



The *VOTER*



Kay Deupree photo

Janesville School Board Forum

JAC-PTA and the League of Women Voters of Janesville conducted a School Board forum for this spring election. Teresa Arrowood was the moderator for this forum in the Educational Services Center boardroom. The election will be held on Tuesday, April 2, 2013. Don't forget to vote!

Save the date...

May 21, 2013 for the Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of Janesville. The dues amount for the 2013-2014 will be set by action of the members present at the meeting. After making our payments to the state and national Leagues, we only have \$4 per member of dues left for local expenses. In this issue we have included a fundraising letter to our members and friends who receive the

newsletter.

Please consider making a donation to the League of Women Voters at this time. If you have any suggestions of individuals or businesses who could be asked for donations, please let Judy Adler know. Letters are expected to be sent out during April. If you have any ideas for other fundraising activities, please let Amy Golackson know that you are interested in serving on the fundraising committee.



Amy Golackson, photos

Janesville City Council Forum

The League of Women Voters, Forward Janesville and JATV hosted a city council forum at the Hedberg Public Library. Janet LeBrie was the moderator for this forum.

Reasons to support changes to the League of Women Voters (LWV) Janesville 1980

Housing Code Enforcement Position:

1. Reading the Purpose together with the Inspection Program, the position can be interpreted as the League of Women Voters – Janesville supports city wide inspection for all residences, rental and owner occupied.

2. Since 1998 the Janesville Housing Code ordinance has included language that it adopts the provisions for the International Property Maintenance Code (IMPC) which is quite comprehensive and specific. City Housing Ordinances can be found on the City of Janesville's website, City Ordinances, Chapter 16.08. It would appear that the goal of a comprehensive code has been met.

3. "City-wide inspection" is prescriptive and inflexible. It limits what the League can support. There may be other measures that League can support to achieve the goal of ensuring decent safe and sanitary living conditions for all tenants. For example, under the existing position we cannot support the staff recommendation that all landlords register with the city although we agree that this is a first step at speeding up the process of getting improvements when landlords live out of town or are registered as an LLC. If nothing else is done, this would help. The new position states the goal of policy and allows us to support multiple ways of achieving it.

4. The Fire Department performs systematic inspections of common space of all commercial rental properties (3 or more units) two times/year. They look for functioning smoke and CO detectors and viable fire extinguishers and anything else that would be a fire code violation or fire risk.



Current Housing Position

SUPPORT IMPROVED HOUSING CONDITIONS, ESPECIALLY THROUGH AN IMPROVED HOUSING CODE, February, 1980

Primary Purpose: The League of Women Voters of Janesville believes that the primary purpose of a housing ordinance in the City of Janesville is to ensure a minimum standard of living conditions, for the safety of both occupants and the public at large. The minimum level of acceptable living conditions for tenants shall be based on general safety and sanitation, and with fully adequate heating, light and plumbing, all in good repair; these systems must function at a capacity which is not below accepted standards for comfort and need.

Inspection Program: A city-wide systematic inspection program is considered by League members to be necessary for a healthy, vital city. Inspections should be accomplished within a reasonable and manageable time period, on a two-year cycle. The "fire zone" as established by the Janesville Fire Department, could be included in a more frequent inspection cycle, possibly coinciding with the fire inspection time period of 18 months.

Obvious violations which occur mid-cycle would receive the immediate attention necessary for the protection of the public. Inspectors should be required to respond to a complaint within a period of 1 to 10 days, with an understanding that there will be a priority given for more serious conditions elsewhere, such as in a situation of inadequate furnishing of heat, or where any immediate threat to the safety of the public or tenants occurs. Prompt response to complaints will demonstrate a degree of concern to the owners as to the immediacy of the situation, and of the intent of the inspectors to press for complete compliance.

Application: In addition to a systematic city-wide inspection, all rental properties, including single family rental homes, duplexes and multi-family housing should be inspected for code enforcement purposes prior to the sale of the property(ies). Inclusion of inspection results should be required as part of the purchase agreement. Responsibility for the correction of code violations should be established within the purchase agreement.

Inspection of private homes which will remain as such should be encouraged, possibly upon payment of a fee to cover costs of the inspection. Compliance with these findings would depend upon the recommendation, with safety of the general public always the primary consideration.

Enforcement: The League of Women Voters of Janesville recommends that enforcement proceedings demonstrate a firm interest by the City of Janesville in a property maintenance program, and that measures taken through wither the Housing Inspection Department or through Court proceedings indicated a sincere effort by the City of Janesville in enforcing a minimum standard of living conditions.

