



## President's Message

### *Keep Up on the Issues*

By Glenda Phillips

Wow! What a wild start to summer! No - I do not mean the wild winds and rain we have had or the 100 degree heat we have endured although those have been bad enough. I mean the political climate. With bills on the floor for Health Care, Climate Change, new Supreme Court Justice, change is immanent and the League is at the forefront of it all.

Even locally issues are always challenging us, but the one to watch right now is **Rental Inspections**. As we speak, an ordinance is being drafted to have rental inspections in the City of Manhattan. Currently the city has building code that requires certain standards for housing structures. These codes are enforced by code inspectors, but only when renters complain and trigger an inspection. In addition, multiplex units are subject to fire inspection conducted by the fire department. Apartment complexes must be fitted with working fire alarms and extinguishers. This inspection is not the same thing as a rental inspection code and it doesn't trigger a code inspection, if the fire inspector sees code violations. Without mandatory "code" inspections, landlords tend to avoid making repairs. The result being that in some neighborhoods have seen degradation with many structures being downright unsafe.

Public forums have presented two main sides for rental inspections – strengthen current law and don't change current law, especially if it means fees. Consequently, the ordinance has been and will be modified for compromise.

Working toward a compromise can often be a good thing, however compromise on rental inspections that creates an ordinance with no teeth can be harmful to renters and further lower the quality of life in our community. The League's positions on Health and Safety outline some of the main reasons regulation is needed and are where we can stand on the need for rental inspections. We need 'justice for all'

including those temporarily in Manhattan (students and military personnel) and those here to stay long-term.

The City Commission will take up the two options put forth by the Rental Inspection Advisory Committee in August. We, the League of Manhattan/Riley County, will be there with input. I **encourage you to attend** as well supporting a quality of life for all living in Manhattan that is healthy, safe and comfortable.

I have included in this month's Voter several items from LWVUS that you may want to follow-up on. Items such as, Climate Change, Voting Rights and Openness in Government, with sites to read and letters to sign are there. Choose an issue, check out the background information and write to your legislator. You make the difference in our government being effective for the people.

We are still having **Lunch With League** in July. Our next one will be on July 14 at the Senior Center at noon. Our speaker will be Anne Smith from ATA Bus filling us in on current bus uses and future plans with the city. It should be very informative creating great discussion. **There will be no Lunch With League in August.**

The **Freedom of Information Act Anniversary** is July 4th, marking the 43rd anniversary of its passage. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is the landmark legislation that established our right to access government records and codified our right to know what our government is doing. The LWVUS [has created a letter to the editor template](#) to help local League chapters mark this milestone. I will be sending this letter to the editor. Others may do so as well or make up your own.

Have a celebratory and safe 4th remembering why our country is great, stay cool and see you on the 14th.

## LWV Advocacy

### ***League Urges Senate to Pass Climate Change Legislation (NEW)***

Global climate change is one of the most serious threats to the environment, health and economy of our nation and our world. The passage of America's Clean Energy and Security Act in the House means the fight for strong climate change legislation moves onto the Senate.

**To take action go to:** <http://capwiz.com/lwv/issues/alert/?alertid=13655636>

### ***LWVUS Fact Sheet on the Effects of Climate Change in the Midwest Online (NEW)***

[Click here to download](#) the pdf file of the League's newly released fact sheet describing and explaining the details of how climate change will affect the Midwest. Leagues in the Midwest should be alert to opportunities to use this information in their lobbying in favor of climate change legislation. The report is available on the LWV homepage at: [http://www.lwv.org/Content/ContentGroups/StudyTaskforces/GlobalClimateChange/CCTF\\_ImpactsMidwest.pdf](http://www.lwv.org/Content/ContentGroups/StudyTaskforces/GlobalClimateChange/CCTF_ImpactsMidwest.pdf)

### ***League Hails Supreme Court Decision to Uphold Voting Rights Act (NEW)***

"The 8-1 opinion in the case Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District Number one (NAMUDN) v. Mukasey represents a vital vindication for the voting rights of all citizens in this country," declared League President Mary G. Wilson. [Click here for the press release](#) or visit the LWV homepage at: [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) and click on "News and Events," then click on "Press Releases."

