

The Lexington Voter

May 2008

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

President's Message

A new League year is beginning and I look forward to beginning my work as incoming president. I would like to personally thank last year's president, Nikole Wolfe, for her dedication and work for the League. A special "thank you" also to Kitty Parker who purchased, printed and mailed postcards reminding members of the annual meeting and to those who participated in the silent auction which netted \$90.

We heard an informative and entertaining speaker at the April 26 Annual Meeting. **Don Blevins Jr., 10th District councilman**, spoke to members about the process involved in the federal Environmental Protection Agency's review of Lexington's sewer problems and the recent consent decree. Mr. Blevins discussed the reason behind the upcoming increase in user fees and what the city will be required to do to comply with the decree. (Please see story inside.)

Unfortunately, many of our members didn't get to hear the speaker's remarks because **attendance at the meeting was low** at just 25. We've also noted that, in general, attendance at recent League functions has been disappointing, despite extra efforts to increase participation of members. We'll soon conduct a survey to see if we can turn around this disturbing trend of low member attendance. Watch upcoming Voters for more on the survey.

It has been a pleasure to welcome many non-League members to our **Dinner & Democracy** nights. Some have commented that they found the events a great way to learn about what's going on in the community. We've also gained a few new members as a result of their attendance. In the coming year, we'll continue these events, but we need help to plan and organize. Please contact me or another board member if you're interested.

I'm proud of the great reputation the League has in our community. But in order to continue our many non-partisan services, we must have funds. As we focus on fundraising, **please consider volunteering** and donating. We need a fundraising chair, committee members and ideas. We need you!

Tammy Fagley
543-0416

From the editor:

Those who serve on the board of the Lexington League of Women Voters are some of the most dedicated people I know. Many have stepped up time and again to continue the work of this organization. It's a privilege to work alongside them.

For the last four years, I've edited The Lexington Voter. With a background in journalism, it's been fun, informative and a learning experience.

*Now, I'll be serving as secretary of the League, filling out the two-year term of **Rachel Noble**. She's busy with plans to attend graduate school, but we hope she'll continue her involvement with Dinner & Democracy.*

*The Voter will be in the capable hands of **Judy Johnson**. She served as co-chair of the membership committee last year and oversaw the Essay Contest as well. During her classroom years at Lafayette High School, Judy served as president of the Fayette County Education Association for four years and was responsible for that group's newsletter.*

*We are fortunate to have **Tammy Fagley** lead us during the next year. She was elected president at the April 26 Annual Meeting. Tammy, a staff attorney with Gibson & Sharps, PSC, served as vice president and fundraising*

(Continued on Page 3)

League hears Councilman Blevins at April 26 annual meeting

Tenth District Councilman Don Blevins Jr. is in his first term on the Urban County Council. But the territory isn't new to him. His father, Don Blevins Sr., was elected to represent that district after city and county governments merged in 1973.

Blevins Jr. told those attending the League's annual meeting that his father's election then confirms that "Your vote does count." His father, who went on to become Fayette Court Clerk, won the council seat by just four votes.

With bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering, **Blevins Jr. has found himself in the midst of Lexington's struggle to deal with long-standing sanitary sewer and storm water problems** that finally led to the Environmental Protection Agency suing the city in 2006 for violating the Clean Water Act. In March, the council approved a consent decree to address the issues.

Blevins told League members and guests about playing in the creek in his Gardenside neighborhood in the late '60s and early '70s. **"If you go to that creek today, what you WON'T see will stun you,"** he said, noting the absence of dragonflies and other insects which have been killed off in the wake of pesticide use aimed at killing mosquitoes that thrive on the sewage-polluted water.

Among projects Blevins cited as already under way are an assessment of the 1,100 miles of the sewer system and "capacity modeling" to eliminate sanitary sewer overflows. He noted that the council has budgeted \$30 million for flooding "fixes," while "In previous years, we've never funded fixes at all."

Speaking of the **Fayette County Neighborhood Council**, Blevins said, "It's through their efforts that we're where we are today. These people are our heroes."

A **Capacity Assurance Program** is part of the EPA consent decree. It relates to proposed developments, requiring proof that sewers could handle the additional load before new developments could gain

approval. "Well, the chamber doesn't like that," said Blevins, referring to Commerce Lexington. He added, "I rolled my eyes and said that's the dumbest thing I ever heard."

The councilman said he is pleased with the way the mayor and city administration negotiated the decree. However, one element surprises him. He said he expected someone from the EPA would be sampling Lexington's water yearly to ensure compliance. Since that is not part of the decree, **Blevins urged League members to be vigilant.** And he expects groups such as the Fayette County Neighborhood Association to continue its close watch.

Asked whether plans include a citizen oversight feature, Blevins noted that he has proposed a water council, but Mayor Jim Newberry hasn't yet acted on his request. "It's probably time for me to rattle a few cages," he said.

