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The *Fresno* **VOTER**



Saturday, February 4
Program Planning
9 a.m.—League Office

Monday, February 20
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m. - League Office

Monday, March 20
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m.—League Office

Monday, April 17
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m.—League Office

Saturday, April 29
76th Annual Meeting
Details to be announced

Members and their guests
are invited to all
League meetings and events



Spotlight on FUSD as transition unfolds

by Kay Bertken

So much is happening. It has been well publicized that Michael Hanson will be giving up his position as FUSD superintendent. It was his intention to leave in August to allow for some continuity through the school year and to help with the transition to a new administration.

It was made obvious at the Board meeting on January 11, that may not be possible. Board President Brooke Ashjian rearranged the seating on the dais so that he occupied the center chair where Hanson had been sitting for 12 years; and Hanson was sent to the far end of the table, mostly out of sight of the television broadcast camera.



Supt. Hanson

While there was a very moving declaration of appreciation and respect for the superintendent by a Baird School representative, the presentation by Tish Rice, the current FTA president, got the newspaper coverage. She advocated for quick dismissal of Hanson--make it quick and not too expensive--in order that a new person might proceed with the contract negotiations currently underway.

Other members of the public spoke to the prospect of choosing a new superintendent, arguing for an inclusive community process. Responding to rumors that the majority of the Board had already decided on a specific transition, a number of community groups and leaders, including LWVF, are advocating for just such an inclusive process.

There are any number of important issues currently on the table for the FUSD Board and leadership: the resolution of contentious contract negotiations with the FTA, the final resolution of the court case surrounding the contracts for Gaston Middle School (new state law effective January 1 will pertain to that case), the lingering but mysteriously inactive FBI investigation of the District, as well as cooperative projects in the works with the Fresno County Office of Education for a downtown career/technical education campus and with City College for an on-campus home for

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President's Message



The January Voter featured a lot of valuable information on Program Planning that is scheduled for Saturday, February 4. At that time we will be choosing our local priorities for the upcoming year and the State League priorities for the next two years. We will be choosing from issues such as education, housing, land use planning, transportation and civic engagement.

It occurs to me that all-out efforts by the League and other coalition member groups on civic engagement would benefit any of the other issues we address. The League belongs to a group called the Civic Learning Partnership that works to improve civic education in the schools, hoping to form a new generation of involved citizens. We also reach out to high school students to do voter education and voter registration.

In addition we attempt to engage various groups that have not shown much civic involvement; of course we always do voter education and registration, but we also encourage them to actively engage in issues that directly affect them. These issues could be in our three "umbrella" areas of government, natural resources and social policy.

If we were to significantly increase our time and efforts in promoting civic engagement, and if we had more people sign on to help, think of what could be accomplished. Having more of our population involved would most certainly lead to a better, stronger Fresno.

We encourage you to come to the Program Planning meeting and engage in the dialogue on these issues. Hope to see you Saturday morning, February 4.

Nyla

The VOTER is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno

Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

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Member News

Please Note Changes in Your Roster

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Fresno, CA 93710
559-260-6819

Patty Campbell
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Clovis, CA 93611

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Fresno, CA 93710

The League is now a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization so your dues payments and donations are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.



Thank You!

The California State Office of Planning and Research will meet in Fresno on Feb. 24 from 1 to 4 p.m., location to be announced. There will be a discussion of new state general planning guidelines. Call Mary Savala at 250-1350 if you can help outreach to planning professionals, elected officials and the public.

Water and Ag Diversity

by Diane Merrill

An objective of LWVF's Natural Resource Position is the preservation of agricultural land, one aspect of which is maintaining agricultural diversity. This is especially true on the east side of the valley where farms tend to be smaller than those on the west side.

Along with urban encroachment into agricultural areas, availability of water can be an issue for smaller farmers, who face competition with larger farming operations, the environment, and municipal water users for limited surface and groundwater supplies. It is estimated that the State has over-allocated by approximately five times the amount of surface water that is available in a year of average rain and snowfall. In addition, the expense of drilling deeper wells to reach declining groundwater levels can be especially burdensome for small farmers.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires the formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies and the formulation and implementation of Groundwater Sustainability Plans in over-drafted groundwater basins such as those in our area. SGMA compliance will

likely be particularly challenging for small farmers.

