

# The Brown County Voter

March 28, 2014

## Calendar

- Monday, March 31      Community Conversation on Courthouse  
6 pm downstairs at the Library  
(our League has a major role in this discussion)
- Monday, April 7      10 am downstairs at the Library  
**Full Membership asked for concurrence on  
Agriculture questions (see page 4)**
- Tuesday, April 8      Primary Candidate Forums (contested races only)  
7 pm Commissioners, Council & Trustees  
Billy Salmon Room, Courthouse Annex
- Thursday, April 10      Primary Candidate Forums (contested races only)  
7 pm Sheriff candidates, 8 pm Congressional candidates  
Billy Salmon Room, Courthouse Annex
- Saturday, April 12      History Day at Brown Co. High School  
Volunteer judges needed (see page 5)
- Monday, April 14      10:00 Board meeting  
Downstairs at the library  
Everyone welcome!
- Saturday, May 3      Spring Blossom Parade in Nashville  
Theme: "Faith in the Future"  
Recruiting children to march with League posters  
See inside
- Monday, May 12      6 pm Annual Meeting  
Catered Dinner  
Please mark your calendar now  
More information to follow

From the *Brown County Democrat* March 19

## **Judge rules in Fire District case**

A judge's ruling in a Brown County fire district lawsuit has resulted in the original ordinance being reinstated. Special Judge Kathleen Tighe-Coriden of Bartholomew Superior Court 2 stated that what county commissioners did in March 2011 to amend the ordinance and reduce the fire district's duties to fire prevention education was illegal.

The lawsuit was brought by Brown County League of Women Voters members Susanne Gaudin, Janet Kramer and Ruth Reichmann, and Bill Lloyd handling the case, though as individual citizens, not as League members.

"The court finds the Commissioners' unilateral actions in gutting the fire district ordinance, except for the sole purpose of conducting 'fire prevention education within the district,' was an obvious 'end-run' around the Gaudin ruling to obtain the result the commissioners intended without determining the wishes of the freeholders within their district," the ruling said.

Since the judge found that commissioners did not have authority to amend the ordinance, that means that the fire district ordinance adopted by commissioners on Sept. 4, 2007 is now in effect.

Read more about the fire district ruling in the March 26 edition of the *Brown County Democrat*. The judge's full ruling and the original 2007 fire district ordinance are available on the *Democrat* website, [www.browncountyindiana.com](http://www.browncountyindiana.com).

### **History of Fire District dispute**

#### **by Janet Kramer, League President in June 2010**

In the mid 1990s, the League of Women Voters of Brown County conducted a multi-year study on the funding and delivery of emergency services in Brown County. This study was one of many based on the mission of the League. It included public safety, including fire prevention and fire protection.

Research, invited speakers and interviews led to an understanding of the many issues involved, such as road width for the large fire truck to travel on, access width of drives and bridges to residences, turnabouts, working fire hydrants, lack of sufficiently large water pipes resulting in a lack of fire hydrants in some areas, the possibility of establishing dry hydrants, insurance issues, etc.

The fire departments were helpful with information and one fire department especially suggested that the League should look into a countywide fire district. The assumption was that if two full-time employees could be hired to work full-time with the fire departments, residents could be assured that there would be someone available around-the-clock to take emergency calls. Countywide planning and record-keeping would also make it easier to get firefighters to the site of a fire as quickly as possible.

The League came to the conclusion that indeed, a countywide fire district would be the best option for Brown County. In a public forum and a written report, the League presented its findings and encouraged decision and policy makers to consider implementation of a countywide fire protection district.

Parts of the report, such as road width and turn-arounds, have been implemented; countywide planning and hiring two full-time persons has not.

### **Commentary by Ruth Reichmann**

At this point we can only hope that the Commissioners will not once more initiate another appeal and decide instead to spend time and effort to work on sound implementation of the public safety issues. It is sad that it has taken, not only the outlay in money and time of Susanne, Janet, myself and especially Bill Lloyd. This issue has cost the taxpayers plenty for payment to Kurt Young for his handling of the lawsuit, and the obvious and major disservice to our community of the deliberate efforts to delay and dismantle all of the progress and good work the Fire Trustees and Susanne were accomplishing. It is sad that it has taken the loss of so many homes, including those of League members Pam Keffaber and Marge Cook, and the sock factory, to finally admit that we have a major water problem. Take a look at the good article by Ben Skirvin in the February 26 issue of the *Democrat*, "Running on Empty: Water availability a concern for county fire departments."

