigration documents; and case management.

Marcus Purvis, Health Advisor, talked about wide-ranging situations that can result in homelessness: unemployment, family conflict, rent increases, mental health difficulties, and lack of a personal support system.

Maria Castellanos, Health Ambassador, addressed what it's like to be a homeless woman: It's scary. Sometimes a woman will get into an abusive relationship just to have some protection from rape or robbery, or to not be alone. People may get a dog for the same reasons: companionship and security.

Mercedes Moreno, Senior Director of Social Services, summed up the philosophy at St. Mary's: Meet people where they are at, treat everyone with respect and dignity, and offer help without judgment. To help people, you have to build relationships, and that takes time. St. Mary's offers many services but also gives "a warm handoff" when referring guests to other service providers. She also announced that St. Mary's expects that by the end of this year they will have 300 modular units on site as low barrier housing for individuals and couples.

Main takeaway: Those experiencing homelessness are people like us. We need to help those who are helping them, our neighbors.



From left to right: Mercedes Moreno, Senior Director of Social Services; Tim Matsumoto, Senior Director of Guest Services; Maria Castellanos, Health Ambassador; Marcus Purvis, Health Advisor

Elsewhere in San Joaquin County . . .

by Jane Wagner-Tyack

According to the [Lodi Homelessness Initiatives page](#), an estimated 2,300 people are experiencing homelessness in San Joaquin County. The 2022 point-in-time count found that 208 unsheltered individuals live in the City of Lodi.

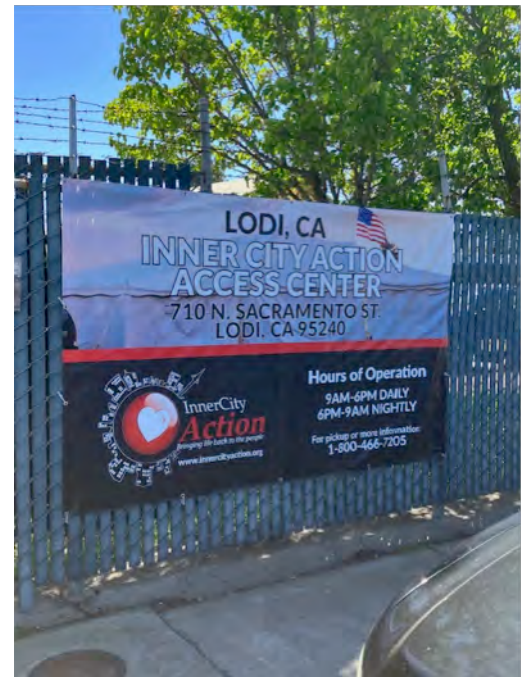
In April of 2022, the Lodi City Council approved Inner City Action, Inc. to operate a temporary emergency shelter as phase one of a larger Access Center plan. Inner City Action is a Stockton non-profit that focuses on meeting the physical and spiritual needs of underserved members of the community, including those who are homeless, low-income, trafficked, or in situations of domestic abuse or substance abuse.

The Salvation Army provides food and laundry services in collaboration with Inner City Action.

The phase one temporary emergency shelter began operations in July 2022. The facility can house up to 49 individuals and provide wraparound services including housing navigation, income advocacy, life coaching, mental health and substance use treatment, and job readiness training. These services are similar to what will be provided once the permanent Access Center is complete. The permanent Access Center will be able to reach many more than 49 individuals.

Onsite services include intensive case management, hygiene facilities, 24/7 staffing including security, and janitorial services. To make sheltering more accessible, partners, pets, and possessions are allowed in a low-barrier setting. However, low-barrier does not mean low-expectations. Violence, weapons, open use of illegal substances, or disruptive behavior is prohibited within the facility.

Recently, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors authorized financial support to finalize the design and construction of the larger, permanent Access Center.



Board of Supervisors Postpones Action on Voter's Choice Act

by Colleen Foster

On February 28th, Registrar of Voters Olivia Hale brought a plan before the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors to implement vote centers for the 2024 election cycle. Vote centers would replace precinct voting and would be located throughout the county: 8 locations would be open for 11 days before the election and 32 locations would be open for 5 days before the election. County residents could vote at any of the centers where language assistance would be available. A Voter Accessibility Advisory Committee is part of the VCA model. The Registrar has plans to propose such a committee to the Board in March.

VCA legislation allows for each county to decide on implementation. LWVSJC 2nd Vice President Mary Kenefick presented a letter from our League supporting the implementation of the vote centers. She was the only one to speak in favor.

