



The VOTER

Vol. 53, No. 2

The Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Kent

March 2006

Kent League's Position Statement on Parks and Recreation to Undergo Comprehensive Member Review, Revision

When it comes to parks and recreation in Kent and Portage County, a lot has changed since 1985, prompting the Kent League of Women Voters to consider another update to its official position statement on local parks-and-recreation matters. A meeting to do so is set for April 17 at 7 p.m. in the Roy Smith Shelter House in Fred Fuller Park, 497 Middlebury Road, Kent.

The revised position will then be submitted to the League's membership for approval at the annual meeting in May. The update will be the basis for the League's review this fall of information related to renewal of a Kent parks and recreation continuing levy. A continuing levy is being sought because of recent changes to the Ohio Revised Code.

Impetus for the review and revision is a forum in March of last year cosponsored by the League and the Kent Environmental Council. More than 60 area residents turned out to hear updated information—including present status and a future vision—about Kent and Portage County parks and recreation. Statistics cited at that meeting were from 2004. Here is a recap of that presentation.

Financial Status of Kent Parks and Recreation Department

According to Parks and Recreation Director John Idone, four parks and recreation levies (all five-year levies with a total of 3.45 mill) that generate more than \$1 million annually are the primary funding source for operating Kent's parks, recreation

facilities and programs. Levies, however, do not increase as property values increase. A rollback feature reduces the effective millage so that property owners pay a tax equal to the amount they paid when the original ballot issue was passed.

Future Vision for Kent Parks and Recreation

This vision includes an open-space master plan featuring a network of hiking and biking trails that connect parks and people throughout the city and beyond.

See *PARKS*, p. 3.

LWVK Supper Meeting to Discuss Kent Schools Levy Wednesday, March 15, 6:30 p.m. Home of Nena Hankins, 1950 Kimberly Drive, Kent

The 6.9 mill operating levy for the Kent City Schools will appear on the May 2 ballot. According to an article in the *Record-Courier*, the "6.9 mill levy is expected to carry the school district for at least four years and provide financial stability to the district operations." The levy would yield \$3.3 million annually according to Treasurer Deborah Krutz. League members will review financial and nonfinancial information. They will then try to reach consensus on whether or not the Kent League will support the 6.9 mill levy. Presenters are Stacy Yaniglos and Nena Hankins.

RSVP to Nena Hankins, 330/673-0128 or nhankins@att.net by March 13.



LWVK Events Alert . . .

Monday, April 17, 7 p.m.

Review and update of LWVK position on parks and recreation; Roy Smith Shelter House, Fred Fuller Park, 497 Middlebury Road, Kent (see article this page).

Inside . . .

From the President's Desk	2
Voters' Guide Committee	2
Armchair Conventioneering	4
Civic Engagement Project	4
Gubernatorial Forum	4
Environmental News & Events	5
Statehouse Day	5
Calendar	6



From the President's Desk:

Voters' Guide... LWVO Leader... Annual Meeting... Parks Levy

Spring can't be far away, as the Kent League of Women Voters prepares yet another *Voters' Guide* for the May primary election. With dozens of open seats—from county commissioner to the governor's race and pending tax-levy issues as well—the guide continues to provide the information that voters need to make informed choices.

We would like to invite League members to volunteer to help with the guide, as our able Voters Service Committee Co-chairs Karen Fuller, Sylvia Armstrong and Barb Fox are starting new ventures and need a break! So, we're looking for volunteers. Please call any board member to offer your help.

The Ohio League of Women Voters has a new executive director, Jerolyn Barbee, who has been flooding us with information and promising more. We're now getting president's info via e-mail and will continue to forward that through Jan Rusnack. (Thanks, Jan!) Not online? Let us know, and we will try to fill your postal mailbox!

Spring also brings the Kent League's annual meeting. This year,

we have selected a date in late May, and hope you will be able to join us to vote on programs for next year and to welcome new officers.

April 17 is another key date for the League. At a meeting that evening, League members will revise the League's local position on parks and recreation in Kent and Portage County. We have received some information on the topic already (at a jointly sponsored meeting with the Kent Environmental Council), and we will review that as well as add some updates at the April meeting. Join us at the Roy Smith Shelter House at 7 p.m. to help determine the future of parks in Kent.

