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Calendar

Tuesday, February 16
Regular Board Meeting Cancelled

CHANGE IN DATE
SATURDAY, February 20
Annual Program Planning Meeting
9 a.m.—Breakfast will be served
Stone Soup Community Room

Tuesday, March 16
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office

April 17, Annual Meeting
Guest Speaker Eddie Aubrey
Independent Police Auditor

Planner describes needed overhaul

by Murray Farber

There is hope for the resurgence of Fresno's downtown, according to John Dugan, the city's new Director of Planning. But first, Fresno must overhaul its codes for building and zoning as well as its goals. The city currently has a population of about 400,000 and he expects it to double by 2035.

Los Angeles. He was also a planner for the federal government in Washington, D.C.



City Planner John Dugan

Speaking at the League's Lunch & Learn on January 27, he said planning is needed to create jobs, housing and a strategy to provide sufficient water. Fresno now replenishes only a quarter of its water annually from underground sources and will be down to zero in 15 years. The city uses 300 gallons per household per day in contrast to Los Angeles (150); Santa Barbara (55) and Amsterdam, the Netherlands (30).

He called on civic organizations such as the League to urge the City Council to revise the city's codes to meet new standards for environmental issues, the consumption of energy, for building design and to recirculate water. Repeatedly comparing Fresno to Oklahoma City, where he previously served, Dugan said updating codes there opened the way for a boom in downtown construction especially by the resurgent oil and natural gas industries

In Fresno, he said, "Good things are happening in the Tower District" and the Fulton Mall has the opportunity to grow as an entertainment center. "Fresno has the opportunity for redevelopment and growth so Mayor Swearingen asked me to rewrite codes and generate community support. The existing planning and zoning codes are compiled in a book as thick as the Manhattan phone book and were adopted in 1960."

Dugan has also served as planning and development director in Norfolk, Va.; Sonoma County, CA; Topeka, KS; and

The revamped codes could lead to coordination by departments to facilitate new construction and more diverse housing options. *(continued on page 4)*

President's Message



New Members

Kaye Fredrickson
2280 East Los Altos
Fresno, CA 93710
324-0786
Kayefred@comcast.net

Kaye serves Fresno County as the Department of Social Services Foster Youth Educational Liaison. Kaye works with school personnel to resolve potential problems in individual cases among students, care providers, school districts, child welfare, probation, and other collaborative agencies. Kaye was instrumental in implementing the Best Dressed Kids' program that has provided over two-thousand foster children with fashionable school clothing. She is a 2008 recipient of the Comprehensive Youth Services Child Advocacy Award.

Diane and Robert Merrill
8540 N. Colfax
Fresno, CA 93720
434-8046
Diane.b.merrill@comcast.net
geolbob@yahoo.com

After almost 10 years of marriage, we are still very grateful to Vicki Haas for introducing us. Diane retired recently after 28 years in the energy efficiency department of Pacific Gas and Electric Company. She is particularly interested in environmental and consumer issues. Bob taught geology at CSUF for 34 years before retiring. Bob's many interests include international travel, the artwork and artifacts of Native American and other cultures, history, and politics.

Elaine and Berg Sudjian
2681 W. Robinwood Lane
Fresno, CA 93711
431-7306
esudjian@comcast.net

We are native Fresnoans. We both are FUSD retired (12 yrs) teachers. Berg taught in elementary school, mostly grades 4-6 for 36 years. Elaine taught science and health in middle school for 31 years. We have two married children and three grandsons. We are fans of Fresno State basketball and football and are avid spectators and photographers at our grandsons' soccer games in Fresno and around California

New e-mail address
Clara Touya
touyaclara@aol.com

A few years ago LWVF did an update study on the Fresno City Charter. When it came to assessing the charter provision that mandates increasing council members from 7 to 9 when a population of 540,000 is reached, our members could not come to consensus and no conclusion was reached.

