



The Brown County Voter

September 23, 2013

Calendar

- Saturday, Oct. 12 League Regional Workshops
11 am - 4 pm, Jeffersonville
See page 3 for information
To carpool to Jeffersonville, contact Judy
at judithaeast@yahoo.com
- Monday, Oct. 14 League board meeting
10 am Library
Everyone welcome
- Friday, Nov. 8 Salt Creek Trail Dedication and Health Fair
4-7 pm, Brown County YMCA
- Tuesday, Dec. 3 “Reality Store” at Brown County Jr. High
League to host voter table. Save the date to volunteer!
- Thursday, Dec. 5 IU Kelley School of Business student presentation:
Brown County Assets Invento for Heritage and
Wellness Tourism
7 pm County Annex Salmon Room
See page 2. Community invited

Brown County Voters reject Courthouse Renovation Plans **Signers of Remonstrance outnumber petitioners in support 8-1**

When Brown County voters learned last spring that the County Commissioners were planning a \$6.5 million addition and renovations to the courthouse without public discussion or an open bidding system for the architect, they rebelled. First they gathered enough signatures for a remonstrance, and after a required waiting period they collected enough signatures to prevent the commissioners from proceeding with the plan for at

least a year, during which time they should reconsider the options. In August, before the collection of signatures began, the League hosted a public discussion of concerns. It took a neutral position on the issue, as always.

The final qualified tally of votes, according to County Clerk Beth Mulrey, is 1457 for the remonstrance and 182 in favor of the original plan.

Please see REMONSTRANCE page 5)

Update on Wellness and Heritage Tourism Project

by Ruth Reichman

The Brown County Assets Inventory, which we are doing with four students of the Kelley School of Business this year, is an extension of the Health Study led last year by Judy East, which served as the basis for our position on local health. Health and Wellness go hand in hand. While "Healthcare" is mainly sickness care, "Wellness" can be seen as prevention and is a different approach to health - staying well or getting well. However, Health and Wellness are like the two sides of a coin. The one does not work without the other.

In 2011 we sponsored three community conversations on Wellness and Heritage Tourism. An outcome of these was the realization that we have many more Heritage assets, natural (our beautiful landscapes, our hills and hollers), historic (the Courthouse, Pioneer Village, T.C. Steele) and cultural (arts and artists) than we know. The consensus was that we need an Assessment of all of our Wellness Assets.

Wellness Tourism, also called destination tourism, will get visitors to stay in the area longer, to walk, hike, bike and swim, visit an art gallery, take a course in an art of their choice, relax and rejuvenate. These same assets and the wellness providers add to our quality of life and make our Brown County such a desirable place to live.

On August 28 we met our "consulting team" from the Kelley School of Business at the Brown County Library. The team members assigned to us are Ying (Jade) Chen, Amanda Corbin, Akash Manwani and Paul Quinnell, all graduate students who will get their degrees this academic year. We would very much like for everyone to meet this delightful group of young people. Our meetings with them are always open to our members and anyone else interested in the project, and we encourage you to participate by providing us names, addresses and information about specific Wellness providers. We usually meet on Friday at 1 p.m. in the Brown County Public Library downstairs.

In the first meeting we provided the students a good understanding of the operation and mission of the League of Women Voters of Brown County. It was followed by a discussion of the project and what we expected of the students. We signed a contract with

them outlining the project and setting milestones for completing different phases of the project. It is our task to provide them with the "Assets" and we handed them a lot of the materials which are readily available. It is their job do the research and do some interviews. Each of the assets needs to be written up and will go on the Be Well Brown County website, designed by Peg Lindenlaub.

At the completion of the project there will be a Community Conversation on December 5, to be held at the County Office Building, where the student team will introduce the project. For information and meeting times, contact any of the board members.

LWVIN Regional Workshops "Voter Registration & Redistricting: What's New for 2014"

Where & When:

October 12 - 11:00-3:00 EDT, Jeffersonville Township Public Library, Clarksville

October 19 - 11:00-3:00 EDT. Morton Community Center, West Lafayette

Registration required - on-line at www.lwvin.org
Deadline to register: for 10/12 workshop = 10/7; for 10/19 workshop = 10/14. Send registrations to Sandy Grant, events chair LWVIN, seffnergrant@sbcglobal.net or 1129 Mulberry St., Kokomo, IN 46901

Cost - \$20, includes lunch - payable on-line with PayPal or at door

Speakers: Tippecanoe County Clerk, Christa Coffee (Lafayette workshop) "Changes to the VRG-7 Voter Registration form"; Clark County Clerk, Barbara Bratcher (Clarksville) "Changes to VRG-7 form"; Floyd County Clerk Christina (Christy) Eurton (Clarksville) "Changes to VRG-7"; David Orentlicher, IU School of Law and former State Representative "Partisan conflict, Polarization, and Gerrymandering"; Prof. Kelsey Kaufmann, DePauw University "Indiana Local Redistricting: A Failed Mandate"; Indianapolis LWV, Karen Kay Leonard "Rethinking Redistricting" (Orentlich, Kaufmann and Leonard will be speaking at both workshops)

Registered members will receive confirmation with schedule for day and map/directions to workshop.