New members are always welcomed at League meetings, but many will visit only if **you** ask them to join us. With the last election, more voters were energized to get involved. Can we get them interested in the League, the only non-partisan study group that works together to make sure voters are informed about election issues and candidates?

- Barb

Voters' Guide Committee Reorganizing

With the governor's office, members of the statehouse and U.S. Congress, and dozens of local offices on the general election ballot in November, the League urgently needs volunteers for its Voters' Guide Committee.

Following in the footsteps of past committee chairs and members won't be easy, but when a need arises, League members can be counted on to step forward. Thanks to all who have served on the committee in the past.

The *Voters' Guide* has long been a Kent/Portage County tradition, and the League's board does not want to drop it now but needs your suggestions on how to streamline the process. Some have suggested putting the publication online, while others prefer the print version.

To volunteer, call Jan Rusnack at 330/678-1261. Time commitment is about three evenings of group work and the compilation of a mailing list.

The **VOTER** is published eight to 10 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Kent. The newsletter is available both in print and online at the League's Web site: <http://www.kent.oh.lwvnet.org/>.

Board Members

Barb Hipsman-Springer
Co-President

330/678-0681

Amie Cajka
Co-President

330/688-9545

Dian Weir-McElroy
Secretary

Nena Hankins
Treasurer

Call the co-presidents to help with program meetings, to volunteer for any committees or to obtain information about the League's activities and policies.

Directors

Tracy A. Deep-Ross

Paulla Gates

Kathy Hardy

Terrie Tarchinski-Nielsen

Jackie Waltz

Stacy Yaniglos

Directors set policy and make financial decisions. They are involved in program, voter services and the organizational activities of the League.

Off-Board Leaders

Nancy Adams

Land-Use Programs

Sylvia Armstrong, Barb Fox
& Karen Fuller

Voter's Guide

Audrey Cielinski Kessler
Voter & Web Site

Jan Rusnack

Voter Registration

PARKS

Continued from p. 1

Financial Status of the Portage Park District

Under the management of Director Chris Craycroft and a three-member board of volunteer park commissioners, the Portage Park District has been able to expand the county park system by taking advantage of grants from state and federal programs, land donations from foundations, land trusts and individual contributions.

For example, Portage County commissioners provided \$109,000 from the county's general fund to support the management of the county's first parkland, Towner's Woods. The commissioners also allocated \$75,000 to the Park District made available from a recent increase in the county's transfer tax.

Craycroft began her presentation at last year's meeting with the observation that in response to increasing pressure for development in Portage County, "conservation is the primary goal of the Portage Park Dis-

trict." No plans are in the works for a levy in 2006, though the possibility of a levy campaign in the next presidential election year has been discussed.

Future Vision for Kent and Portage County

Through the collaborative efforts of the following governmental bodies, a network of interconnected greenways is being developed to link Portage County communities with green corridors for hiking and biking:

- Portage County commissioners
- Portage Park District
- Kent city administration
- Kent city council
- Kent Parks and Recreation Department and board
- Kent State University
- Franklin Township trustees
- Ravenna city administration
- Ravenna Parks and Recreation Department and board

The concept of a total network was tagged "The Portage" by Tom Clapper, senior assistant

to the vice president of administration at Kent State University. He stressed the economic advantage of continuing growth and noted that park facilities and recreation programs are quality-of-life issues.

Proposed Position-Statement Deletions and Additions

Proposed changes to the League's position on parks and recreation include minor word changes and additions, the deletion of sentences or phrases and the addition of new or expanded position statements. The following are proposed deletions:

- Establishment of a governmental park district to oversee the development of existing county parklands
- A county park levy

The following additions are being suggested:

- Establishment of a broad-based source of revenue for the Portage Park District that would provide adequate funds for the conservation of environmentally sensitive natural areas; a system of green hike/bike trails connecting communities and parkland throughout Portage County; partnerships with townships and municipalities in land-conservation projects; expansion of environmental education programs. Specific broad-based sources of funding could be a county park levy, designated developers' fees, transfer-tax allocations or other viable options.
- Active planning and collaborative efforts among regional governmental units, such as the Portage County commissioners, townships, municipalities and the Portage Park District, to enhance the conservation and protection of the natural heritage of Portage County, which might include watersheds, wetlands, forests and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Summary of the Kent League of Women Voters Position Statement on Kent Parks and Recreation (last updated 1985)

The Kent League of Women Voters . . .