Now Council members Lee Brand, Andreas Borgeas and Blong Xiong want to rescind that provision of the charter (Section 1504) for a number of reasons. They point out that the average number of people represented by a council member in California is about 98,000, whereas in Fresno it is 70,000. Each additional seat on the council would incur costs of \$300,000 per year. If the council were to be increased, it would cost about \$6 million over a 10-year period. They question whether it is prudent to consider such expenditures now, especially when specific funding was not set aside for this purpose.

Although they asked the support of the League for their efforts to get this on the June 8 ballot, your Board decided that without further discussion with our membership, and a brief update study, we could not take a position at this time. However, we applaud their efforts to share their concerns and reach out to the citizenry by speaking to various public and private groups around the city.

For our part, we are planning to put this revocation issue up for discussion at our Program Planning meeting on February 20 to determine membership interest. If it is high, we may decide to make it a local priority.

WE NEED YOUR INPUT. PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND THIS IMPORTANT MEETING AT STONE SOUP FROM 9 A.M. TO NOON ON SATURDAY, FEB. 20.

(see page 3 for procedures)

We promise to provide a delicious breakfast for you

Francine

Dr. Warden Barr Sisson

- We are saddened to report the passing of Warden Barr Sisson, M.D., a League member since 1995 and husband of Georgia Sisson, our Vice President for Program Planning. Ward was a neurologist and especially enjoyed research. He had a private practice in Fresno and also taught at the VA Hospital University Medical Center and the Regional Center.
- Ward was a participating member of LWVF and enjoyed speaking out at Lunch & Learn seminars and other occasions. We will miss him.

Members and guests are invited
to our annual Program Planning Meeting
exciting and highly interactive
Saturday, February 20 * 9 a.m. to Noon**
Community Room*Stone Soup**

SHORT GUIDE TO PROGRAM PLANNING

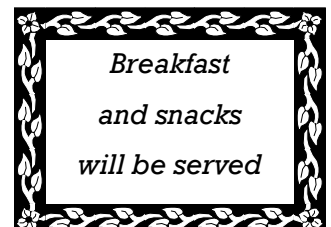
- ◆ It is a process that confirms your influence in a grassroots organization.
- ◆ It is the basis for education and action for your local, state and national leagues.
- ◆ Annually local leagues decide local issues on which to focus their efforts
- ◆ Every other year local leagues have input into either state or national issues. In 2010 we will focus on national and local issues.

Local leagues select one process to support among four choices

- ◆ New study: recommending an issue implies local and national commitment of resources for 1-2 years. Local leagues can focus on a new study through public forums, discussion meetings.
- ◆ Update: a minor study to update an already existing position
- ◆ Concurrence: agreeing or concurring with a position or statement
- ◆ No recommendation
- ◆ Local leagues send their program planning results to the national Board which recommends, amends or does not recommend each proposal.
- ◆ It approves a Proposed Program to Convention which is sent to all leagues in May.
- ◆ Convention delegates adopt the 2010-2012 LWVUS program after debate and discussion

How to decide on a study

- ◆ Is a new position required or are there existing positions to use as basis for action?
- ◆ Does the proposed issue fall within League principles?
- ◆ Is government action the most effective way to address the issue?
- ◆ Is there widespread member interest?
- ◆ Is it timely?
- ◆ Is this the appropriate League level to address this issue?
- ◆ Are there other groups League can work with on this issue?
- ◆ Can League realistically have an impact on this issue?



Dugan describes plans

(continued from page 1)

At the same time Dugan recognizes that some areas of the city are stable and do not require major changes. "We should focus on Blackstone and Gettysburg rather than the Dominion area." As an ideal, sections of the city would have two to four-story housing units built over retail stores to encourage walking, local shopping and a neighborhood feeling.

League members and guests peppered him with questions. For example, "You're talking about the next 8 to 10 years. What about now?"

Dugan said for short term the council has adopted an incentive package that includes deferring impact fees for 3 to 4 years. He suggested stopgap studies to clear the way for immediate improvements. Dugan pointed out that meters near Chukchansi Stadium permit two-hour parking but baseball games often run three hours.

