



THE BROWN COUNTY VOTER

July 7, 2014

Calendar

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| Monday, July 14 | 10:00 Board Meeting, downstairs at the Library Everyone welcome |
| July 27 to Aug. 2 | Brown County Fair, Mon. -Sat. 6-10 pm Volunteers needed to staff League booth in 2-hour shifts Contact Julie Winn, jmbwinn@hotmail.com |
| August 1 - 17 | State Fair in Indianapolis |
| Thursday, Aug. 14 | Community Conversation on Courthouse future 6:30 pm at the Library (see below) |
| Tues. & Thurs. Oct. 7 & 9 | Candidate forums for November elections Watch for specifics in future newsletter and Democrat |

Community Conversation on Courthouse Needs

by Julie Winn, President

The subcommittees on the Courthouse have continued to meet to gather information since our last Community Conversation March 31. It was recently suggested by Mark Dollase, with Indiana Landmarks, that a consultant with expertise in historic preservation might be able to help us pull all our materials together, and serve as an expert resource. He drew our attention to Dr. James Glass, of Historic Preservation & Heritage Consulting LLC. Dr. Glass has a long career in historic preservation, and recently served on Governor Mitch Daniels' Indiana Historic Courthouse Preservation Advisory Commission, chaired by former Justice Randall Shepard.

Dr. Glass has agreed to assist with this matter. The League of Women Voters of Brown County is fortunate to have been given a sum of money to pay for a consultant in this matter, and will apply it to Dr. Glass's contract. He will prepare a report for our community, and will also speak on a panel at the next Community Conversation, which will take place on Thursday, August 14, at 6:30 p.m. at the Brown County Public Library. Hope to see you all there - bring a new friend!

Community Conversation: Health and Heritage Tourism

June 9, 2014

by Judith East

LWVBC Vice President Pam Raider introduced Ruth Reichman, facilitator of the conversation. She noted that the League's "Assessment & Inventory of Brown County's Rich Heritage" is available in hard copy but was obsolete upon printing; it will soon be put online and can be constantly updated. She then introduced the panel. Each participant updated the audience of about 25 people on current activities of their organizations, with occasional observations on the future in Brown County:

Doug Baird, Brown County State Park:

Doug noted that the park is up 4% in visitation and revenue this year so far. The playing field near the fire tower will be converted to a wildflower prairie with a grant secured by Leslie Bishop. It should attract butterflies and other wildlife. The Abe Martin Lodge will be adding six new duplex cabins by October, and the Lodge kitchen will be expanded by spring.

Jim Allen, Yellowwood/Morgan Monroe State Forest:

Yellowwood has primitive camping sites, but some will be updated to electric to accommodate campers' changing preferences. The former Girl Scout camp at Belmont is being sold to the Nature Conservancy piece by piece; the Bridge House, six cabins and considerable acreage is owned so far. Suggestions are being taken for usage; not many coming in. IU students did a study of possibilities, including a wellness retreat center. There is a plan to connect the 42-mile Tecumseh Trail to the Knobstone Trail, which would then extend to Louisville. Mountain biking is growing in the county and

trails could connect to the State Park, Hoosier National Forest and Yellowwood. Disc golf, camping, hiking and general recreation are all possibilities for the Belmont site. Water is the biggest issue at Belmont; it must be hauled in, and it would cost over \$1 million to fix the problem.

Jesse Moore, The Nature Conservancy:

One regional office is maintained now at Belmont. The focus in Indiana is forestry: it is critical to migratory songbirds. The Conservancy also maintains 450 acres off Freeman Ridge Rd. where there is a 3-mile trail and small shelter in partnership with the Hoosier Hiking Council.

Keith Baker, Salt Creek Cleanup

Committee: There are three major logjams along the 15+ miles of the creek considered "navigable," meaning on state-owned land extending to the high point of the banks. 75 to 100 trees also cross the creek. Cleanup (very expensive), education and promotion are the major goals of the committee. It hopes to extend the navigable creek to Lake Monroe eventually for canoeing and kayaking, which will increase the economy in B.C. The committee receives state funding but must find matching money.

