

April 2008

League of Women Voters of Norman

Established in 1925

LWVN
P.O. Box 720621
Norman, OK 73070
405-447-3800

STEERING COMMITTEE

Barbara Robinson
Chair
701-1907

Lois Hilbert
Secretary
321-4592

Joyce Collard
Treasurer
321-1058

Helen Duchon
Member
329-2485

Mary Francis
Member
474-0695

Marj Greer
Member
321-9678

Ruth Loeffler
Member
329-5358

Off Committee

Diane Blank
VOTER Editor
360-0419

Join us for our annual pot luck salad feast, enjoy an excellent program, and help set the League's course for the coming year.

Salad Luncheon and Annual Meeting

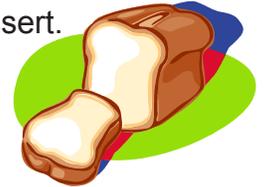
Saturday, May 3, 2008

11.30 AM



Memorial Presbyterian Church
601 24th Ave. SW

Please bring a salad, bread item, or dessert.
Coffee and tea will be provided.



Our Speaker

Linda Rice Price

Revitalization Manager for the City of Norman

TOPIC:

The Latest News on Issues and Projects within the
Revitalization Division of City Government

"The Revitalization Division is responsible for the ongoing process of revitalization of our community through the management of federal grants related to housing and community development. Further, the Revitalization Division is responsible for the enforcement of various codes that affect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Norman." —Excerpt from the City of Norman website

Business Meeting Highlights

- Elect a Steering Committee for the next fiscal year. The nominees are:
Joyce Collard Lois Hilbert
Helen Duchon Ruth Loeffler
Mary Frances Barbara Robinson
Marj Greer
Nominations will be accepted from the floor.
- Adopt a budget for FY 2009 (July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009)
See page 4.
- Reaffirm Local Program. No new program items have been proposed.
See pages 5-7.
- Direction for the new Steering Committee. Members are invited to make recommendations on projects and actions for the coming year.

Norman's Storm Water Master Plan with Trails Component

by Lyntha Wesner



City of Norman
<http://www.ci.norman.ok.us>

This effort is a result of the federal Clean Water Act of the early 70s. Cities across the country first attacked “point source” pollution, i.e., sewer discharges from city sewer treatment plants and business discharges, such as paint shops, dairy processing and manufacturing. Urban and rural storm water is part of the “non-point” pollution effort. This would be water after a rain event, which carries heavy metals from the streets into storm drains, as well as herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers and topsoil from both urban and rural environments. These contaminants get carried into our lakes and rivers and ultimately into someone’s drinking water.

As part of the first phase of non-point management, the City of Norman hired personnel responsible for working with construction projects to control runoff and sediment. The Storm Water Master Plan is part of Phase 2.

There are two Austin-based consulting firms working together on the Master Plan. The PBS&J firm deals with the technical issues. These include assessing the amount of impervious surfaces—in this case streets, sidewalks, parking lots, rooftops, swimming pools, driveways, patios—in our watersheds, as well as soil types, typography, streams, riparian corridors, and the impact of rain events on all of the above. From this information they determine the needs created by such events for storm water space in gutters, retention and detention facilities, and streams on its way to Lake Thunderbird or the Canadian River. In addition the Mayor has appointed a Storm Water Task Force, which has been meeting with the consulting firms.

HALFF Associates, paid out of Norman’s Greenbelt Commissions budget, are looking at ways in which the City of Norman could develop a greenway system along with storm water rights of way. They have had multiple meetings with city staff, the Greenbelt Commission, the bicycle committee, the Taskforce and the general public at hearings. They have developed maps of the entire Norman landmass with all streams and tributaries identified and made initial suggestions for trail opportunities. They have gotten feedback from all of the above citizen groups and are moving slowly toward prioritizing elements of a greenway system.

These two firms, with staff and citizen input, will determine the costs for needed right of way along streams, constructed facilities and maintenance. The end result, judging from what has happened in many cities that are ahead of Norman in their planning for better storm water management, will probably be a proposed storm water utility. Such a proposal would go to our citizens for a vote. It is probable that all city stakeholders would be asked to contribute, probably based upon their contribution to storm water, determined by the amount of impervious surfaces on their individual property.