## The League of Women Voters fondly remembers Hank Swain

by Pam Raider

Hank Swain will be sorely missed by this community. In every sense of the word he was an engaged model citizen. It might surprise folks to know that he was a very active member of the League of Women Voters (yes, since the 70's men have been members too) serving on our board for many years. He was especially involved in the Vision 2010 process. The logo, which was also used for Vision 2020, was designed by his daughter, Davie. Many wonderful things came out of the Vision 2010 plan – the Y, the new library, the new jail, the community foundation and Hank was a big part of making that happen. It was Hank, Jerry Floyd and Ruth Reichmann who met with people at the Lilly Foundation about starting a Community Foundation. Against heavy odds, he helped see that through every step of the way. Having been in the building trades he was helpful in overseeing some of our newest buildings. When the Master Plan (another component of the Vision process) was nixed, it was Hank who sat with others in lengthy meetings to craft the Comprehensive Plan for Planning and Zoning guidelines. And speaking of meetings, he was a tireless and faithful attendee of the Commissioners' meetings and followed the financial situation of the county closely. He helped with the job descriptions of elected officials because he felt that some did not know what their job entailed. He also attended the Meet Your Legislators sessions and always gave a historical perspective and well thought out questions with reasonable advice – they all knew him by name as did our county officials. Hank was a member of so many groups in our community, and not just as a silent attendee, but carrying his own independent opinions and often played devil's advocate. His long history of community service was so helpful when it came time for the League to craft their questions to the candidates. He was a terrific mentor, an invaluable ally, friend to all, reminding us gently of the long view of things. So many groups in this community will miss his guiding hand and principled presence. He has given us a sterling example of the ways in which elders make an invaluable contribution. Now, if we can just live up to his example.

## League to march in Spring Blossom Parade

“Faith in the Future” is the theme for the May 3 Spring Blossom Parade in Nashville. The League of Women Voters of Brown County would like help from children of all ages, our future, to march with signs emphasizing their important role in maintaining our democracy. Adults are needed to make the signs.

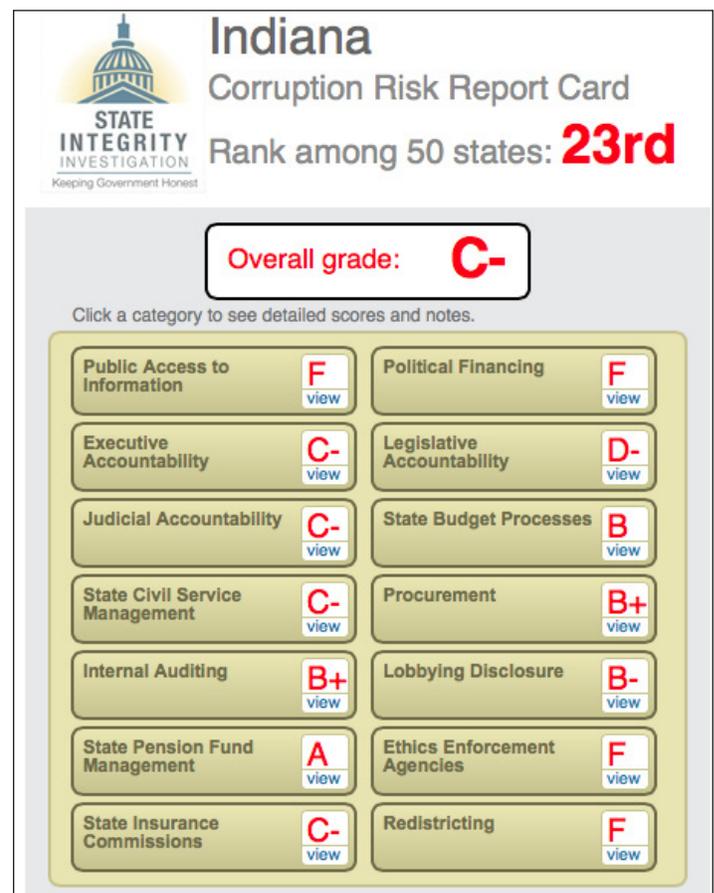
Details have not yet been arranged, but if you are interested in helping, please contact Judy East at [judithaeast@yahoo.com](mailto:judithaeast@yahoo.com).