Toward this end, we suggest that the City of Janesville expand its enforcement measures beyond its current ordinances, which provide for a notice to correct violations, orders to vacate, and condemnation. We recommend that these be expanded by providing:

1. the authority to the city to make any necessary repairs where the public safety is deemed threatened, and to place a lien for repairs against the property;
2. the capability to the courts to place properties into receivership in order to return the full rental income into building repair costs and to abate any public nuisances;
3. the addition of the office of administrative hearing officer to the city's inspection department for speedier enforcement;
4. a progressive fine schedule which should reflect penalties at least equivalent to the costs of repairs, in order to impress upon the owner the seriousness of the problem and of the community concern.

We also recommend that proceedings must be of a civil nature, rather than criminal, in the interests of speedier compliance.

General Instructions for Improvement in Inspections:

The concern of the League regarding inspections is founded on the strong assumption that housing within the City of Janesville should provide the citizens with adequate facilities, and have acceptable levels of safety; and that the inspection procedure should become more responsive to these principles.

Recommendations for extensive, improved inspections also must include better reporting and monitoring of the inspections of existing housing. Reports on the progress, status, and final satisfaction of violations should be provided to the administration and to the council members on a monthly basis.

Records of the history of violations in buildings and of the ownership should be open to the public view; a system of occupancy permits to certify the adequacy of rental properties should be established; complainants should be furnished with a full report of the inspection and a periodic report of further proceedings; extensions for completion of repairs must be limited; and an appeals procedure through a citizen's board should be instituted for the further protection of both the renters and the owners, and as part of the availability of information to the public.

LWV JVL Proposed Housing Code Position 2013

Position: Support improved rental housing conditions and neighborhood stabilization in the city of Janesville, Wisconsin

Purpose:

(1) To ensure a minimum standard of living conditions, for the safety of both tenants and the public at large in the City of Janesville. The minimum level of acceptable living conditions for tenants shall be based on general safety and sanitation with adequate heating, electrical and plumbing, all in good repair; these systems must function at a capacity which is not below accepted standards for comfort and need.

(2) To promote safe and healthy neighborhoods.

To improve compliance with the Janesville Housing Code, the LWV Janesville supports:

- * Retain regular exterior inspections focused on target areas.
 - * Retain policy of re-inspection fees when seeking abatement for viable complaints. The fee should adequately cover all costs to the city so as to provide incentive for prompt compliance.
 - * Add proactive interior inspection of problem units with fees to cover city expenses.
 - * Require code inspection by any certified inspector of all rental properties at time of sale.
- Violations are to be reported to the city inspector.
- * Make available on the City of Janesville (COJ) website a clear and specific set of code requirements to ensure general safety and sanitation as well as adequate heating, electrical and plumbing systems.
 - * Create a Landlord and Tenant agreement template which delineates the rights and responsibilities of each party. The agreement should be available on the COJ website.
 - * Create a city-wide listing of all rental units by address, owner and contact information of a local responsible party.
 - * Create a "Vacant Building" list for unoccupied buildings including those in foreclosure with owner contact information and plans for securing the building.
 - * Improve the city data system so that Police and Neighborhood Services easily share data on Nuisance Ordinance calls. Landlords should be notified if a ticket is issued.

* Encourage property owners to utilize tenant screening tools to maximize good maintenance of their property.

Background:

The current City of Janesville Housing Code Enforcement includes:

* The City of Janesville (COJ) Housing Code adopts provisions of the International Property Maintenance Code (IMPC) including the 2009 update (COJ ordinances Chap. 16.08.045). The standard is “decent, safe and sanitary”.

* The Section 8 rental units must, in addition, meet HUD standards. They are inspected annually. Complaints for these units are responded to by Section 8 staff.

* Commercial rental properties (3 or more units) must provide functioning smoke and CO detectors and viable fire extinguishers in common spaces. The COJ fire department performs inspections two times per year.

* Chronic Nuisance Ordinance (9.32.02 2008) counts documented maintenance violations among the 4 enforcement actions within 12 months that require the property owner to meet with city staff to develop an abatement plan.

* Proactive exterior inspections are focused on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) target areas.

* Interior inspections for non-Section 8 rentals are only done on a complaint basis.

* COJ Neighborhood Services Dept. employs 2.5 “property maintenance inspectors.”

They responded to 1,586 complaints in 2012 with 5,356 inspections.

* When a violation is considered to put occupants in imminent danger, an order to vacate is issued.

* When a violation is less severe, the owner is sent an order to correct within a time frame.

If corrected upon re-inspection, no charge. If not corrected, a \$50 fee is charged for each re-inspection event. Last resort actions include issuing a ticket and/or the city doing the work and charging the owner (exterior violations only).

Possible specific actions:

*Amend the Nuisance Ordinance to trigger interior inspection of all units owned by that property owner if said property owner has had four verified property complaints within a 12 month period. An inspection fee sufficient to cover the cost to the city would be charged for each unit’s inspection.

*If a complaint is received for a non-listed rental unit, a fine would be imposed at such a level as to encourage all properties to be listed.