In response to another query, Dugan said that the state's proposed high speed transportation will be built 60 feet off the ground, with a station located downtown. A trip to Los Angeles will take an hour and a half. However, at 225 miles per hour, the bullet train noise will be a challenge that will impact on residences and offices. Perhaps a solution will be an elevated tube for the train. In regard to concerns that the rail line would be built piecemeal with no funding left for Fresno, Dugan said the first link would be from Fresno to Bakersfield because of the flat land of the Central Valley.



Are you looking for a special gift for someone who is having a birthday, anniversary, graduation, or other celebration?

Remember them with a donation to your League.

The League also accepts memorial gifts and bequests.



WANDA GRAYSON

Wanda Grayson, LWVF member since 1994, passed away on January 19. She was committed to the election of women to public office as well as many other interests and philanthropies. She was one of the first significant donors to Emily's List. She served as Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign coordinator for two of the five California districts that he carried and was a founding member and president of the Fresno National Women's Political Caucus.



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Natural Resources

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Legislation

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Fresno Green Development Code

The work plan presentation for the City Council set for January 14 was postponed to an indefinite date. The development staff is probably meeting with the Building Industry Association to iron out some controversy so that everyone can be on board when the presentation goes to the Council.

Measure C Citizens Oversight Committee (COC)

The COC met on January 14 to complete its review of the Measure C Extension expenditures for 2008-09 and the planned expenditures for 2009-10. Suggestions and modifications for the reporting forms continue. The COC will review the auditor's reports for 2008-09 after February, and was reminded that final reviews of all reports follow two years after expenditures. However, until the Measure C Extension was passed with a citizens' oversight process, there was little transparency regarding these expenditures at all

The COC also heard an update on efforts to locate the High Speed Rail Maintenance Yard in Fresno and learned that a "letter of interest" was submitted to the High



Speed Rail Commission from the County of Fresno last week. It committed the expenditure of \$25 million to locating the rail yard in Fresno. The source of these funds was not precisely identified. A project area of about 700 acres on the south side of the City on Cedar Avenue between American and Adams Avenues was mentioned. Bakersfield has also submitted a letter of interest, but not yet known if Merced did likewise. Neither Bakersfield nor Merced has local self help transportation sales taxes.

Jessie Morrow Mountain

The controversial proposal is generating a lot of heat, particularly among opponents. Our Board last year agreed not to take a position at that time. Richard Weldon, former County Planning and Development director, is working now for the proponents of the project and is making the rounds talking to as many groups as possible about the merits of the proposal. He would like to speak to the League Board. We may decide to revisit our position.

More than 90 proposed statewide ballot propositions have been filed with California election officials as possible contenders for either the June 8, 2010 or November 2, 2010 ballots. Although most of the proposed ballot measures will not qualify for the ballot, somewhere between 10-20 are expected to make the final cut.

The Office of the Attorney General of California is estimating that it costs them about \$6,800 to prepare a ballot title and summary for each potential ballot proposition submitted to their office, which means that so far, the state has incurred costs of over \$600,000 to begin the process of qualifying propositions for the ballot.



Signature requirements mean that qualifying for the ballot requires an initial investment of about \$1 million just to collect signatures.

The following initiatives qualified for the June 8 ballot:

"Top Two Primary" The top two primary vote getters move to a general election regardless of party affiliation

"Fair Elections Act" Public funding of politicians' campaigns

"Seismic Retrofitting" Seismic retrofitting should not add to property's tax assessed value

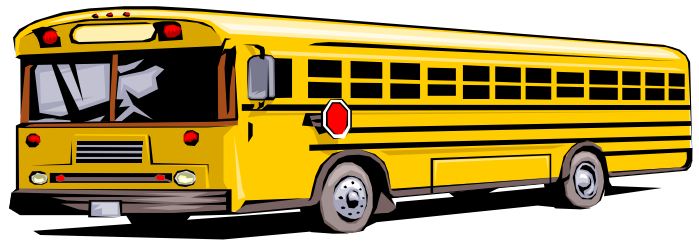
"2/3 Requirement" 2/3 of local voters required before establishing CCA program