## Indiana graded on Corruption Risk

Startling news: The Center for Public Integrity gives Indiana F's in Public Access to Information, Political Financing, Ethics Enforcement Agencies, and Redistricting. [See below] how Indiana managed to scrape out an overall grade of C- , [from] a site called Grading the Nation: How Accountable is Your State. There you will find a gray map of the United States titled Interactive: What is Your State's risk of corruption. Click on IN for the whole report card.

Have fun,

Tomi Allison (former Bloomington mayor)



# League Members needed for Brown County Fiscal Study

by Julie Winn

The League of Women Voters of Brown County decided at its 2013 annual meeting to conduct a study of the fiscal management and developmental decision-making provided by Brown County's elected officials. A committee named by the Board will investigate the Study Question, drawing on such materials as it finds useful and beginning with the job descriptions of our officials (the County Commissioners, the County Council, the Town Council, and Township Trustees and Boards). The Committee will report its findings to the membership at one or more consensus meetings, during which members will discuss as many sub-questions\* as the Committee believes necessary for a thorough review of the Study Question.

League members and other Brown Countians are now being recruited for this committee. If you would be willing to participate, please contact me, Julie Winn, at [jmbwinn@hotmail.com](mailto:jmbwinn@hotmail.com).

Some background material to consider:

Brown County, Indiana, is a rural county of about 15,000. Over 50% of land in the county is untaxed (or taxed at a symbolic rate) due to being federally- or state-owned, owned by private NGOs, or in "Classified Forest" status. Brown County does assess an income tax. The primary business driver is tourism, with little light and no heavy industry. Median household income is about \$48,000, 13% of residents are under poverty level, and over 50% of school children are on free/reduced lunch.

Over the last several years, questions have arisen about the handling by our elected officials of both fiscal and development issues. Examples include lagging behind in property tax collection, exhibiting county and county-town dysfunction in economic development, failing to include a budget request for the critical bridge fund, foregoing local legal representation in favor of an expensive Indianapolis firm, and neglecting to meet requirements in the budget approval process, resulting in the State's refusal to approve the 2014 county budget.

Study Question for the Committee: [What is Brown County's fiscal viability] OR [How is Brown County's fiscal viability advanced or hindered], based on the accountability, transparency and coordination with which the County's elected officials approach financial and developmental decision-making?

Definitions:

- Fiscal viability: the County's continued ability to meet the needs and expectations of its citizens through generating and managing the revenues necessary to do so

- Developmental decision-making: having to do with economic development and strategic planning for the county

\* Sub-questions for consensus process should not be answerable "yes or no" but rather elicit discussion. E.g., questions should begin with How, What, To What Extent, etc.

## Agriculture Update Consensus Questions

Please join fellow Leaguers Monday, April 7

As outlined in our previous newsletter, the National League has asked every local league to prioritize agricultural issues by this April. Given the short timeframe and the quantity of information, the League of Women Voters of Brown County decided to choose just one issue to study. The membership voted (after a runoff) to study issue #7, Research and Development.

It is the League way to study and discuss an issue until concurrence can be reached. To that end, **the full membership of the League of Women Voters of Brown County is invited to come to the Library the morning of Monday, April 7, at 10 am to discuss this aspect of agriculture.** Various board members have summarized the parts of the Research & Development issue so that not everyone must try to learn everything provided by the National. **Those summaries will be emailed to you separately very soon.**

If you cannot join us on April 7, we would still value your opinion. Please send it to Julie Winn, [jmbwinn@hotmail.com](mailto:jmbwinn@hotmail.com), by Sunday afternoon, April 6.

# 2014 NATIONAL HISTORY DAY IN INDIANA VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION

## Contest Locations:

**Central District**  
Indiana University-  
Purdue University  
at Indianapolis (IUPUI)

**North District**  
Saint Mary's College,  
Notre Dame

**South District**  
Brown County High School,  
Nashville

**State Contest**  
Marian University,  
Indianapolis



## Contact Information:

Amanda Aird  
Coordinator, Volunteer Services  
Eugene and Marilyn Glick  
Indiana History Center  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269  
aaaird@indianahistory.org  
(317) 234-7640

## Volunteers needed April 12 in Brown Co.

Sign up online at [Indianahistory.org/historyday](http://Indianahistory.org/historyday) starting January 20.