- Supports an adequate public recreation program and park facilities in Kent and Portage County
- Supports adequate funding to maintain park and recreation programs for all ages in Kent
- Supports continued operation of the community pool program at Kent Roosevelt High School
- Believes property tax levies are appropriate revenue sources for park and recreation funds
- Urges the use of federal/state funds and programs to develop and maintain both city and county parks and programs

LWVUS Discussion List Allows for Armchair Conventioneering

Even if you are unable to attend the League of Women Voters of the United States' Convention this year (June 10-13 in Minneapolis, Minnesota), you still can add your two cents (or more) regarding the program-planning process.

On the U.S. League's Web site, you can subscribe to a discussion list that began on March 1 and continues through the Convention to allow for the exchange of ideas on convention issues such as recommended and not-recommended program items, results of the local and state Leagues' program-planning meetings, and the U.S. League's budget and per-member-payment (PMP) assessments. The discussion list also lets you lobby other Leagues to support your issue, thus giving Ohio's delegation a leg up during convention debates. To subscribe to the list, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.lwv.org.
2. Log in to the FOR MEMBERS page.
3. Enter your e-mail address and password.
4. Click on Login.
5. On the Welcome page, click on FOR MEMBERS.
6. Select Convention from the drop-down list.
7. Click on Join the Convention Discussion List.
8. On the Convention Discussion List page, subscribe by entering your e-mail address and, if you choose, your name.
9. Click on Subscribe.
10. On the LYRIS ListManager page, you should get a message acknowledging that your subscription request was made and noting that a confirmation message will be sent to your e-mail address.

Gubernatorial Forum to Focus Attention on Children's Issues

Children's issues will be the focus of a gubernatorial forum cosponsored by League of Women Voters of Ohio and the Children's Hunger Alliance and the Children's Defense Fund of Ohio on April 13 in Columbus.

The forum gets under way at 10 a.m. in the Saxbe Auditorium of Ohio State University and concludes at noon.

As of press time, three gubernatorial candidates—Republican Jim Petro and Democrats Ted Strickland and Bryan Flannery—have accepted the groups' invitation to discuss their agendas for improving the lives of children in Ohio. All candidates for the governor's office have been invited.

See FORUM, p. 6.

LWVO Designs Statewide Civic Engagement Project

The importance of civic engagement and how it affects politics and political reform are the key elements of the state League's Civic Engagement Project, which promises to be a font of information when the fall election season approaches.

According to the state League, the plan "has gelled" around two components. The first component is a set of fall town-hall meetings held around the state and hosted by local leagues (probably including the Kent and Northern Portage Leagues). The state League will prepare an agenda outline, a DVD, and materials to be used during the meeting and distributed to attendees.

The second component of the project is a Web site intended to raise awareness about the importance of civic engagement, broaden the scope of knowledge on the subject and increase the number of stakeholders involved in political reform.

The state League is in the granting process with a national foundation that will enable the staff to hire a public relations firm and acquire help for the Web site. The League hopes to know by the end of April whether the grant has been approved.

It's Not Too Late!

There is still time to send in your contribution to the LWVK 2006 Member Finance Drive.

Send your contribution to Jackie Waltz, 4564 Hatrick Road, Rootstown, OH 44272



Environmental News & Events



Environmental Conservation Awards Dinner and Auction

The Eighth Annual Portage County Environmental Conservation Awards Dinner and Auction, cosponsored by the Portage County Environmental Roundtable and the Portage Park District, is scheduled for April 8 at the American Legion Hall at 1945 Mogadore Road in Kent. A reception and silent auction begin at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Hors d'oeuvres featuring local foods, an open beer and wine bar, and a cash bar will be provided at the reception. The group Northern Portage will provide the entertainment.

Proceeds from the auction go to the Portage Park District for the improvement and expansion of Portage County hike and bike trails. Reservations are required by March 31. To make a reservation, call the Portage Park District at 330/297-7728.

Thanks to supporters and project partners, Portage County's trails have made great progress, with local contributions leveraging hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants. Plans for proceeds from this year's awards dinner include extending The Portage hike and bike trail from Franklin Township to Kent, improving the Headwaters Trail from Garrettsville to Hiram, extending the Headwaters Trail from Mantua to Aurora and planning trail connections to more communities. Some of the proceeds from the auction are earmarked as local matches included in recent grant applications.