Supervisors raised concerns: need for more support data on value and costs (Canepa); temporary COVID procedures shouldn't continue; we have some illegal voters (Ding); would having just one day to vote decrease the potential for voter fraud (Patti); seniors may not be able to travel to centralized voting places (Rickman).

Audience members spoke firmly against the proposal. Some voiced a strong preference for neighborhood precinct voting over a centralized system. Others voiced concerns over "widespread" election fraud and questioned the integrity of voting by mail. One suggested that the DMV was registering non-citizens to vote. (The DMV refers all requests for voter registration to the Registrar of Voters who checks on voter eligibility.) A few said we didn't need to make voting easier and were against multiple day voting. One speaker spoke against "the government takeover" of the voting system.

Several speakers referred to the voter fraud case of a Lodi councilmember as the basis of their concerns. They were not persuaded by the Registrar's statement that instances of fraud are less than 1% or the input from staff from the Secretary of State's office that the vote center model would allow workers to verify voters on site.

The Board decided to postpone action on vote centers for six months.

Expanding voter access is a key issue for the League. When the Board revisits the VCA, the League should be prepared to have cogent arguments to support our stance on this issue.





Making Democracy Work

by Colleen Foster

Over 35 people, both League members and interested community members, attended both forums on Making Democracy Work, held on March 25th and April 8th at the Chavez Library.

Part I

If “Voting is an exercise in hope” as one League member suggested, why don’t more people vote? Speakers at the first of two forums on Making Democracy Work offered some insight.

Olivia Hale, SJ County Registrar of Voters, provided graphs showing that youth have a low voter turnout, as do Latino and Asian American voters in San Joaquin County.

Ines Ruiz Huston, El Concilio Vice President of Special Programs and Civic Engagement, asked the audience for reasons people don’t vote. They were many and varied:

- No voting tradition
- Lack of information about voting
- Limited civic education in schools
- Experience from countries where it is unsafe to vote
- Lack of time to vote due to work and family obligations
- Candidates who don’t look like the voting populace
- A belief that one vote won’t make a difference
- Distrust of the political system

We need to find ways to make voting relevant to our diverse population.

UPDATES ON LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

Making Democracy Work, *continued*

D’adrea Davie, Vice President of the local chapter of the NAACP, echoed some of these concerns: A mistrust of government, historical trauma regarding voting, lack of information about voting process and places, and disillusionment with the political system and elected officials who are unaware of the history and culture of the Black community.

Jouriel Quisin and Jane Faull, members of the Delta College Politics and Law Club, addressed why young people don’t vote:

- Perception that voting has little impact
- No habit of voting
- Lack of information on polling places, voter registration, candidates, and issues
- Barriers: loss of income if you miss work to vote; activities (jobs, school, family) compete for limited time

Olivia Hale closed the program by highlighting the Voter’s Choice Act which will be considered by the Board of Supervisors later this year. She said the VCA would increase outreach to address some of the concerns raised. Vote Centers, if they are implemented by the Board of Supervisors, would increase access to voter information, extend the voting period to allow for in person voting beyond a one-day opportunity, provide better ADA access and language assistance. Concerns include loss of neighborhood polling places. A mobile outreach van and mock elections in high schools could improve voter involvement.

The challenge is clear: Strengthen our democracy by expanding voter engagement.



Making Democracy Work, *continued*

Part II

On April 8th, a panel of speakers energized the audience with information on positive actions that are helping to Make Democracy Work.

Lisa Lennon-Wilkins, a former science teacher, spoke of how youth made an impact on Lodi Unified School District races by walking precincts, explaining how the election would affect the community.

Stacey Greer, Director of Language & Literacy at the County Office of Education, stated that the new Social Science Framework prepares students from kindergarten through high school for civic engagement, countering the concern that a lack of civic education is one reason for poor voter turnout.

Paula Sheil, Vice President of *Stocktonia*, a local online news service, described *Stocktonia* as **the** source for local, independent, rigorous, ethical, fact-based news. Focused on news and current events in Stockton, its mission is to fill the void in government, political, and educational news coverage locally.

League member Bea Lingenfelter summarized League tools and activities that help to inform voters: **Voter's Edge**, a comprehensive, nonpartisan online guide to federal, state, and local elections; **Easy Voter Guide**, information on state ballot measures in several languages; **Pros and Cons**, League presentations about state ballot measures; **mock elections** in high school (as volunteers allow), and **Candidate forums**.

