



# 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**

- June 7 **Primary Election Day**
- June 21 Lunch with a Leader, Tamara Baer, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m.
- June 21 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, 10 a.m., preceding L/L

## **Lunch with a Leader: Community Development Department Principal Planner Tamara Baer**

On Tuesday, June 21, Lunch with a Leader will feature Tamara Baer who's been the principal planner for the Community Development Department of Los Alamos County since 2015. She will explain and answer questions about the current comprehensive plan for Los Alamos. The event is at Mesa Library from 11:45a.m -1p.m.

Tamara is a Registered Landscape Architect with over 25 years of experience in urban design, and city and regional planning in public and private sectors. She and her architect husband have worked together designing buildings in NM as well as in Massachusetts. Previously she was the Planning Manager with the Santa Fe Land Use Department. Under her direction, SF worked on restructuring the city's land development laws, and she was the primary author of a new Business and Industrial Park District and an outdoor lighting ordinance as well as the state's first "big box" ordinance. As the city's representative on the City Planning Policy Commission, she helped formulate and promote policy on issues such as affordable housing and water resource management. Tamara was also the landscape architect for the NM State Parks where she managed the wetlands, construction, and landscaping using xeriscape techniques, and making parks ADA accessible as well as inviting to children. In the private sector she focused on commercial, industrial, and institutional development, and multi-family housing, as well as educational and health facilities. She specialized in affordable housing, often doing extensive pro bono work for this cause.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## **President's Message**

As I begin the daunting task of trying to fill the shoes of Barbara Calef, I would like to once again thank her for her past and continuing service and I would like to thank the Los Alamos League members for entrusting me with this position. I think that we are all conscious of how precious the democratic process is as we move through the primary stages and towards a general election that will define our country's values and actions for the next several years.

The League will continue to address local issues ranging from carbon neutrality to economic diversification to national issues like the recent erosions of voters' rights. We must work together to ensure that an active and informed electorate participates in the upcoming elections.

The recent very successful candidate forum at UNM-LA was an important part of that process. We are now beginning work on the LWVLA Voters' Guide that will provide voters with the information that they need to make informed decisions in the polling booth.

Thanks again to all of you who support the League and help us to keep our democratic system strong and vital. Please contact me if you have issues that you think the League should be educating the public about, or ideas for future League events.

*Wendee Brunish*

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2016-17**

### **Officers**

President: Wendee Brunish

1<sup>st</sup> VP: *not filled*

2nd VP: Rebecca Shankland

Treasurer: Kathy Taylor

Secretary: Barbara Calef

### **Directors**

Reservations: Amy Birnbaum

Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster

Membership: Tarin Nix

Voter Services: Lynn Jones

Board of Public Utilities Observer: Julie Williams-Hill

Publicity: Jody Benson

Director at Large: Akkana Peck

Director at Large: Rosmarie Frederickson

### **Off Board Directors**

Arrangements: Mary Van Eeckhout

Fundraising: *not filled*

Webmaster: Barbara Lemmick

Assistant Webmaster: Julie Williams-Hill

Observer Corps: Lynn Jones

Newsletter Editor: Kathy Taylor

Nominating Committee: Carroll Thomas, Tarin Nix

## **Report of May LWL: Meredith Machen**

LWVNM President Meredith Meredith noted that she taught for 38 years before becoming the leader of the state League. She proceeded to give an overview of the state League study of charter schools, which has been underway for a year. There are now about 100 charter schools in New Mexico, about 60 of which are authorized by the Public Education Commission. The others are authorized by local school districts.

During the last few years the number of charter schools has proliferated in the state, but there are some serious concerns about accountability and funding inequities. During the past seven years funding for education has increased steadily, but although charter schools comprise only 6.6% of New Mexico students, they have received 48% of the funding increase. The study committee has discovered that the average charter school funding is about 15% higher per student than for district school students. Furthermore, no minimum percentage of the allocation is required to be spent on instruction.

Although two of the charter schools are virtual schools with no bricks and mortar, funding for them is not much lower than for traditional schools.

Whereas traditional schools are supervised by elected school boards, the state-authorized charter schools are governed by boards chosen by the schools' founders. There is a pattern of spending that benefits for-profit companies rather than the students.