Lee Edgren, River Light Yoga:

Lee's studio is above Ferrer Gallery. "We need some kind of synergy," she said: we need to market all the resources we have. The Winter Wellness Weekends she has organized at the State Park incorporate hiking, dance, music, meditation, art, a race, etc. Kathy Anderson's "Experience the Arts" (like Chautauqua) was unsuccessful but a great idea.

Kim Robinson, Brown County YMCA:

The Y now houses Jan Spear's dance studio and Bucks & Does square dancing. It offers pilates, yoga, tai chi, aquatics and free Silver Sneakers (one of the largest in the State) in addition to traditional YMCA activities. It is also a trailhead for the Salt Creek Trail.

Tom Tuley, Arts & Entertainment

Commission: Marketing is important to Tom's organization. A common question from tourists is, "Where are the arts?" Elderheart's new sculpture "Soaring" outside the Visitors Center is a healing process between veterans and the arts. At its base will be a QR reader for cello phones that will call up a listing of all county arts, current musical performances, etc. A national study of arts communities show that public art must be displayed on the streets to draw tourists. Other sculptures are now being installed downtown, and leaf signage will soon identify shops selling local goods.

Pete Bullard, B.C. Historic Society: The Historic Society receives no public money; all its efforts are privately funded. Construction of the its building is on time and will be paid for by its opening at the end of September. Operating funds are still needed and donations are very welcome! ...still need \$500K. The Society meets the first Monday of each month with a potluck dinner. Richard Leiber's great grandson will be in town in early July to speak about the State Parks. The Courthouse and the old jail are on the Registry of Historic Buildings. The old jail is almost unique in the nation and will deteriorate if not maintained.

Mark Dollase, Indiana Landmarks: Brown County is now covered by the Indianapolis district of Indiana Landmarks. Its focus is

more than old buildings: the stories that go with them define communities. Looking at what works in other communities, Mark suggested walking tours of our historic or art-centered buildings. Grants are available to develop these. The Brown County Interim Report of 1995 lists 414 sites of historic importance in Brown County! Community development will require the interaction of the groups re presented at this Conversation. Indiana Landmarks is a membership organization; historic preservation is its goal. Mark also sits on the board of the Main Street Commission.

In a Q & A session afterwards, the following comments were made:

- Why don't we have a form of "Outdoor Women" here? The DNR offers sessions for women on outdoor skills such as using a chain saw, fishing, etc. Maybe "Outdoor Families" would work here. A women's mountain biking event sells out.
- Does the Nature Conservancy have maps of its trails? (Only on its website and at offices).
- We need activities for young people who live here, not just for tourists. One idea for making a (low-wage) living here might be to recycle old clothes into creative items.
- We need to connect the State Park with the arts district. We might shut down the alleyways for pedestrians and bikers, and when the Salt Creek Trail is complete people might see more than Van Buren St. There are 20 art and history sites along those alleys: great, underused resources. They could generate spinoff businesses, e.g. restaurants to serve the growing foodie movement. 32 businesses sprang up along the Monon Trail in Indy when it opened. A walking tour the Historic Society once conducted as a fund raiser was a great success.

- Why aren't we designated as a "Hiking Community" when Bloomington is so designated with only its B-Line Trail? Ironic! We have 88 miles of trails in the State Park alone.
- There are only five "arts communities" in the state, and Brown County, Columbus and Bloomington are three of them, right together. Efforts have begun with IDOT to coordinate all three, possibly identifying I-46 as an arts destination corridor.
- The Elderheart sculpture is intended to draw attention to the issue of suicide among veterans.
- The Prosecutor's office and the parking lot between it and the Courthouse are in the Historic District.
- CVB should be represented on this panel. It has the resources to market our assets.
- *Water, internet access and roads* are major issues preventing economic development in Brown County. We basically have no fire protection without water, and our fire insurance rates are the worst in the nation (we are rated 10 on a 1-10 scale). None of this is being addressed with the Stellar Community project. We are spending \$500,000 more a year than we are bringing in; our funds will

run out next year.

- Are these ideas going into some kind of report that will just be shelved? Vision 2020 is full of platitudes; we need to implement our plans!

