



# UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

**League of Women Voters of Los Alamos**

**P. O. Box 158, Los Alamos, NM 87544**

**Website: [www.lwvlosalamos.org](http://www.lwvlosalamos.org)**

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## Calendar

July 10 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon  
July 15 Lunch with a Leader, Police Chief Sgambellone, Mesa Public Library, 11:40  
August 19 Lunch with a Leader, Ben Carlson, Mesa Public Library, 11:40

## Lunch with a Leader July 15: Dino Sgambellone

On July 15 our new police chief, Dino Sgambellone will speak about his impressions of the community and his goals for the department. The meeting will take place at 11:40 a.m., upstairs in Mesa Public Library.

Chief Sgambellone served with the United States Air Force from 1987 to 1990, during which time he obtained an Associate's Degree in industrial security. He subsequently earned bachelor's and master's degrees in business and in 2011 completed his PhD in public safety with criminal justice specialization. His career as a police officer began in 1991 when he went to work for the Mansfield, Ohio Division of Police. He remained in Mansfield until last year, eventually rising to the position of police chief. The day after he retired from the Mansfield Police Department, Chief Sgambellone accepted a position as Chief of Police in Los Alamos. He and his wife Robyn have been married eighteen years and have a son Nick (17), a daughter Emily (11), and a schnauzer named Oreo.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## **Welcome New Members!**

We are pleased to welcome two new members who have joined our Los Alamos League during the past few months:

Nona Girardi  
Howard Barnum

*Barbara Calef*

## **Message from the President**

The primary election has concluded and the League is now engaged in planning candidate forums and preparing the voter guide for the general election. During the next couple of weeks we will be choosing the questions for the candidates. If you would like to suggest one or more questions, please send them to Lynn Jones, our Director of Voter Services at [jonesmm1\(AT\)comcast\(DOT\)net](mailto:jonesmm1(AT)comcast(DOT)net).

Here is the slate of Directors and Off-Board Directors elected during the Annual Meeting.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2014-15**

President: Barbara Calef  
1<sup>st</sup> VP: *not filled*  
2nd VP: Rebecca Shankland  
Treasurer: Rosmarie Frederickson  
Secretary: Julie Williams-Hill

#### **Directors**

Arrangements: Kathy Taylor  
Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster  
Membership: *not filled*  
Voter Services: Lynn Jones

#### **Off Board Directors**

Fundraising: *not filled*  
Publicity: Jody Benson  
Webmaster: Barbara Lemmick  
Observer Corps: Lynn Jones  
Newsletter Editor: Kathy Taylor  
Nominating Committee: Carroll Thomas,  
Michael McKay  
Voter Services assistant: Michele Poling

Also at the Annual Meeting, an amendment was

requested to clarify part of our environment position. The board adopted the following change on June 26.

### **ENVIRONMENT** (Adopted 2012; Revised 2014)

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos believes that our natural environment is integral to our community's unique sense of place and to our well-being and prosperity.

- We support protection of this environment, including the canyons and other open space, vistas, wildlife habitat, and dark skies.
- ~~We support the use of natural processes to provide services such as storm water management in the built environment for the sake of healthy ecosystems and community livability.~~ To improve ecosystem health and community livability, we support wherever possible "Green Infrastructure." EPA defines this as "... an array of products, technologies, and practices that use natural systems – or engineered systems that mimic natural processes – to enhance overall environmental quality.... Green Infrastructure techniques use soils and vegetation to infiltrate, evapotranspire, and/or recycle storm water runoff. "

## **Recycling Tour**

Do you ever wonder what happens to the contents of your blue bin after they're collected? On May 23 LAC Public Works Director Philo Shelton drove a group of curious residents to the Friedman Recycling Plant in Albuquerque, the new destination for recycling from Los Alamos.

Our tour began in a pleasant conference room where Sourcing Representative Mike Smith gave us an overview of the system before he took us through the plant. Smith's principal function is to sign up businesses and municipalities to send their recyclable waste to the plant. He is very enthusiastic about the company and proudly told us that he is on the board of the New Mexico Recycling Coalition.

Completed early this year, the \$22 million plant is the fourth for the Friedman brothers and is large enough to serve all of New Mexico, plus Utah and Colorado.

The facility receives 250 tons of material a day or 1400-1500 tons a month. Among the current customers are Los Alamos, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Carlsbad, Silver City, Sandia Laboratory, and the City of Albuquerque.

Smith explained that contamination is inevitable. Thirteen to fifteen percent of the material received is a "sin," or unacceptable material, which is re-directed to the landfill. Sources that consistently send extremely contaminated material may be terminated. Among the sins, glass is one of the worst because it can damage the machinery. The material from Los Alamos is very clean, he said.