There have already been Public Hearings. More are planned. There is an active website, where your questions may be answered or asked, if no answer is readily apparent. The website is www.ci.norman.ok.us. On the right hand side of the page is a blue water drop. Click below the water drop’s feet for more information on the storm water process.

Regional in-put meetings on Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan to be held this summer

The Oklahoma Legislature appropriated funds in 2006 for an update of a 50-year Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan that was first published in 1980. The Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) is being assisted in a five-year planning process by the Water Research Institute (WRI), which conducts non-partisan scientific research and is located at Oklahoma State University. The Water Research Institute maintains a website on the planning process at <http://okwaterplan.info>



OK Water Plan
<http://okwaterplan.info>

Local citizen in-put meetings were conducted across the state in 2007. The reports from those meetings have been compiled and published on the water plan website. Nominations were held for participants in the initial discussions in upcoming regional in-put meetings to be held in the summer of 2008. Thirty participants for each region will be selected from among the nominees. Over 575 total nominations were received. The WRI has expressed a commitment to see that all interests are represented. The League of Women Voters of Norman nominated Mary Francis as a participant in Region 4 (ACOG). As yet no date has been announced for the Region 4 meeting. The regional meetings are open to the public.

Financing the League

The League of Women Voters is orgaized to parallel the three levels of government: national, state, and local. The work of the LWV is largely funded at all three levels by membership dues. Most members join at the local level, but are members of the League at all three levels. It is the responsibility of the local League to forward a portion of dues to the state and national offices as per member payments (PMP).

Prior to the fiscal year that began on April 1, 1972, state Leagues provided financial support to the national League through a pledge system. At the 1972 convention, which was chaired by President Lucy Wilson Benson, delegates amended Article IV, Section 2 of the bylaws to read:

***Dues.** Members who are enrolled in local Leagues shall pay annual dues to the local League. Each local League shall make a per-member payment directly to the LWVUS, the amount of such payment to be determined by national convention by a 3/5 majority of those present and voting. Additional support for state and national shall be determined at state convention or council. Each state League shall make the per member payment to the LWVUS for members-at-large.*

The per member payment system has remained largely intact since its first adoption, though the per member payment rate has gradually risen over the years due to the effects of inflation.

**League of Women Voters of Norman
Proposed Budget
FY 2009 (7/1/08–6/30/09)**

Income – FY 2009 Operating Budget

Finance Drive	0.00
Member Donations	382.00
Member Dues* 38 members @ \$50 ea.	1,900.00
Misc.	0.00
Total Income	2,282.00

Expenses – FY 2009 Operating Budget

State and National Per Member Payments (PMP)**	1,507.00
Workshops, Training, and Travel	100.00
VOTER Printing and Postage	50.00
League Easy Web*** \$160 annual fee + \$75 startup fee	235.00
Finance Drive	0.00
Supplies, Postage, and Copies (other than VOTER)	150.00
Post Office Box Rental	40.00
Voter Service / Citizen Education	150.00
Misc.	50.00
Total Expenses	2,282.00

*An increase of \$2 per member. The increase in dues offsets a proposed increase in National PMP.

**Includes a proposed National PMP increase to be voted on by delegates to the LWWUS Convention.

***League Easy Web (LEW) is an Internet service for local and state leagues sponsored and maintained by the LWV of California. This line item replaces the League phone, which costs ~\$525 per year and is seldom used. For more information on LEW go to <http://www.lwvnet.org>

League of Women Voters of Norman

Local Program Positions

As Amended at the 2007 Annual Meeting

Section I. City Planning

The LWVN supports the concept of city planning, with the following policies and approaches.

A. Zoning

1. Strict procedures for rezoning and stronger provisions for protesting rezoning.
2. A professional city planner and an adequate and qualified staff.
3. Long-range planning for the location of parks and schools, with adequate access by streets and paved routes for pedestrians and bicyclists.

B. Sidewalks

1. Sidewalks should be required by ordinance in new subdivisions, except that the sidewalk requirement may be waived in industrial subdivisions, with the exception of the perimeter, if the developer can demonstrate that the sidewalks will not contribute to the health, safety or welfare of the public in those areas.
2. Sidewalks should be built in existing areas to the greatest extent possible with special emphasis on providing access to schools and recreation facilities.
3. The City should adopt an aggressive attitude in initiating sidewalk construction.