- Brown County residents are too independent to come together on a cohesive plan. Everyone has a different view of what B.C. is or should become.

- The Columbus Chamber of Commerce learned that one third of rural communities in Indiana will go bankrupt in the future. County's that will not embrace change will be replaced by something else. We have to come together or we will pay for BC being so independent or just being BC.

- The serenity of Brown County is what draws city people and their money here.

- How can we pull people together? A community is not like a business with a CEO who can issue orders. Political leaders must take charge. Do we need another community conversation? Do we need another community conversation?

- NOTE: A community conversation on Courthouse needs is scheduled for Aug. 14 at 6:30.

Dorothy Stewart Scholarship

Please think about a donation to the "Dorothy Stewart Scholarship" with the Brown County Community Foundation. Dorothy was one of our League founding members and its first president. She was killed by a pack of dogs while working on the 2000 Census. The scholarship will go to a Brown County graduating senior who is interested in a political or environmental field of study. Your tax-exempt donation provides scholarships to Brown County students interested in civics

Brown County Partnership meeting May 27, 2014

by Shari Frank

Brown County Commissioner John Kennard provided an update regarding Brown County septic and sewer Systems. He reports the County has been trying to get grants to expand sewer treatment systems for over 10 years. An engineering study was done in 2009. Cost was estimated at \$1.2 million to add several communities (Bean Blossom, etc.) to the Helmsburg treatment plant. Kennard says this grant amount is actually too low to even garner consideration, as most grant approvals are for much higher amounts. Due to the amount of time that has passed, Kennard said a new engineering study is needed. They found a way to get approval for a \$12K grant to conduct a new study, although a 2nd grant for a study is not normally allowed.

Kennard argues the need to address the sewage systems in Brown County is great, for many reasons:

- Field surveys in Coffee Hill and Orchard Hill communities built in the '60s have shown residential septic system failures to be 47% to 76%!
- Septic affluent (wet yards) is a big attractor for mosquitoes. Mosquitos travel 15 miles. West Nile virus is a threat to residents, as well as to Brown County's reliance on tourism if West Nile virus becomes more prevalent.
- Water samples around the county show we shouldn't eat the fish, let alone swim in any of Brown County's bodies of water.
- The Helmsburg treatment plant is at about 11% capacity with 64 customers since the sock factory left. When Helmsburg school is out, usage

drops even further. With so few customers,

- cost is high for those on the system. Plus, the plant has to maintain a higher usage rate to avoid the metal getting corroded.

- Other problems with septic systems versus sewer line:

- Brown County soil, being heavy in clay, has bad drainage inhibiting good septic systems. The Presby septic system offers an alternative but has other drawbacks.

- Indiana laws have changed requiring septic systems to be at least 200' (vs. previously 100') away from a lake. A typical septic system requires 120' length and 60' width. Many lots, e.g. around Lake Lemon, don't have that kind of room.

- They continue to find that additions and renovations to some older houses were done improperly, sometimes leaving drainage pipes exiting into creeks!

- The Nashville treatment plant \$6 million expansion some time ago was successful, and they now have excess capacity where other areas could be added, such as Sweetwater/Cordry Lakes.

Kennard says the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) has been very good to work with. They are exploring ideas of grouping various communities for cost effectively adding to the

existing treatment plants at Helmsburg and Nashville and Gnowbone.

Homeowners and communities have been very resistant to installing sewer lines, per Kennard. Homes with leaking septic tanks could be condemned as health hazards, Kennard says. However, this would leave taxpayers holding the bill for repairs or upgrades, not to mention the social upheaval. Even if grants are obtained to support expanding sewer lines, homeowners will be responsible to install hookups to their homes. Cost per home initially was estimated at \$5 thousand, but since the initial study, this cost has gone down to approximately \$1 thousand per household. That's better but still difficult to mandate, especially for low income or fixed income residents.

There is no time line for completing development of sewage treatment plans. He feels there isn't sufficient money through taxes to make necessary improvements. Kennard believes once the current engineering study is complete, they will have a better chance at getting grants and setting timelines for completion.