The recycling plant produces eight to eleven different "widgets" depending on market demand. They fall into just a few categories: paper (fiber), plastic, and metal. Widgets within the fiber category include cardboard and white paper, which are processed in the United States; colored paper, and mixed paper, which includes anything that can be torn. Bales of colored paper and mixed paper are sent abroad, where regulations for treatment are lax or non-existent.

China is a major market for mixed paper and cardboard. U.S. cardboard is high in wood fiber, which is needed for China's cardboard market given their lack of timber. Ships bringing products to the States routinely return east laden with recyclables.

We entered the plant behind a huge truck, which dumped its load on the floor of the 90,000 square foot building. A front loader immediately began scooping up the material, dumping the scoops at the base of the first sorting machine. The driver stopped from time to time to remove items such as a hose, a vacuum cleaner, and a mattress. Smith had explained that the plant was designed for the single stream environment preferred by customers, meaning they can put all the recyclable materials in one container. The plant is designed to separate the materials so that they can be baled and sent to the appropriate processor.

Most of the sorting is done by machine; the machines used are 95-98% efficient. The first one sucked up the material, fluffing it to allow for better separation in later processing, and deposited it on the conveyor belt.

The next machine sorted out the cardboard, and two more removed the paper. Between each pair of machines a pair of human laborers plucked materials from the belt and dropped them into the appropriate hole to be funneled to various destinations, such as trash, white paper, and colored paper.

Note: customers should put only shredded paper in clear plastic bags; we saw the line workers shaking out the contents of opaque "mystery" bags onto the belt.

A giant magnet removed the tin cans and another machine with optical sensors created a magnetic field and air-blasted the aluminum to remove it. Finally, only plastic materials remain on the belt. The more valuable plastics are separated: HDPE is the "top dollar plastic." It comprises 40% of the plastics. Another 40% is PET, used for soda bottles. The last 20% is mixed rigid plastic and lowest in value. It includes many household

products, including six-pack holders and even plant containers if they are clean.

We walked outside to examine the bales of sorted recyclables. Five percent contamination is allowed, and we could see the odd bit of color in a bale of white paper and a plastic bag in with the aluminum cans, but they were remarkably homogeneous.

Returning to the conference room to discuss what we had seen, we tried to understand the complexity of modern technology. Plastics are especially troublesome because there are so many varieties and, for processing, they need to be separate.

Currently the plant is not recycling plastic bags. Numbers 2 and 4 plastic bags should be taken to Smith's. The others should be discarded if you cannot use them at home. Clean aluminum foil is acceptable, but not desirable. LDPE (bubble wrap) is okay.

Do not put the following in the blue bins: Styrofoam, potato chip bags, paper with foil adhered to it, plastic silverware, PVC, nylon, and greasy cardboard such as pizza boxes. Bottle tops should be avoided. Everything deposited in the blue bins should be clean or lightly rinsed. People should avoid using red paper because the dye is difficult to remove in the recycling process.

In addition to providing a market for our yogurt containers, the new recycling plant accepts a large variety of pulp fiber. Residents can now recycle egg cartons and phone books as well as chipboard (e.g., cereal boxes) and all sorts of paper.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Observer Corps Report**

At the May 27<sup>th</sup> County Council meeting, Council passed a resolution requesting that the DOE vacate the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) decision of 1954, which rescinded the security clearance of Dr. Robert Oppenheimer. The J. Robert Oppenheimer Memorial Committee has been working for several years to get the AEC decision vacated. Letters of support from some of the former LANL Directors, Laboratory Fellows, biographers of Dr. Oppenheimer, and the Los Alamos Historical Society are all part of the supporting documentation being sent to DOE Secretary Ernest Moniz.

At its June 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, Council introduced the ordinance which puts the Charter amendment regarding Article V, the Public Utilities section, onto the November ballot. This has been in the works for several years, and was researched and studied by two separate Charter Review Committees. The public hearing on this ordinance will be held during the County Council meeting on July 29<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. in council chambers. It should be a lively and interesting meeting.

Also on June 27<sup>th</sup> Council held a public hearing that resulted in the awarding of a contract for food service at the new Golf Course Community Building to Pajarito Golf Group, LLC. While this is a new business, the managing partners are the same as for the Pajarito Brewpub and Grill, which opened in Los Alamos last November to great success. While the menu will be very different, the managing partners have experience in town with the tastes and preferences of Los Alamos residents. We wish them well. Although it will take several months, it will be fun to have the Golf Course available for dining once again after a long hiatus.