## Volunteer for a National History Day in Indiana Competition

The Indiana Historical Society is recruiting volunteer judges for the National History Day in Indiana district and state contests.

## What is National History Day?

This yearlong education program is dedicated to enhancing history education in elementary and secondary schools. Students in grades six through 12 explore a historical subject related to an annual theme and then use their research to create exhibits, original performances, documentaries, websites and papers. The 2014 theme is *Rights and Responsibilities*.

## What do general volunteers do?

Volunteers assist participants and contest staff throughout the day. Typical assignments include directing students and parents to rooms, assisting staff at information tables and monitoring presentation rooms.

## What do volunteer judges do?

Judges work in teams to interview students and evaluate student projects based on their research and presentation. Judges' comments provide helpful feedback to students who advance to the next level of competition as they revise and improve their entries. For students who do not advance to the next level, judges' comments are especially important as they encourage the development of students' research and presentation skills for the future. Judges are typically comprised of college or graduate students, teachers, professors, librarians, museum professionals or anyone from the history and education professional communities.

## What will be my time commitment?

For judges, the day begins at 8 a.m. with an orientation led by the event coordinator over complimentary morning snacks and coffee. Preliminary judging takes place from 9 a.m. until noon. Afterwards, a complimentary lunch is served while judges deliberate. Some categories may require a second round of judging to decide the final placement of entries. Those who do not participate in the finals round will conclude their day at approximately 1 p.m. Those who choose to participate in finals judging usually finish before 2 p.m.

## How do I volunteer?

Contact Kathryn Richardson at 812-988-2227 (office) or 812-327-7462 (cell) or Amanda Aird at [aaaird@indianahistory.org](mailto:aaaird@indianahistory.org). An application will be provided and, when received, further information will be sent to you.

## Why volunteer?

Volunteering for National History Day is a rewarding experience. By donating your time and expertise you will be enriching the lives of young people while positively reinforcing a unique and enjoyable learning experience.

## Observer Reports

by Julie Winn

### **Feb. 27: Special Commissioners Meeting on Transfer of Four Corners to Town, 10:00 am**

About a dozen attended outside of officials. All said were pro transfer of the Four Corners to the Town of Nashville, except me and one other (both of us said no opinion at this time). Terms of transfer/sale are not yet decided; need another public meeting, town council needs also to decide if they want this. Several noted need for covenants not to resell or build on this property, keep it for same purposes, not commercial (churches, not for profits). Noted that some thought it already *was* the town's property: town already provides the police patrol coverage, overall management and insurance, and maintenance is easier if town handles. Steve Gore suggested selling for \$1, but Commissioners didn't commit to that. Brenda Badger urged no playground equipment. Said hard to determine if there will be savings or not to let it go, but generally thought fees collected did not cover expenses of owning/maintaining. Buzz King (also pro, member of Town Council) noted that it was basically the Village Green, since Jefferson was once the main route into town from the north until SR135 was built in 1933 or so. Joe Wray pressed a bit on why Courthouse is not in center; King said that the town was laid out before it was county seat, and the Courthouse was put where it is because the log jail was there. Said until SR135, Van Buren ended at Gould more or less, with a horseshoe pit.

### **March 5: Commissioners Regular Meeting**

Brief meeting by usual standards (less than 90 minutes), no fireworks. Mowing contract awarded, as was a contract for GUTS (for Treasurer). Mark Shields reported that the seller whose quote on a utility vehicle had been accepted had come back and said he couldn't give both a discount and zero % financing; decided to take the zero financing. Commissioners had to reapprove combining Jackson 3, 4 for election season. IT reported Hwy and Courthouse video work done. Corrections was in the top bonus category this year (about \$20,700). Ben Philips, as President of BC Water Utility, made a presentation, with an engineer, about the need for the County to maintain three chunks of roads totaling .9 mile: Wallow Hollow, Freeman Ridge and Sunshine Ridge. They are now unmaintained and their trucks can't get to two big expensive water tanks that

service about 20% of the county. Tanks were put there years ago because they are county high points, but are becoming impassable. A lot of back and forth. Commissioners will look at scenes and have Roger Bush look as well. One speaker suggested fire protection as reason to do, but after Susanne Gaudin queried, it was clear that trucks can't draft from BCWY tanks.