Forum on Energy Conservation Programs

Join the Portage Environmental Roundtable for a discussion about energy conservation programs for low- to moderate-income families that can help them increase the energy efficiency of their homes. The forum is set for March 20 at 7 p.m. in the Haymaker Room of the new Reed Memorial Library, 167 E. Main Street, Ravenna.

The primary focus of the forum is home weatherization and space heating. Much of the housing stock in Portage County and many mobile homes are poorly insulated and have old or poorly functioning and wasteful heating systems. Therefore with the increase in costs for natural gas and oil this winter coupled with the environmental costs of energy waste, an environmental problem and an economic problem converge. The people with the least ability to pay the increased costs are those who are most likely to have the poorest heating systems and the most likely to live in the least energy-efficient homes.

Also on the agenda are energy audits, priority home improvements for greatest efficiency (available technology), state and federal funding options, and the Emergency Energy Conservation Fund.

Statehouse Day Set for April 4 in Columbus

In an election year, it is fitting that the theme of the League of Women Voters of Ohio's annual Statehouse Day is "Let's Talk About Values." The one-day event is scheduled for April 4 in Columbus.

Participants will have a chance to learn more about the state League's positions on issues and to connect with their state representatives. This year's event will lay the groundwork for the Kent League's 2006 election efforts, so it's important that as many members as possible attend this event.

Confirmed Speakers include the following:

- Dr. Mitch Chester, associate superintendent for policy and accountability leadership for the Ohio Department of Education
- Cathy Levine, executive director of Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio
- Jack Shaner, director of public affairs for the Ohio Environmental Council
- Peg Rosenfield, the Ohio League's election reform specialist

Kent League members who want to attend—and all are encouraged to do so—should call Amie Cajka at 330/688-9545. She will coordinate drivers and riders.

For more information about Statehouse Day and how you can benefit from attending, go to www.lwvohio.org or call the state League at 614/469-1505.

FORUM

Continued from p. 4

The forum will be moderated by Lee Leonard, retired *Columbus Dispatch* statehouse reporter, with questions and answers from reporters representing the *Columbus Dispatch*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and Ohio Public Radio.

The Ohio League has been allotted approximately 80 seats for this event. Invitations will be available soon with RSVPs needed by April 7. For more information, e-mail Mary Cannon, LWVO office manager, at mcannon@lwvohio.org

On a related matter, the Ohio League is exploring the feasibility of sponsoring a statewide gubernatorial debate before the November general election. It has long been the state League's belief that the optimal setting for a debate featuring candidates for any statewide office would be a single, widely viewed event. This would ensure that Ohio voters hear a consistent message. No date has been set.



LWVK Calendar . . .

March

- 15 *Supper Meeting on Kent City Schools***
Home of Nena Hankins, 1950 Kimberly Drive, Kent;
6:30 p.m.; RSVP by March 13.

April

- 4 *Statehouse Day***
Columbus; for more information: www.lwvohio.org or
614/469-1505.
- 8 *8th Annual Portage County Environmental Conservation Awards Dinner & Auction***
Cosponsored by the Portage County Environmental Roundtable and the Portage Park District; to benefit Portage County trails; American Legion Hall, 1945 Mogadore Road, Kent; 6 p.m. reception and silent auction; 7 p.m. dinner; RSVP by March 31.
- 13 *Gubernatorial Forum on Children's Issues***
Cosponsored by the League of Women Voters of Ohio, the Children's Hunger Alliance and the Children's Defense Fund of Ohio; gubernatorial candidate forum on children's issues; Saxbe Auditorium, Ohio State University; 10 a.m.-noon.
- 17 *Parks & Recreation Update Meeting***
Review and updating of LWVK position on parks and recreation; Roy Smith Shelter House, Fred Fuller Park, 497 Middlebury Road, Kent; 7 p.m.
- 19 *Kent League Board Meeting***
Pufferbelly restaurant, Franklin Avenue and West Main Street, Kent; 6:30 p.m.; members welcome.

The VOTER

Audrey Cielinski Kessler, Editor
1638 S. Lincoln Street
Kent, OH 44240-4449