The following initiative qualified for the November 2 election:

"Water Bonds" \$11.1 billion bond to upgrade California's water system

Education

By Kay Bertken



Local school districts have been on vacation since late December; children returned to their campuses on January 11. While students were out, the State and school districts were busy preparing an application for the Federal Government's 4.3 billion dollar Race to the Top reform program. The funds will be allocated in April to states that submitted qualifying and competitive applications by January 18. California stands to get as much as 700 million dollars (some estimate \$1 billion) spread over the next 4 years.

Legislation has been passed to align state laws with the requirements of the Race to the Top ambitions: 1) adopting internationally benchmarked national standards and assessments across the states (individually determined and inconsistent state standards have been part of the criticism of NCLB); 2) recruiting, developing, training and rewarding effective teachers and administrators; 3) building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals of how they can improve their practices; 4) turning around the lowest performing schools.

Application for Funds

The Governor has submitted California's application accompanied by memoranda of understanding (MOU's) from nearly 800 local California school districts and other local education agencies, each of which has pledged to implement the reforms. At the January 13

FUSD School Board meeting, the trustees ratified Fresno Unified's MOU. It commits them "to partner with the state in refining California's rigorous state standards; provide new supports for teachers and principals to improve effectiveness; enhance local data systems and coordinate them with state data systems; and transform persistently lowest performing schools."

Data for Teacher Accountability

The most controversial feature of the Race to the Top and California's application is the use of student performance data to enhance instruction. For the first time in the state, that data will be used to identify quality teachers and administrators, even textbooks and teacher training programs. The linking of that data to teacher and site administration pay in merit pay incentives and the abandonment of seniority criteria for job assignments have yet to be worked out in contracts across the districts.

Like all massive reform efforts, the Race to the Top has detractors, and most of its features are controversial. Beyond the teacher evaluation impacts, it has been noted that the \$700 million expected to flow into California represents a very small fraction of the annual California education budget. San Francisco Unified itself is facing a \$100 million shortfall this year. The federal provision for national standards aggravates those who are interested in enhanced local control.

The reforms that enhance parental choice and influence are complex. The California application proposes that parents in low performing schools may transfer their children, not only to another school in their district, but to schools outside that district. In addition, if 50% of parents in a low performing school agree, the school could face personnel turnover or even closure. Critics note that under NCLB, parents were generally loyal to their poor performing neighborhood schools and few requested transfers.

Transfers Bring Consequences

However, though parents are unlikely to transfer into new districts or request "transformation" of their local school, the consequences of that happening are uncertain. How will new districts handle an influx of students from failing schools? How long would it take for an alternative to emerge for a closed school, and how long would it take to absorb those students; and how would the school and students cope through the closure process.

California educates about an eighth of the nation's children. Its achievement scores are lower than the national average, the drop out rate is very high and the state is near the bottom in per pupil expenditures. There is general agreement that many things need to change.

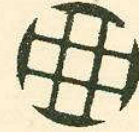
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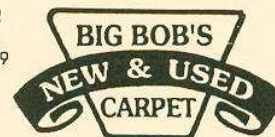
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NONPARTISANSHIP: The League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party.

DIVERSITY POLICY: There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the LWVF on the basis of race, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic level.

TO PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS: For more information, please leave your name and phone number on the League message phone, 226-8683, or contact our **Membership Chair, Dolores O’Neal at 435-1185**. Prospective members receive one issue of *The Fresno Voter* free.

JOIN US! Members receive newsletters from national, state and local Leagues, may access local, state and national League websites and list-serves, and may participate in League studies of issues.

Yearly Dues Individual - \$60 ~ Family - \$90 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - \$30

Please send your check payable to the League of Women Voters, Fresno, with registration form (below),
 to: LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Suite 4, Fresno, CA 93710.

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