C. Bicycle Routes

1. Bicycle routes should be studied and implemented whenever feasible, with the idea of bicycle riding as a recreational activity as well as an alternate means of transportation.
2. The League also favors upgrading the City's current bicycle safety programs and stricter enforcement of bicycle safety provisions.

D. Parks

1. The LWVN supports long-range planning for the acquisition and development of new and existing parks in Norman to better meet the needs of the community with endorsement of the following policies:
 - a. Neighborhood parks of ten acres as a desirable goal.
 - b. First attention to acquisition and development of parks in areas most in need.
 - c. Adjoining park-school site development with school board cooperation.

E. Housing Supply

1. The LWVN recognizes the need for low-income

housing and supports the concept of public housing equitably distributed in Norman.

2. In order to ensure adequate low and moderate income housing in Norman, the LWVN recommends as a priority, providing incentive for private enterprise to obtain this goal, and the use of federal housing programs that allow the greatest possible freedom for local decision making.

F. Protection of land in the Little River Watershed

The LWVN believes that the Little River watershed is an environmentally sensitive area that must be protected.

1. The League recognizes that uncontrolled development in the watershed could allow hazardous pollution of Norman's water supply.
2. De-annexation of land in environmentally sensitive areas would end Norman's control over its land use; therefore, de-annexation of land in the Little River watershed should be considered with great care.

G. Public Transportation

In order to reduce highway congestion, fuel consumption and vehicular pollution, and to provide better access to housing, jobs, recreation and medical care, the LWVN advocates the development and maintenance of energy-efficient and time-efficient public transportation systems within the City of Norman and connecting with other communities in Oklahoma. Priority should be given to government-funded transportation projects that are directed toward better public access to fuel-efficient transportation and the reduction of single occupancy vehicles on the roadways.²

H. Traffic

The LWVN believes the City should provide for safe bicycle traffic and encourage a pattern of development that facilitates public transportation and diminishes automobile congestion.²

Section II. Infrastructure

The LWVN believes that a modern, properly maintained infrastructure is essential for health, safety, and positive economic life of the community. Since lack of attention over many years to Norman's existing infrastructure, inadequate planning during rapid growth and inadequate resources have resulted in a crisis situation, the LWVN encourages compliance with a master plan that would

assure citizens that all problems will be addressed in an orderly and timely manner. The plan would:

- A. Include repair, maintenance, and expansion of the sanitary sewer system and of the water supply system.
- B. Resolve current and prevent future drainage problems.
- C. Address street modernization.
- D. Enforce City codes.
- E. Be environmentally sound and fiscally responsible with bond issues presented at regular intervals for major projects, and continued allocation each year within the operating budget for smaller capital projects of highest priority.
- F. Reduce maintenance costs by replacing inoperable systems.
- G. Set priorities in the order in which repairs and improvements are made.

Section III. Municipal Services and Finances

The LWN believes that city government should be efficient and economical, that the government should retain competent personnel, insure clear assignment of responsibility, and secure adequate financing. The following points should be considered:

- A. The League supports the concept that municipal government should supply its citizens with **basic services** that provide for the health, safety and welfare of citizens including public safety (police, fire, emergency medical service), sanitation (responsible solid waste pickup/disposal), water (safe drinking water and sewage treatment), infrastructure planning and maintenance (streets, sidewalks, lights, signalization), and community amenities (parks, recreational facilities/programs, museums, libraries), and as many recycling centers in Norman as practicable, with the future goal of having curbside recycling. ¹
- B. **Amenities** such as parks, recreational facilities, and cultural institutions should be recognized as important in maintaining a sense of community.
- C. **Funding:**
 1. The League believes city services and programs should be funded through a combination of sales taxes, bonds, and user fees.
 2. Shared funding could include privatizing some elements of city government with retention of responsibility for:
 - a. Establishing clear criteria, oversight, and periodic assessment of how well citizens are being served, and
 - b. Making sure citizens are not losers in the process.

