

News from the Cook County League, www.lwvcookcounty.org

New Board Members Elected at Cook County League Annual Meeting; Gainer Explains Land Bank

Peggy Kell (Oak Park & River Forest League) and Nancy Marcus (Winnetka, Northfield, Kenilworth League) were elected Co-Presidents of the League of Women Voters of Cook County (LWVCC) at its annual meeting on May 8.

Also elected were Vice Presidents Jan Goldberg (Lagrange Area) and Karin Hribar (Arlington Heights); Amy Little (Chicago) as Treasurer; and Directors Diane Edmundson (Park Ridge), Georgia Gebhardt (Wilmette), Beverly Graham (Oak Park & River Forest), and Kelly Kleiman (Chicago). Continuing in their 2-year terms are Secretary Eleanor Prince (Winnetka, Northfield, Kenilworth) and Directors Laura Davis (Palatine) and Betty Hayford (Evanston).

In addition to these elected Board members, each local League can have a Local League Representative, who is also a full member of the Board. Pris Mims served as Chicago's Rep this past year.

The 82 members of local Leagues in Cook County who attended heard reports from the LWVCC Committees and Interest Groups:

- Voter Service partnered with WTTW-Channel 11 to produce a Video Voters Guide for the Primary and November 2016 elections for Cook County and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) offices
- The League has been very active with advocacy, writing letters, talking with Commissioners, and testifying at Committee and Board meetings
- Health & Hospitals System group has presented its program, "Cook County Health & Hospitals System: How Sustainable," to the majority of the local Leagues. This program may also be booked by non-League groups.
- Observers are covering all Board meetings of the Health & Hospitals System, MWRD and Cook County and many County Committee meetings. Their "Eyewitness Reports" can be found under "Our Work" on www.lwvcookcounty.org.
- Budget & Structure, using a previously-approved position with the criteria, was able to do a quick study on whether the elected position of Recorder should be eliminated in time to support that referendum on the November ballot.
- Criminal Justice, which previously had done a study on pre-trial procedures and concluded that monetary bail should no longer be used, relayed that more and more people are coming to that conclusion, with the Illinois Supreme Court recently issuing a policy statement that cash bail should only be used as a last resort.
- HARD (Housing, Affordability & Residential Desegregation) has been interviewing members of the Affordable Housing and Fair Housing communities as the group explores what government policies could help with affordability and desegregation as studies have shown that the entire area could flourish more if there weren't large pockets of segregation and poverty

Commissioner Gainer Touts Work of County Land Bank

Bridget Gainer, Cook County Commissioner of the 10th District (which runs along the lake and north side in Chicago), was the featured speaker at the luncheon following the Annual Meeting. Several years ago she sponsored an ordinance setting up the Cook County Land Bank Authority and now chairs the board, whose members are appointed by the Cook County President. Rob Rose is the Executive Director. The purpose of the Land Bank is to acquire and then ultimately

dispose of vacant, abandoned, fore-closed or tax-delinquent properties in order to stabilize neighborhoods and/or spur economic development.

During 2016, the Land Bank acquired 8,000 of such properties through tax sales. There are a number of steps that must be taken before such properties may be sold to others, including verifying who the prior owner was and disposing of unpaid bills, such as water and property taxes. The Authority generated \$7.5 million for further use by the Land Bank during 2016 and created \$5.4 million in market value via rehabbed, re-occupied homes. Commissioner Gainer said that the Authority is now self-sustaining.

-- Pris Mims