The Housing Position Review Committee consists of

Kay Deupree, Deb Fisher, Heide Keith, Nancy Stabb and Carol Herzig.

Interviews:

Prior to formulating this recommended position the Committee interviewed the following:

City of Janesville Housing Specialist Kelly Mack

City of Beloit Housing Specialist Teri Downing

A City of Beloit Code Inspector

Dale Hicks, president of Janesville Area Rental Property Association (JARPA)

Gary Fields and 2 other members of the Beloit Rental Property Association (BRPA)

Staff at ECHO,

House of Mercy homeless shelter,

YWCA transition program and various local lenders to ask what inspection requirements they have.



To contact the League, please feel free to use either of these options:

**www.lwvjvl.org or
P.O. Box 8064, Janesville, WI
53547-8064**



March 28, 2013

Dear Members and Friends,

As you know, the League of Women Voters of Janesville is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization which believes in the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We do not support or oppose candidates. We study issues. We provide information to voters.

With your help, in the past year we have:

- Registered over 120 voters, including 72 at Craig and Parker High Schools this past month.
- Provided candidates' forums for the State Assembly 44, Janesville School Board and Janesville City Council. These have been in cooperation with JATV, Forward Janesville, and the Janesville Area Council – PTA.
- Monitored the November general election in Janesville.
- Provided candidate and issue information on our website—lwvjvl.org.
- Studied issues such as climate change and global warming, the state judicial system, and local housing codes.
- Provided information on voting and registered voters at the Janesville Farmers' Market on six occasions.

Issues we are studying include:

- Housing conditions in Janesville, as well as Fair Housing and Historic Preservation
- Climate Change and sustainability

Our dues only cover a small fraction of the funds we need locally. We need your help to continue our work. Please consider a donation to the League of Women Voters of Janesville. The League of Women Voters of Janesville is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Sincerely,

Amy Golackson
President

* * * * *

Please make checks payable to the League of Women Voters of Janesville and send to:
League of Women Voters of Janesville, P.O. Box 8064, Janesville, WI 53547-8064

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____



Housing Consensus Meeting.

April 6, 2013

9:30-11:30 a. m.

at the home of Nancy Stabb

Kathy Kelly

April 3, 2013

6:00 p.m.

**Community room,
Basics Co-Op
1711 Lodge Drive,
Janesville**

Kathy will talk about experiences living alongside ordinary Afghan people in a working class neighborhood in Kabul. Afghan mothers have told her that they think they are losing their minds or becoming emotionally unstable because they cannot feed their children. Kelly will describe what she has seen and heard and also help analyze the cost of war and the price of peacemaking in Afghanistan.

In November, 2012, Kathy and two Voices activists went to Gaza, arriving just after a cease fire was signed following Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense. The Voices team visited Gazan families who lost loved ones and they documented destruction caused by the eight days of Israeli Defense Force aerial bombing.

What: UW-Rock County Art Students Celebrate Women's Contributions to Greater Rock County Community by Hosting a Version of Judy Chicago's iconic installation "The Dinner Party"

Where: UW-Rock County Campus, Commons (HS 120), Hyatt Smith Hall

When: Tuesday, April 16th, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Who: UW-Rock County Students enrolled in the "Women in Art" course.

Join Professor Danica Oudeans and her students as they honor women in the greater Rock County community. UWRC students have selected women honorees for their significant and positive impact within our community. Our dinner party was inspired by artist Judy Chicago's work entitled, The Dinner Party. Constructed over a three-year period of time, Chicago's The Dinner Party has been recognized as a quintessential collaborative artwork that honors significant contributions made by women throughout history such as Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Blackwell, and Sojourner Truth.

In the tradition of "The Dinner Party," UW-Rock County students enrolled in Professor Oudeans' "Women in Art" class have each designed and created an original place setting that symbolizes the contribu-

tion made to our community by his or her honoree. The project required students to experience the artistic process through the creative mind of an artist. During the dinner, students will present their place settings that celebrate their honoree. They will discuss the motivation and inspiration involved in the creation of their design and how it represents their honoree. All of the honorees have been invited to attend. This event is open to the public. Please join us for light appetizers while honoring these women for their contributions to our community.

If you have any questions about this event please contact UWRC Assistant Professor of Art Danica Oudeans at danica.oudeans@uwc.edu or call 608-758-6565 Ext: 715.

If interested in learning more about the inspiration artwork, Judy Chicago's The Dinner Party please go to the following web address: http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/home.php



Web addresses of National, State and Local Leagues: To check out the action go to: LWV-US <www.lwv.org> LWV-WI <www.lwvwi.org> JANESVILLE LEAGUE <www.lwvjvl.org>

Celebrate your Birthday with the League!

Remember you may still contribute to the State League with a birthday donation and half of your donation will be returned to our Janesville League.