Observers Reports

September 2013

by Pam Raider

Much has transpired since last I reported on governmental meetings. I will try to list the meetings in order. The paper has done a good job of attending meetings and reporting on the business as well.

July 15 County Council: Many requests for reallocation of funds – shifting monies from one account to another:

- Sheriff's Department \$130,000 for 911 and employee pay costs.
- Humane Society assistance for spay/neuter program,
- Health Department needs money to move defunct clinic equipment to the Sock Factory (have received permission from commissioners to store at old Sock Factory)
- Highway Department needs money and transfer from rainy day fund to cover oversight on Bridge fund (did not get in last budget);
- \$60,000 from old Economic Development to new Redevelopment committee.
- And last but certainly not least, Area on Aging has been taken over by Thrive Alliance and in the reshuffle they did not claim their \$4,000 fuel budget for 2012 and now applies. After discussion they reauthorized this money. I have since learned that Thrive does not want to continue running the Access Van Service as it is a money loser, so we will hear more on this when the contract is up in December.

July 17 Commissioners meeting was almost entirely devoted to issues surrounding the new Van Buren Township fire department which, according to John Kennard, is hampered by circulating rumors. Contention seemed ready to break up already formed alliances; however, order was restored and people got back on board. Bids are to be submitted by the end of August. Commissioners are ready to move ahead with selling unassembled building at Sock Factory

August 7 Commissioners – Meeting got off to heated start when Donna Lutes, standing in for the auditor, took issue with the claim for Mike Thompson's personalized post-it notes ordered from Joe

Wray's company; payment tabled. State entity wants to use our county office building for training 45 counties – need permission and request upgrade on tech equipment; this passes. INDOT presents Yellowwood paving plan for commissioner's signature – they will give the new bridge they removed back to county. There were two lengthy presentations regarding use of the Sock Factory: Elderheart's Magnus Johnson who heads a veterans' public art project, and Carmel Process Solutions which designs and builds automated machinery. Mike Robertson of Mike's Dance Barn requesting outside activities – we heard negative comments from neighbors and zoning board commissioners vote down his request.

August 12 combined governmental meeting involving Council, Commissioners, School Board and Town Council: Unfortunately, another meeting was scheduled with the Chamber of Commerce which Town members attended, so there was not full participation of all entities. The biggest issue this night surrounds inability of Town Redevelopment Commission and the County Redevelopment Commission to join forces. Much of the contention has surfaced over differing plans to get the Opry off the ground. The town wanted a TIF district which both schools and county redevelopment opposed. Plan to merge redevelopment boards must wait on Town approval. The Commissioners and Council announced a plan for tax abatement to the Opry to help them get sewer or septic. Will have to pass IDEM as there are flood plain issues. Town of Nashville shares plan for new bathrooms under green next to courthouse – they have money. Plan must wait until remonstrance is over. A plea for passing ordinances to support the Master Plan was put forth by Andy Szakaly – something the League has wanted.

August 19 Council meeting: Emergency Management received a grant for emergency preparedness. Health Dept. reports clinic equipment moved and has received the \$120,000 for old clinic rebate. Discussion on Tax abatement for Opry. Sock Factory given over to Redevelopment Commission – transfer county interest and legal rights and title, although they are under Commissioners who are still responsible. The laws surrounding what redevelopment can do are less stringent, which gives more options. Sycamore Valley senior citizen center is now under Parks and

Recreation. Budget hearings are beginning and we learned our \$3 million surplus is almost gone. Since Bean Blossom sewer district is now county district, they request expanding board by two members, hoping to expand and work with Nashville to bring line up SR 135.

August 21 Commissioners: More discussion on conflict of interest policies. Commissioner Kennard takes issue with Sheriff request for reimbursing commissary fund for fans at the fair. Highway Dept. says Waglers reported they carried excess dirt which broke down Helmsburg Rd. They will repay the \$5000 cost to repair. State they believe paving Yellowwood would save on county gravel expense. Resolution to transfer the Sock Factory to Redevelopment passes. Mediation on fire district is Sept. 19 and 20. Try to clarify health insurance policy for county employees, especially part time.