The following quotations are from an article on the UC Agriculture and Natural Resource website:

“Farm diversity — in size, as a proxy for resources and capacity — has been shown to foster innovation, increase stability and resilience under changing climate conditions, and facilitate building knowledge and human capital to support future generations of farmers. Farms of all scales will be required to comply with SGMA and the established management plans; however, farms of different scales have varying human and financial resources. As such, compliance with SGMA requirements is likely to be manageable for some growers but severely burdensome for others. Unless sustainability plans explicitly address this equity concern and consider all growers' water needs during the planning and implementation phases of SGMA, the law will threaten the future of the state's agricultural diversity.”

To balance water supply with demand, GSP's are likely to contain restrictions on groundwater pumping.

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



John Duchscher has been elected chair of the Behavioral Health Board (BHB). He has much experience in the treatment of Substance Use Disorders which will be helpful in working with Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) on the re-design of Drug MediCal, one of its major projects for the year.

The rash of teen suicides in the Central Valley has led to DBH partnering with others in the community to improve education about suicide, mental illness, and substance use disorders within the local school districts. David Weber, BHB member and psychologist for Clovis Unified, will be making a presentation to the BHB Children's Committee on February 23.

Recommendations to forward to the Board of Supervisors were approved in January. They are: 1) New permanent supportive housing in place or at least in progress 2) As part of a larger coalition, seek more funding for suicide prevention and education programs 3) Continue to expand field crisis response services to 24/7 service within Fresno County metropolitan and rural areas, and 4) Expand existing services or provide new services to DBH clients for job development, job placement and job coaching. In addition, the BHB agreed to support the priorities set down by DBH.

BHB members visited the Supervised Overnight Stay (SOS) program. SOS is a Mental Health Services Act Innovations project, and provides short-term housing and linkage services to clients who otherwise would be discharged to the streets from hospitals after 5150 short-term psychiatric holds. SOS has been successful with many of its clients, significantly reducing the number of return visits to hospital emergency departments.

The BHB heard about the inclusion of Room and Board homes, where many DBH clients live, in the proposed Rental Housing Improvement Act, which will come before the Fresno City Council on February 2. League members are encouraged to attend the Council meeting, or contact your councilperson, in support of this ordinance that would require inspection of all rental properties within the city.

Health Care

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



better prices. Drugs are heavily advertised and promoted to physicians, often in ways that offer financial incentives for overutilization.

Here is a rational thought experiment for our new Congress and Executive: before advancing ideas for modifying our health care system, develop a budget for our *total* national health care spending. It now stands at 3.1 trillion dollars yearly, 18.1% of our GNP, and approaching \$10,000 yearly for every person living in the US.

Our physicians and hospitals do not compete on cost, but on “cutting edge” technology. We do not adequately recruit, train, and reward young physicians for careers in primary care. We overpay procedure-oriented physicians and get more procedures.

By comparison, the advanced countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (aOECD) on average spend 10% of their GNP’s and about \$4,000 per person on health care. Excepting our superior survival of patients with selected cancers, our overall performance is worse, and this is not surprising given the poor or non-existent access to care for millions of Americans—even after the early increases in coverage from the Affordable Care Act. No other OECD country leaves its residents uninsured or provides various tiers of health care based on income and employment status.

The U.S. needs to create breathing room in its health care budget for capitalizing breakthrough technologies and organizational strategies. We will certainly need a national health database that meets needs for long-term analysis of our health care performance *and* absolute security of personal data. We will need vast improvements in our medical information technology and secure communications systems. We will need coordinated health care systems that emerge out of our still-prevailing cottage industry version of medicine.

We are seeing continuing hyperinflation of health care costs without proportionate improvement in health outcomes. Our pharmaceutical and medical devices industries continue to produce too many high-cost products of low or marginal utility. Our FDA, unlike equivalent agencies of OECD members, is enjoined by law from performing cost-benefit analyses of new drugs and technologies. With the exception of the Veterans Health Care System, our government programs are not allowed to conduct competitive bidding for

And we will need to support medical schools and postgraduate training programs so that inability to afford the arduous path to a medical license does not stop many of our best prospects from applying to medical school.