*Lynn Jones*

## **LWVUS Convention**

The LWVUS biennial convention was held in Dallas this month in the three year-old Omni Dallas Hotel, a LEED Gold structure on the edge of downtown. Becky Shankland and I managed to escape the confines of the hotel on a couple of occasions to explore nearby parks and to eat out, but we spent most of our waking hours attending caucuses, training sessions, and the five plenary sessions.

The biggest surprise was learning that the sheriff of Dallas County is a woman! Sheriff Lupe Valdez welcomed the delegates to Dallas. Another speaker, Houston Mayor (and League member) Annise Parker remarked that government is not a necessary evil; government is necessary. She added that, “You can’t get elected mayor by promising not to do things,” and went on to speak about the importance of transparency in government, the need for redistricting reform, and how Houston is working to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

We were especially interested in the Money in Politics caucus and workshop led by delegates from Massachusetts. Kathy Campbell, who now lives in Amherst, participated in the creation of a primer on campaign finance reform to educate League members as well as members of the public. It is available for download at: <http://www.lwv.org/content/money-politics-developing-common-understanding-issues>. The primer is part of a toolkit for Leagues to use for education and advocacy. As entertainment during the program, we were shown the winning entry from the Massachusetts League’s “Dear Future Governor” Video Contest for high school students, which challenged them to create a two-minute video telling the next governor what is on their minds. You can watch the winning video at <http://www.markjsullivan.org/2014/05/tj-horgan-wins-dear-future-governor.html>

Another very interesting caucus, From Suffrage to Parity, concerned the structure of the election system. This is an issue that has been discussed for years by League members, but has not caught the interest of the general public. Rice

University Political Science Professor Mark Jones gave an excellent talk in support of establishing multi-member districts. In the majority of the world’s democracies proportional representation rather than single member districts is the basic component of the electoral system. With proportional representation, gerrymandering is not a problem. Rather than re-districting after a census, the number of representatives is adjusted to reflect changes in population in the district. Furthermore, many such countries have refined the structure to assure significant female representation in the government. The U.S. ranks 84<sup>th</sup> for female representation. Professor Jones commented that establishing an independent re-districting commission is “just a band-aid.” Such commissions have not reduced polarization or increased turn-out.

During the plenary sessions the delegates adopted a human trafficking position through concurrence. They also approved a three-part program including

- a study of the process of amending the Constitution,
- a review and update of the position on campaign finance,
- a review of the redistricting process for the U.S. Congress.

In other business, the delegates adopted a resolution in support of putting a price on carbon emissions that will increase in stages; improving energy efficiency; and replacing fossil fuels with renewables.

The convention also adopted a resolution to advocate for restoring voting rights to felons who have been released from prison or been paroled or placed on probation. Proposals for a study on economic inequality and concurrence with the Kansas position on a living wage failed.

*Barbara Calef*

## **June LWL: Tarin Nix and Ellen Morris Bond**

According to the sustainability position of the Los Alamos LWV, in a sustainable society, “Each individual would live in dignity with a livable wage.” The New Mexico minimum wage of \$7.50 an hour is clearly inadequate.

Legislators have tried to address the issue during the past two years, but last year the Governor vetoed the bill and this year a resolution calling for a constitutional amendment to raise the minimum wage and tie future adjustments to the cost of living failed in the House.

Efforts at the federal level have also been unsuccessful so far. But 125 cities across the country have passed laws to increase the minimum wage, including Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Last year Tarin Nix led the successful campaign to extend the City of Santa Fe’s living wage ordinance to Santa Fe County. Currently the minimum wage there is \$10.66 an hour. Now Nix is working to pass a similar measure in Los Alamos, where she is a resident. During the June 17 LWL program Nix and Ellen Morris Bond, Executive Director of Self Help, presented statistics and facts to underscore both the need for and the economic benefits of the ordinance.

While many in Los Alamos are well paid, 4.9% of the population lives in poverty. Another 10% are “near poor” whose income is between 100% and 133% of the poverty threshold. Bond spoke about the large number of clients who need assistance to pay for such basic requirements as housing and utilities.

At \$7.50 an hour a minimum wage worker makes only \$1,250 a month. At \$10.66 an hour, the income is \$1,777 monthly. Most of the poor in the state are single mothers. Nix said a bare bones budget for a mother with two children is \$1,950 monthly, so even \$10.66 is inadequate without further government support programs.

Most employers in the county do pay more than \$10 an hour in order to keep their workers. Smith’s is paying \$10.88 to new employees. But other businesses lag behind.