The other topic of business at the Partnership meeting was the Nashville Stellar Community Project, discussed briefly by Scott Rudd. He talked about growing up in Nashville. He reminisced about walking through town as a kid, and trying to get to the State Park and other areas without using busy roads. He feels the proposed trails in the Stellar project will make this easier for residents. He also feels the street and sidewalk improvements in town will be more welcoming to tourists and residents, and will improve safety. The stairs from the sidewalk to the street in many areas used to lead to parking spots. He says since the parking spots are no longer there, they create an unsafe invitation for kids and others to walk directly into the street. He also talked about some of the beautiful sculptures planned for exhibit in town, and said the first one – a leaf sculpture – has been installed. A letter of support for the Stellar Project was passed around and signed by many of the agency representatives at the meeting.

Partnership Meeting

June 24

by Janet Kramer

A draft of the update of Vision 2020 was presented and a final update will be done by the end of June by those on the committees and any other input we can gather.

After a final report a PowerPoint presentation will be prepared for presentation to the public. From this, recommended actions and followups will happen from government and groups in the county.

Brown Countians for Quality Healthcare to Distribute Survey at Fair

Brown Countians for Quality Health Care will be distributing a health needs survey at the Brown County Fair in order to learn more about the health needs and attitudes of our residents. Chances on a drawing for a food basket will be given to participants. BCQHC will be working with IU health, the Brown County Health Department and other health providers to provide health information at the fair.

Notes from Courthouse Needs Committee Meeting

Friday, June 27

by Michael Jeffries, Courthouse Committee

An early topic of discussion was the amount of space taken up by hard copy record storage in county offices and the potential for saving and reallocating space by digitization of records. Julie Winn has talked with the various departments in the County Annex and has observed that most offices are comfortable with space allocated for personnel but keep needing more space due to hard copy records. The Records Office is

the exception in that its records are digitized, but they feel the need to maintain hard copies on site. Two members of the Needs Committee have offered to look into state requirements for record keeping and digitization possibilities.

Another topic which was discussed was the assumption that county government must continue to grow even though the county population and tax base are not growing. Factors such as inflation need to be considered but improving technologies should allow for government reduction in some areas and some workloads. Plus, what is the county's financial situation? What can it afford to construct right now? And what is the local tax payer willing to support?

Jim Shultz offered comments on the proposed courthouse project, saying that what was proposed by Bert Perdue was no more than a 12 percent "over build" and that it would not make sense to put a much smaller addition on to the current courthouse based upon the needs of the Court, the Clerk's office, Probation and the possibility of

including the Prosecutor's office in a courthouse expansion. He noted that with GIS working, Courthouse traffic is down. The possibility of keeping the current courthouse as county office space and building a smaller courthouse then currently proposed on land near Brown County Sheriff was briefly discussed, but it was thought it might still cost several million - which brings it back to what local residents would support.

Julie pointed to the fact that the current courthouse has serious needs for improvement in security and handicap upgrades and suggested that thought go into an initiative for courthouse improvements and its preservation as a historical site. Jane Huffman emphasized that the county has many places that need to be made ADA compliant that are difficult for shoppers and citizens to access.

Julie passed on the news that a consultant with expertise in historic preservation might be able to help us pull all our materials together, and serve as an expert resource. Dr. James Glass, of Historic Preservation & Heritage Consulting LLC, has agreed to help with this project. As reported in other committee news, the League of Women Voters of Brown County has been given a sum of money to pay for a consultant and will apply it to Dr. Glass's contract. He will prepare a report for our community, and will also speak on a panel at the next Community Conversation, which will take place on Thursday, August 14, at 6:30 p.m. at the Brown County Public Library.

Brown County League of Women Voters Observer Report

June/July 2014

by Pam Raider

It has been another busy season of meetings, official and non. Let's hope this is a sign that as a community we are beginning to work together.