Buildings and Grounds – rushed through with a “nothing new” but Susanne rose to ask about the planned Courthouse roof. Must be in compliance with historic landmark rules (Diana Biddle concurred). John Kennard said it was the same asphalt shingles as before, and that Chamblee had checked but didn't know with whom; will let us know. Thompson noted it had been a tough year on County Health Insurance. Dave Anderson provided the name of someone who could do better on price, and Dave Critser mentioned Bill Todd's upcoming presentation by Activate in Monroe County.

Dave Anderson also said he wanted to form a committee now to explore options for Brown County Ambulance service.

Joe Wray said there might be a closing on the Sock Factory Thursday. Queried about holdup, he described clouds on title regarding old mortgages. Some concern in audience about taking property without clear title to begin with.

### **March 6: Town Hall on Revitalization Plan**

(Note, attended only an hour on 2-19, had to leave but did have Ken Birkmeier ask about routing traffic right through the Courthouse area; answer was traffic flow needs.)

Came in late, as MKSK was giving an abbreviated version of same presentation as Feb. 19. Pam Raider spoke up and asked about Old School Lane impacting historic Courthouse, and was told it wouldn't impact the Courthouse on that side, although parking spaces on west side (Van Buren) might a little. Basically, the MKSK proposal for traffic flow would provide a “decision point” at Washington from the south, with a sign guiding visitors to the right there, and then promptly left on Old School Way, which would be their “through” path for finding parking. From the north, visitors would be guided to Jefferson, via a right off Gould.

Other items in the plan included better signage, islands in Van Buren at the entry to town, wider side-

walk and narrower street for Van Buren through town, and new road cuts between Post Office and Gould, and through CVS area back to Jefferson.

Discussion was most lively and negative on the traffic flow pattern. Mark Bowman raised again the Courthouse Historic District and its being on the National Register, and both Bob Kirlin and the MKSK rep said no, it's just the Courthouse itself, to which many in the audience shouted no, a district (correct!) comprising several buildings including the Courthouse (I heard a town official I don't know come up to Bowman after and say, "Gee, you're right, I looked it up online"). Others were very concerned that having folks turn at Washington was a risk to the schools. When the MKSK rep said no, they'll turn off before that on Old School, attendees pointed out that they might miss that turn, or see it backed up with traffic and either way continue right into the jr. high area. The rep said maybe that could be blocked, but a big parking lot would then be missed. Pressed, MKSK rep admitted they had not talked to the schools administration.

Kirlin intervened to stress that none of this plan is "etched in stone," nor does the town have any funding, this is long-range and aimed at getting people to stop and visit. Jeremiah Reichmann commented on parking, then stressed that the Courthouse/Pioneer Village is a big concern for a lot of people, and there's a need for a plan that focuses on that. Kirlin said that tweaks had already been made to the MKSK plan due to uncertainty over what might happen with the Courthouse (he even said, "maybe torn down," to which audience shouted no way). Pam Gould said that she for one found this an exciting conversation, that it is time for strategic planning on these issues and we need to start somewhere, recognizing that no one will be fully satisfied.

Kirlin closed things down noting that a vote by the Town Council on this plan did not mean the plan was approved as is, but that it was more an acceptance of the study so the bill could be paid. It would not mean that the study/plan would be implemented without change or even at all – but he did say that it helps to have a plan for Stellar Community, so we need to watch this carefully!

## **Brown County School Board March 6 Meeting**

*by Robyn Bowman*

The High School Guidance Department is working on adding new classes to the high school schedule: Micro and Macro Economics, Consumer Science and more....

We The People reached their \$35,000 goal. As of the school board meeting they were at \$45,000, which gives the team a little extra for a few supplies and leaves money for next year's team.

The Regional Science Fair was March 1 for 4-12 grades. Seven students from 4th, 5th, and 6th grades will be going to state competition, as well as four students from 7th & 8th grades and five students from 9th-12th on April 5 in Indianapolis.

### **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.

The Foundation is located at 91 W. Mound St. Unit 4 and the address is P.O. Box 191, Nashville 47448. This is the building at the corner of Mound and Jefferson Sts.

Support your local league with a tax deductible contribution to our education fund with a check made out to lwvin-ed. Send to PO Box 74, Nashville, IN 47448. Or, you can contribute directly to the Foundation, either to the Fund (i.e. endowment) or directly to this year's grant.