Elbert Holman, former Stockton City Councilman, talked about the role of money and redistricting in election results; the responsibility of voters to be informed about who they are voting for and the difficulties they face in gathering such information; and the fact that over 66,000 people commute out of the county for work and, as a result, find it difficult to make time to vote.

Donna Brown, Chair of the League's Democracy Committee, spoke about Seattle's Democracy Dollars program, which supplies every voter with four \$25-vouchers to contribute to candidates for local office, thus increasing voter participation and diversity, both as contributors and at the polls. As a result, candidates take a greater interest in the interests of the average voter, not just those of large donors.

Pam Eibeck, retired President of the University of the Pacific, has revived the Good Government program that operated from 2007-2017 to recruit and train people interested in running for elected office or being appointed to a board or commission. The first cohort of the reinstated program will be selected and trained this fall.

The two sessions of Making Democracy Work raised challenges and solutions to voter participation in the electoral process.

Our League is honored with the Community Impact Award

Our League has been chosen by the San Joaquin Delta College Department of Political Science to receive their inaugural Community Impact Award. The League was chosen for this recognition as a local organization that has shown dedication to improving the local political discourse. The letter to the League announcing this award outlines why the League was chosen to receive this award:

By working in tandem with the Department of Political Science to present political forums on our campus, the League of Women Voters has created an increase in awareness of the need for political participation. This work has impacted not just members of our shared community but our students as well. This commitment to encouraging civic participation has defined the standard we hope to promote with our Community Impact Award.

The League will receive the award on May 16th at the 1st Annual Department of Political Science Reception to be held at China Palace Restaurant.

Delta College's Political Science Department has been a long-standing partner of the League in presenting candidate forums. It is an honor to be recognized with this award.

Reminder: Membership renewals are due by June 30, 2023. Donations are always welcome. You can support the work of our local League by

- renewing at the Mission Support Level
- donating to LWVSJC
- making a tax-deductible donation with a check made payable to LWVSJC Ed Fund, a 501(c)3 supporting our Voter Service activities

IN REMEMBRANCE



Peaches Ehrich, LWVSJC President 2008-2009, passed away much too soon on April 26, 2023. Peach followed in her mother's footsteps both as a librarian and a League leader. (Tandy Hughes was League President from 1993-1994.) Peach believed in outreach to include everyone, whether at the library or during a League event in a neighborhood park for children and families featuring taiko drummers and food.

Peaches loved sharing books with children, both at the library and as a volunteer with Rotary Read-In. Her enthusiasm for what she loved, whether the library, the League, or *Mr. Burt Reynolds* and her other precious dogs, was boundless and catching. Peach was vivacious and fun-loving but serious in her commitment to friends and family. She brightened our lives. Thanks, Peach.

UPDATES ON LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

Welcome new members of the San Joaquin County
League of Women Voters!

Barbara Lea
Alane Dashner

Save the dates and watch for
email announcements for these
upcoming events

May 6 Forum on Child Care
May 18-21 LWVC Convention in
San Francisco
June 24 Annual Meeting

The LWVSJC Board of Directors meets on the 3rd Monday of each month from September through June, unless the 3rd Monday is a holiday, in which case, we reschedule. Board meetings are held on Zoom, and any LWVSJC member is welcome to attend. If you would like to receive a Zoom link to a Board of Directors meeting, please contact JaneTyack@mac.com.

2022-2023 LWVSJC Board of Directors

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Mary Kenefick, 2nd Vice President
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Bill Loyko, Treasurer

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Jane Wagner-Tyack
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Communication – Jane Wagner-Tyack
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Terri Mercer
Membership – Susan Mora Loyko
Nominating – Suzy Daveluy
Helen Pearson Award –
Bea Lingenfelter

Webmaster – Walt White

Voter Editor – Jane Wagner-Tyack

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.



League of Women Voters of San Joaquin County

Presents a Panel on **Quality Child Care**

Good for Our Families, Good for Our Children, Good for Our Economy



Saturday, May 6th, 2023

10:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.

Cesar Chavez Central Library
605 N. El Dorado Street, Stockton



Speakers

Kay Ruhstaller, CEO, *Family Resource Center*

Connor Sloan, Ed. D., Division Director, Early Childhood Education Services, *San Joaquin County Office of Education*

Suzanne Coleman, Professor of Early Childhood Education, *San Joaquin Delta College*

Linda Fermin, Past President, *San Joaquin County Society for Human Resources Management*