A 25% reduction (\$750 billion) in health care spending would still leave us as the highest spending OECD country, but would provide stability to our federal programs and breathing room for future investments in health care. It might even bring some jobs back to the US.

Fresno Unified transition

(Continued from page 1)

Design High School. All of these things are going to require some continuity in the focus of the District.

District staff presented the Board with data showing positive acceptance and utilization of the Health and Wellness Center at Gaston Middle School. The center has been financially viable for the provider, Sierra Clinica Vista, and is in fact generating funding for the District’s own health initiatives. Board

members objected to much of the presentation. The sites chosen did not represent all of the Board members’ districts. Trustee Mills objected to the criterion used to select the “neediest” sites. As a result of the objections, the projects will undoubtedly be delayed.

One of the more relevant educational decisions to affect many FUSD students will be decided on February 2 by the Fresno City Council rather than the school board.

On that date the Council will be debat-

ing proposals for a rental housing inspection program. The children of our city are the most vulnerable victims of the unsafe and unhealthful conditions that have been documented to exist in Fresno.

LWVF has encouraged the school district to lobby the mayor and council on behalf of its students, advocating for a program that comprehensively assesses the condition of rental housing and enforces standards in properties where those standards are not being met. Please write your Council representatives to advocate for such a program.

Transportation

by Stephenie Frederick

FRESNO BUS RAPID TRANSIT

Fresno's Bus Rapid Transit – twenty years in the making – will begin service in November 2017. The Q Line will run on Blackstone Avenue from River Park to a transit center located at Courthouse Park in downtown Fresno. From there the buses will head east on Ventura Street-Kings Canyon Road.

Stops will be located at half-mile intervals. Buses will come along every few minutes. To speed travel, passengers will board with tickets in hand, purchased at machines placed at the stops. Q Line buses will have signal priority. Sensing devices will lengthen a green light or shorten a red light, depending on where a bus is located, to favor the bus's arrival at its next stop.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Last February the High-Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) voted to connect its initial Central Valley segment north to Silicon Valley instead of south to Los Angeles. In August 2016 came the announcement that the first segment (Bakersfield-



Merced) will not be completed until the end of 2022. Local demolition and construction are proceeding in Fresno. In October 2016 the HSRA indicated that it will begin work on design of a Fresno station. In December 2016, the HSRA board took the first steps required to access bond funds approved by California voters in 2008. Opposition to the project continues to be strong.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PUBLIC TRANSIT PLAN

Also called the "Regional Long Range Transit Plan," the plan will provide strategic guidance for public transportation in Fresno County. A consultant will be hired to create the plan by the end of 2018. The major transit operators will implement the plan with support from various levels of government, funding agencies, and towns and cities that will benefit. This transit plan will feed into development of the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan described below.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Every four years, each planning area in California must create a regional transportation plan (RTP) in order to secure federal and state funding for transportation projects. To date, the Fresno County RTP has not really been so much a plan as a list of transportation projects that the county, the cities and towns within the county, and Caltrans would like to implement. The hundreds of pages in which the list is embedded are descriptions of the current state of transportation affairs within the county; descriptions of public meetings to discuss transportation needs; tables of policies and funding sources; etc. As time passes, the RTP may begin to incorporate actual plan elements, since the State of California will be seeking reductions of greenhouse gases in the transportation arena. Fresno COG's work on the 2018 RTP has begun; as noted above, it may incorporate elements of the Fresno County Sustainable Communities Public Transit Plan.




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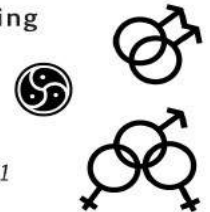
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What do you get when you join the League? All for one fee, you become a member of the Fresno, California and national Leagues and receive their newsletters. You may participate in League studies of issues; receive leadership training; hone your public speaking skills; become knowledgeable about local and state issues; learn more about government, natural resources and social policies as your time and interests dictate. You will also meet some interesting and friendly women and men who represent diverse backgrounds but find common ground in keeping abreast of current issues.

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I'll see you at
PROGRAM PLANNING

SATURDAY

February 4

9 a.m.

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