In theory a living wage should raise the worker above the poverty level. A wealthy community like Los Alamos should do better than the state and can certainly do as well as Santa Fe. There are economic advantages, too. Job growth in cities with a living wage is above the national average. Santa Fe experienced no adverse effect between 2003 and 2007.

Nix said that she has learned through experience how to frame the conversation. Her use of the term “living wage” is a conscious effort to move away from the negative connotation of “minimum wage.” She plans to bring about change in Los Alamos by building a working coalition of businesses, non-profits, county departments, churches, officials, and community members. She recently participated in a Chamber of Commerce meeting, where she learned that 33.33% of the members favor raising the minimum wage in Los Alamos, while 42.86% are undecided.

The plan is to determine the details of an ordinance through discussion and to bring it to the County Council early next year. Nix believes that if the Council fails to adopt the ordinance, an initiative brought by the citizens could succeed. After all, a poll of New Mexico voters by the Center for Civic Progress found that 79% of voters support a wage increase, including 58% of Republicans.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Observer: Board of Public Utilities**

During the June 18 meeting of the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) the Department of Public Utilities staff gave a number of interesting reports. Among them was an announcement that Los Alamos Reservoir, which is full of water, must be drained so that it can be dredged. Sipapu, the new manager of the Pajarito Ski Area, will pay to pump five million gallons of water from the reservoir to the retention pond on Pajarito for snow-making next winter.

Every seat in the conference room was filled with residents eager to hear the latest news about the San Juan/Chama Project. James Alarid, Deputy Utilities Manager, informed the BPU that the Office of the State Engineer has agreed to allow Los Alamos to drill wells for its San Juan/Chama water, but they must be within a mile of the Rio Grande. The existing well fields are too far away to qualify. The DOE denied a request to consider locating a San Juan/Chama well on LANL land south of White Rock due to cultural concerns.

An environmental assessment to explore questions such as the impact of drilling on the springs in White Rock Canyon has been budgeted for 2015. Because of the unresolved issues, the DPU has decided to pursue replacement of the County's two oldest wells. Work is also being done to bring an existing well in Pueblo Canyon back into production.

Alarid informed the BPU that the Office of the State Engineer is requiring the County to revise its 40-year water plan, which was completed in 2006. This will be a good opportunity to make corrections to the current plan, which was based on a very inaccurate projection of population growth. The request for proposals will go out in July; the contractor will be chosen in September; the new plan should be completed in the spring.

LANL is also planning activities that will be reflected in the new water plan. The Lab is developing a test well to treat a plume of chromium. If the project is successful, they may drill several wells. They have not yet decided

how to use the treated water, but it will not be returned to the aquifer. Councilor Sheehy presented a graph showing that water consumption by LANL has decreased by 200 acre-feet a year in recent time due to strict conservation efforts. However, the Lab expects to require an additional 300 acre-feet a year in 2016 for a new supercomputing facility.

The BPU wanted to know how the aquifer is responding to current usage. Acting Utilities Manager Tim Glasco responded that LANL hydrologists who have modeled the aquifer believe the recharge is greater than the depletion.

He mentioned that San Ildefonso Pueblo's use of groundwater is unregulated. They can draw as much water as they wish, although at present they have only one well.

Glasco feels that rather than considering the San Juan/Chama to be a reserve for drought, it should be used as a primary source in times of plenty to allow the aquifer to recover, reducing the chance of encountering contamination.

After hearing the staff reports and listening to the public comments, the BPU voted to postpone further action on the San Juan/Chama Project until the 40-year water plan has been revised.

*Barbara Calef*





LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS
MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mail to: LWV Los Alamos
P.O. Box 158
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you are willing to receive our local newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving us postage.

Check here if you wish to receive friendly reminders of upcoming events by e-mail.

Membership Categories

Single membership: \$45

Household membership (two+ people at the same address): \$65

Single Sustaining membership: \$75

Household Sustaining membership (two+ people at the same address): \$95

Note: Membership checks should be payable to LWV-Los Alamos

Additional ways to support the local League

Unrestricted contribution (not tax deductible): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

LWV Education Fund (tax deductible): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Checks for tax-deductible contributions must be payable to LWVLA Ed. Fund and not combined with any other payments.

Interests (check as many as apply)

- One-time activities (unit meetings, fund-drive mailings, etc.)
Affordable Housing
Election Reform
Fuller Lodge
Land Use
Local Government
Medically Indigent Fund
Public Transportation
Sustainability
Water Issues
Not sure (I just support LWV)

Other (please suggest) \_\_\_\_\_

*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan 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.*

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