3. Capital needs of Norman are too massive in cost to be addressed by the general fund alone and should be funded through General Obligation Bonds.
4. The general fund and user fees collected in enterprise funds can more appropriately be used to support administration of city government and ongoing maintenance needs in sanitation and the infrastructure.
5. Sales tax revenue should be reserved for items in the general fund.
6. Some services necessary to insure the general health, safety, and well being of the community should be the responsibility of city government and must be made available even if they do not pay for themselves.

D. Adequate City Staff

Adequate staff is necessary to oversee the management, planning, and orderly development of the community.

1. Professional planners and engineers are needed to insure continuity of programs.
2. City Council policy makers must acknowledge their responsibility to provide for an adequate staff to meet city needs.

Section IV. County Services and Finances

- A. The LWN encourages the modernization of bookkeeping and record keeping procedures by Cleveland County.
- B. The LWN encourages the use of the county's share of road-users tax money for the benefit of ALL residents of the county, including the improvement of city streets where legally possible.
- C. The LWN will continue to monitor the functioning of county government including the organization, finance, and accountability of funds.

Section V. Equality of Opportunity

The LWN will continue to support effective procedures to ensure non-discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

Section VI. City of Norman Growth and Development Plans

The LWN is dedicated to monitoring growth and development plans for the City of Norman. The Norman ComPlan was replaced by the Norman 2020 Plan and later by the 2025 Plan. Topics of concern to the League include growth management, traffic management and flow, protecting neighborhoods and city housing needs. The following areas are of concern, and should be monitored:

A. Zoning Changes:

1. The Planning Commission should review the policies of the 2025 Plan before accepting zoning change requests.
2. Requests for changes should be turned down if they clearly do not fall within the guidelines of preventing urban sprawl, balancing development on the east and west as much as possible, and protecting plans made for the central business/residential area.
3. All requests for demolition of property should be accompanied by any desired change in zoning, or the city should be assured that there would be no change. Demolition requests that call for changes in zoning should then be accepted or refused depending on their nature, plus an inspection of the property. The city needs to pass an ordinance allowing it to be more aggressive in removing derelict buildings and trash or trashy and unsightly items.
4. Requests for changes in zoning also should be made public with signs posted and notice in the newspaper. There should be a much larger area involved in protesting/accepting zoning changes.

B. Definition of "Neighborhood":

The LWVN defines a "neighborhood" as an area that may have physical boundaries, such as a major street, or boundaries with cultural/social-economic

characteristics; and it may be residential or commercial. A neighborhood may have a different definition depending on the interest of the individuals in it. It may be a small area for a neighborhood watch or a larger area when considering a wider interest, and these areas may overlap.

C. Development Planning:

1. Commercial development should be planned.
2. Businesses in residential areas should be restricted to those useful to a majority of the residents.
3. A new classification of "neighborhood business" should be developed, or only "special use" permits that revert to residential when sold for any other purpose should be issued.
4. Neighborhood businesses would include grocery stores, laundromats, beauty shops, and others that Norman residents might approve.
5. Protection is needed for a neighborhood when a property is sold so a business considered inappropriate to the area cannot buy and use the property.
6. New areas being developed could include plans for these "neighborhood businesses" as a part of the overall plan.
7. Care should be taken not to zone and use land that is best left for a greenbelt area.

¹ Language added to Section III. Municipal Services and Finances **A.** at the 2006 Annual Meeting: "*and as many recycling centers in Norman as practicable, with the future goal of having curbside recycling.*"

² New wording for Section I. City Planning **G. Public Transportation** and Section I. City Planning **H. Traffic** approved at the 2007 Annual Meeting.

League of Women Voters

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

Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a voting member of the League. Associate membership is available for students not yet eligible to vote.



Members, please bring this issue of the *Norman VOTER* to the Annual Meeting.

Salad Luncheon and Annual Meeting Saturday, May 3, 2008 11.30 AM

Memorial Presbyterian Church
601 24th Ave. SW

Please bring a salad, bread item, or dessert.
Coffee and tea will be provided.

See details page 1.



Junetta Davis

Junetta Davis, a long-time Norman League member, died March 7. Junetta worked as a reporter for several newspapers before beginning her teaching career. She taught journalism at North Texas and then at the University of Oklahoma for 14 years until she retired in 1986. While Junetta was at OU, she was a strong advocate for women's rights and worked to improve the status of women at OU.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NORMAN

P.O. Box 720621

Norman, OK 73070