Blevins supported the increase in **sanitary user fees** that just went into effect to fund projects and bring the city into compliance with the consent decree. A **storm water fee** assessing residences, malls etc. for runoff is under discussion. The fee, based on equivalency units, would be about \$5/month for residences, he said.

Blevins called for a "cultural shift" in thinking to solve and avert flooding problems, such as changing parking lots to minimize the use of concrete.

Asked about his opinion of the **Public Service Commission's approval of Kentucky American Water's plan** to provide additional water to the area, Blevins said, "Speaking as an engineer, it makes sense to pipe water from Louisville." And while some council members were willing to consider the Louisville water plan -- which was not before the PSC -- Blevins said that "Louisville changed its numbers constantly....Louisville never set their price low enough to make them an attractive candidate. They had their chance and they blew it."

Betty Higgins

From the editor (Contd. from Page 1) --

chair last year. She also serves on the state board. A native of Independence, Tammy attended law school at the University of Kentucky. She's always been interested in government and politics. Tammy and her cat, Sam are "big UK fans."

*Tammy succeeds **Nikole Wolfe** who has agreed to continue lending her skills as Web master, a job she filled last year while serving as president. She also remains an asset as a board member.*

*The League welcomes back to the board **Terry Naydan** as vice president. She previously has served the state and local leagues in many capacities, including president at both levels. Currently, Terry, who is a retired teacher, is finishing her doctorate in education at the University of Kentucky.*

***Steve Senft** begins another two-year term as treasurer, his third in this critical position. Active in the League since the '70s, Steve is retired from a career in lighting development with General Electric and Sylvania where he applied his degree in chemistry.*

DIRECTORS -- *We welcome back the following directors who've served consistently and diligently: **Richard Heine**, campaign finance; **Margaret Melville**, environment; **Mary McNeese**, local government; **Barbara Sterrett**, membership; **Cindy Heine**, public relations and **Kitty Parker**, voter services.*

***New to the board** are **Lowell Eberwein**, essay contest chair, and **Shirley Hendrix**, co-chair of the public relations committee.*

In the next Voter, we'll provide information on these directors.

Betty Higgins

IN APPRECIATION

The Lexington League honored **Martha Jane Whiteside** as its **Esteemed Member of the Year** at the annual meeting. League members will hand deliver a proclamation to Martha Jane, a 50-year member. Please congratulate her by writing her at:

380 Hart Road
Lexington KY 40502

New mortgage law protects consumers

League member Rich Seckel, director of the Kentucky Equal Justice Center headquartered in Lexington, calls a new mortgage lending bill passed in the last session of the General Assembly "a big step forward."

The bill, signed into law April 24, offers new home owner protections and sets new requirements for lenders. It was drafted by the state agency which oversees mortgage loan companies and mortgage brokers in response to the foreclosure crisis which has hit Kentucky and the rest of the country.

Key provisions require responsible lending by making sure borrowers can afford to repay loans and refinance more easily; strengthen standards of conduct and related enforcement and help families in danger of losing their homes.

(Editor's Note: Thanks to Nancy McDuffie for bringing this to our attention!)

DUES REMINDER!

June 30 is the deadline for paying next year's dues.

Membership Chair Barbara Sterrett thanks members who have already sent in payments and urges everyone else to do so as soon as possible. She'd like to avoid making last-minute phone call reminders!

The cost is still \$50/year for individual members and \$75/year for family membership (same residence).

Installment payments and limited scholarships are available. Please contact Barbara for information at barbarasterrett@insightbb.com or phone 223-1722.

Please make checks payable to Lexington League of Women Voters. Contributions to the Education Fund (tax deductible) should be make SEPARATELY to LWV Education Fund.

Mail dues and contributions to: Lexington League of Women Voters, Box 22045, Lexington KY 40522

Lexington League of Women Voters
PO Box 22045
Lexington KY 40522

Return Service Requested

Votē Tuesday, May 20

Your votē does count!

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

Calendar

LWV of Lexington Website: www.lwvlexington.com

Phone: 859-494-3203

NOTE: Board meetings are open to all MEMBERS; programs are open to the public

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| Saturday, May 17 | 10 a.m. Joint Board Meeting, previous and new board members; Faith House, Faith Lutheran Church |
| Tuesday, May 20 | PRIMARY ELECTION, 6 A.M.-6 P.M. Members who need a ride, call the League phone number, 859-494-3203 BEFORE Election Day. Members who can provide transportation, please call the same number and leave a message. |
| JUNE 30 | DEADLINE FOR PAYING DUES FOR NEW LEAGUE YEAR. REGARDLESS OF WHEN YOU PAID DUES IN 2007 (FOR 2007-08), THE DEADLINE FOR 2008-09 IS JUNE 30!!! (PLEASE SEE PAGE 3 FOR DETAILS) |

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