September 4 Commissioners meeting -- the shortest I have attended – one half hour. Contract for Van Buren fire department is awarded at \$408,000 and 242 days building.

September 16 County Council: Solid Waste is having financial problems; awarded money. Budgets begin with Town of Nashville, library, conservancy. Judge Stewart wants hourly pay rate raised for part time professionals. Adjustment to Mike Murphy's salary to make him supervisor of maintenance approved. Appointment of John Kennard to Bean Blossom sewer board.

September 18 Commissioners: Questions arise over \$35,000 bill from attorneys Barnes and Thornberg – defer payment till research (forty hours at \$500 an hour). Cathy Paradise presents material and assistance for county to become clean community. Made choice on roof bids for County Office Building. Highway Dept. reports maintenance problems on trucks need \$216,000 to remedy. Friends of Yellowwood make a plea for commissioners to look into report and paving project. Mike Murphy appointed supervisor of maintenance. Mike Thompson now county employee, not contractual. Teresa Oldstrom appointed to Bean Blossom sewer board. Learned that county employees and school are self-insured. Expect webcasting of county meetings in October. Disagreement over whether sheriff's fair fans were campaign

material – matter to be sent to election board. Unassembled building from Sock Factory moving to county garage. Need to collect lawn mowing bids with and without Sock Factory as 5-6 people interested in buying Sock Factory. Kennard tells board he met with Brown County Community Foundation and Julie Winn from League; reads Julie's letter and seemed pleased with the collaboration idea and movement on courthouse.

We could use some help on the Observer Corps, especially with some of the other boards such as Planning and Zoning and Redevelopment. It is important to have a presence at meetings and to keep informed. And...it is actually entertaining to see government at work.

Observer Report: Partnership, August 27

by Janet Kramer

Mike Thompson reported the Van Buren Fire Station construction bid was accepted. Bob Kirlin announced the dedication of the Phase I section of the Salt Creek Trail will be on November 8. The report on the Partnership Self Assessment was the main topic and in general everyone agreed on the importance of the Partnership to the community but we can improve, mainly by better communication.

Access Brown County is in need of an administrator to take over and run it since the Thrive Alliance will no longer be doing it.

Mary Pelton

You might have heard that longtime League supporter Mary Pelton died on August 22. She was 80 years old.

Mary had a master's degree in speech and hearing therapy from Ball State University and worked in the field for thirty years in Indianapolis and Noblesville, retiring to Brown County where she became active in our community.

Although she was living in Franklin, Mary was still a member of the Brown County League of Women Voters. She will be missed.

REMONSTRANCE continued from page 1

In an effort to make sure the county takes the necessary steps to solve the undeniable needs of the courthouse (ADA compliance, security and space), the League is cooperating with the Brown County Community Foundation to work with the County Commissioners. Our president Julie Winn met with Foundation CEO Larry Pejeau and Commissioner president John Kennard. Subsequently, they sent the following letter to the editor of the *Brown County Democrat*:

The petition and remonstrance process for the proposed Courthouse renovation and extension is mathematically over, with the result overwhelmingly against proceeding with that project.

The question is what now? Anyone interested enough to sign pro or con knows that the needs of the Courthouse are real: it does not meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and there are real access problems for those with disabilities; there are gaps in security and privacy; and Courthouse tenants are in need of additional and more efficiently organized space to do their jobs for us.

As a community, we need to look at what we should do to meet these needs. And for that, we need some fact-finding. What realistic options exist? What do we have to do, sooner rather than later? What are the legal implications of this

or that plan? What are the financial costs associated with various options? Lots of ideas have been floated, and lots of rumors as well, but there is a deficit in the array of facts and data needed to make the best decision for the County.

So, this letter is a call to action. The League of Women Voters, the Brown County Community Foundation and our County elected officials all want to solve this. And we know that we are not alone. Did you carry a petition or remonstrance for signature? You care. Do you have business at the Courthouse sometimes? You care. Are you a registered voter or property owner in Brown County? You care. Do you have expertise in finance, real estate, construction/engineering/architecture, local government, planning in historical districts, the law? You sure could be useful.

We will be planning one or more events to get this fact-finding going, with the goal of using the gathered data to guide future planning to resolve Courthouse needs. Stay tuned for date and venue, and in the meantime, think about how you can help.

Julie Winn, President,
League of Women Voters of Brown County
Larry Pejeau, CEO,
Brown County Community Foundation
John Kennard, President,