The Legislative Education Study Committee is focusing on addressing the issues raised by the LWVNM study committee and others: charter school funding, virtual schools, and performance frameworks to ensure that the educational outcomes are better. They will propose legislation for the next session of the legislature.

## **Primary Election Dates**

The official primary election day is June 7. The polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The vote centers that day will be at the Municipal Building, the Golf Course Community Building, and the White Rock Library.

Ballots may be cast from May 10 to May 20 at the Municipal Building from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Early voting begins May 21 and continues through June 4 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Municipal Building and the White Rock Library. During that time ballots may be cast any day except Sunday or Memorial Day (May 30).

Absentee ballots may be mailed between May 10 and June 3.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Observer Corps Reports**

### **County Council - April**

Much of April was taken up with County Council Budget Hearings. The County Council spent five evenings over a period of three weeks reviewing the budget plans of the various county departments. On May 2 they gave final approval to the \$188M budget.

Two Art in Public Places projects are coming to fruition. At least two of the San Ildefonso Pottery Replicas have been installed along N.M. 4 in White Rock, and the Solar Tree is well underway in front of the Municipal building. Check them out.

On May 24<sup>th</sup>, the council voted to move the processing of warrants from the Sheriff's Office to the Los Alamos Police Department. This was done for safety and liability reasons. During the serving of warrants, Sheriff's deputies were being exposed to risks that more appropriately belonged with the Police Department.

Our Probate Judge Bill McKerley resigned due to a previously unknown conflict of interest. In December of 2015, the NM Legislature changed the law to say that even part-time Probate Judges were not allowed to hold a leadership position in a political party. Since McKerley is Chair of the Los Alamos Republican Party, he had to make a decision between the judgeship and party leadership. He chose to resign the judgeship, and so the county is once again soliciting letters of interest. The new position will run through December of 2016.

*Lynn Jones*

### **Board of Public Utilities - May**

At the May 18<sup>th</sup> Board of Public Utilities meeting, BPU members discussed findings of the BPU subcommittee that was formed as a result of a customer's concerns over the Department of Public Utilities' water system delivery and infrastructure policies and rules. Specifically,

1) Who should be responsible for maintaining water delivery lines - the customer or the DPU?

2) Aging water mains need to be replaced and/or relocated,

3) Are customers fairly charged by the DPU for waterline repairs?

4) A 2007 Water Leak Detection Report should be updated.

The subcommittee determined that consistent with other communities the DPU rule that defines responsibility for the operation and maintenance of water service lines is adequate - customers are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the water service line at the property line, even in circumstances where the water meter is located at the home. Additionally, the subcommittee determined that DPU has a schedule for replacing and/or relocating aging water mains. In regard to waterline repair costs charged to customers, the subcommittee found no unusual or unfair expenses charged to customers. Lastly, the subcommittee agreed that the Leak Detection Report should be periodically updated. Following the discussion, BPU passed a motion that requires DPU to reach out to all customers with water meters that are not at the property line. DPU is to inform these property owners that their responsibility to maintain waterlines begins at the property line. DPU will offer to relocate the water meter to the property line at no cost to the customer. Additionally, DPU will implement a valve exercise program.

At the request of some County Councilors, BPU members also discussed the timing of rate adjustments as they relate to the budget approval process. Currently, the budget is approved by Council with expenses related to planned utility rate changes. The BPU was asked to explore the pros and cons of requesting Council to approve a utility rate change prior to the budget hearings. The intent of the request is to provide assurances that expenses in the budget are backed by an approved rate. A subcommittee was formed to delve into this question.

*Julie Williams-Hill*



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 Education 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
Budget, Finances
Elections
Water Issues
Land Use
Local Government
Health Care
Money in Politics
Website, social media
Other (please suggest)
Education
Living Wage
Voting Rights/Voter Services
Sustainability
Public Transportation
Public Relations
Newsletter
Membership
Not sure (I just support LWV)

*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.*

**IN THIS ISSUE**

**Page**

Calendar	1
Lunch with a Leader: Tamara Baer	1
President's Message	2
LWVLA Board 2016-2017	2
Report of May LWL: Meredith Machen	4
Primary Election Dates	3
Observer Corps Reports	4
Membership Form	5

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