May 20th: The first meeting I attended since the last report was a combined arts and economic development group discussing the Hwy. 46 Arts Corridor. Of the five designated arts communities in the state - three of them lie along the Highway 46 corridor: Bloomington, Nashville and Columbus. At the meeting, representatives from the three arts communities were present as were Convention and Visitors Bureaus, Louis Richie head of the Indiana Arts Commission and a state representative from the state's cultural tourism bureau. We learned that INDOT is planning on making 46 a four lane road in 2025. The group decided to contact INDOT to discuss how their plans could be modified to include art and biking before meeting again.

May 21st Commissioner's meeting:

Bids accepted from insurance companies. Discussion of employee smoking policy including e cigarettes. Band director requests fund raiser use of courthouse for new uniforms. Budget Workshop set for June 11th and 12th. Highway discussion - some roads will have to go back to gravel. Request for more hours for commissioner assistant tabled. Dean Henderson appointed to community corrections. June 18th commissioner meeting cancelled since there will not be a quorum.

May 27th Repurpose Courthouse meeting: Discussion of rental entities that might go into courthouse if it moved.

LEC: Refurbishing costs estimates and current maintenance cost figures. Other tie-ins for village square use.

Stellar Community, Town Hall June 3:

ORCA person not there. Bob Kirlin answered questions from the floor. Many people upset. We learned the town could deviate from application plan and public would be able to weigh in on each project. This is designation and does not guarantee grants which must be applied for separately. Street scape not etched in stone - part of plan is connection Gould St. to Jackson Branch and to the Post Office and connecting Jefferson to CVS. Will applying for Stellar affect taxes? Yes. There will be weekly meetings on Wednesdays at 4 pm until the deciding committee visits July 11th. Comments? Contact Bob Kirlin at 812-720-0222 or see town hall website or call town hall.

Commissioners meeting June 4:

Approved claims and revisited insurance - tabled vote until budget workshop date. Highway form must be signed by home owners or no service on roads. IT recommends insurance on computers. Engineer bids on Elkinsville Bridge accepted. Kurt Young wants to appeal parts of the fire district decision. Commissioners want to be in charge of ordinance vote to appeal and do free holders petition.

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Arts and Entertainment Commission

June 12: Working on brochure and website. Elderheart to knock out leaves to match sculpture which appear on buildings in colors based on categories. Phase 1 - shops and entertainment; Phase 2 - artists and studios. Still four more public art projects to come.

June 14 Community Conversation on Wellness Tourism: covered elsewhere in this newsletter (see page 2). **June 16 County Council Meeting:** Appropriately \$56,000 for nurse vehicle from tobacco monies.

Jim Oliver wants classification of permanent part time Deferral/ Diversion Coordinator position. Council sets dates for budget hearings for August 18-21st. Dave Critzer wants to hire consultant Dan Eggerman to help with budgets \$12,000 to \$15,000. Highway superintendent and his assistant have quit. Vote to raise mechanic's salary for interim replacement - he is leaving by end of July. County has lost over \$800,000 in last two years with budget goofs. May be out of money by end of year.

National Position on Agriculture

Follow this link to see the national League position on Agriculture established after our study last spring:

[http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/lwvus-position-federal-agriculture-policies?
utm_source=LeadersUpdate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LU20140522.](http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/lwvus-position-federal-agriculture-policies?utm_source=LeadersUpdate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LU20140522)

National League Website

Sign up for the National League website updates at <http://www.lwv.org/get-involved>

Free Summer Meals at Brown County Schools

by Robyn Rosenberg-Bowman

Free summer meals, funded by the USDA, are available to kids and teens ages 18 and younger at two summer meals sites in Brown County. Details:

- Lunch is FREE to ALL children and teens ages 18 and younger who come to a summer meals site

- Free summer meals will help families **save money** and stretch their already tight food budgets

- Food served is healthy and follows USDA nutrition guidelines

- Summer meals sites are at fun, safe places for kids and teens

- No application or proof of income needed

- Meals are prepared and sponsored by Brown County Schools Food Service Department

Lunch will be available Monday through Friday for free for kids and teens, from June 9 through July 25 (no meal service the week of July 4) at these locations:

Brown County High School Café 11:30am-1:00pm

Brown County YMCA 11:00am-11:25am

The cost of school lunches will increase for the school year 2014-2015 from \$2.50 to \$2.60.