## Join Efforts with the Overseas Vote Foundation

LWVUS partner Overseas Vote Foundation (OVF) has helped give voice to tens of thousands of military and overseas voters all over the world. In partnership with individual Secretaries of State, OVF has launched customized portals on the Secretaries' websites. Click here to read about how Minnesota's collaboration with OVF led to a 282 percent increase in the number of returned ballots from overseas and military voters! State Leagues interested in learning more about initiating similar partnerships should email Allison O'Flinn at: [aoflinn@lwv.org](mailto:aoflinn@lwv.org).

## Check out Our New "Issues" Blog

In order to keep our members up-to-date about issues and concerns in our community, our chapter has opened a blog where we will be posting the *Observer Reports* in a more timely fashion.

We encourage the membership to take advantage of this new service and use it as a sounding board for ideas about and solutions for issues our community faces.

Go to: <http://lwvmanhattanks.blogspot.com/> to visit the blog. While you are there, become a "follower" so that when items are posted, you will receive a copy as an e-mail.

# Observer Reports:

## *USD 383 School Board*

**Kathy Dzewaltowski, Observer**

### **May 20, 2009**

The board had a preliminary discussion of the 2009-10 budget. Overall, the district's budget will decrease due to a significant decrease in base per pupil aid from the state.

Building committees at Amanda Arnold and Ogden Elementary Schools have been meeting and discussing schematic designs for the schools as part of the bond construction projects.

Board members discussed student fees. The board had previously approved 6-1 on first reading to keep fees the same as the previous year, but during the discussion for the second reading, the board directed administration to develop an option that would keep up with the district's rising costs. Administration developed an option that recommended a 3% increase in fees, and the board approved the option 7-0.

The board discussed whether to allow neighborhood access to the playground at the Eugene Field Head Start building, which had been requested by a citizen. At present, the playground is locked. Board members were split on the issue. Some board members thought the public should have access, as is the case with other school playgrounds. Other board members were concerned about the potential for vandalism and illegal

activities occurring after hours on the playground if it were unlocked. The board approved 4-3 to continue to keep the playground locked, with Curt Herrman, Susan Marshall, and Beth Tatarko voting "no."

### **June 3, 2009**

Board members discussed developing a request for qualifications for the "Construction Management At-Risk" approach, which has been discussed for the construction projects at MHS West Campus. Universal Construction Company, the district's program manager, will work on the details and the timeline for the requests for qualifications and bring those items to the board on June 24th.

The board approved 6-0 to contract with Mike Mayo, The Ebert Mayo Design Group, to consult with the architecture firm working on MHS West Campus. Mr. Mayo had created the document that outlined all of the district's facility needs for the bond election, and so the board felt his knowledge will be valuable for the high school project.

The board received a report on Summer School. Enrollment at the secondary level has been what was anticipated. At the elementary level, enrollment has been approximately half of what was projected, which was estimated to be due to the cost and the downturn in the economy.

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## *Riley County - Manhattan Board of Health*

**Sue Cohen, Observer**

Updating the financial situation for 2009-2020 was the main focus of the board meeting.

The loss in funding for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2009 is \$82000. Administrator Charles Murphy has had to trim staff, some of whom had been with the Health Department 20 years. "A tough thing to do."

An unexpected cut came when KDHE (Kansas Department of Health and Environment) discontinued an expected grant because Manhattan had successfully passed a no smoking ordinance and thus the grant money was to go to other places.

Other grants will begin in January that will provide support for child care. Additional grants are being written. One centers on other preventive health measures and another dealing with chronic diseases, which is a federal program.

Federal money from EPA will be minimal this year and there is very little money from the State of Kansas for Public Health. Administrator Murphy stated Kansas was either 4th or 6th from the bottom of the states in support for Public Health.

The board also acknowledged the 23 year services of Sharon Wolff who is retiring in mid-July.

## Riley County Commission - Selected Notes

**Jan Kruh, Julie Merklin, Lyndal Nyberg, Joan Strickler, Observers**

### June 1, 2009

Commissioner Kearns said the courts are anticipating cutting costs by closing one week per month January – June 2010.

The commission heard Museum Director Collins tell the history of Loyal and Mary Payne and their contributions to preserving the Goodnow House and its contents.

### June 4, 2009

Robin Cole, Pawnee Mental Health Services, reported that budget cuts are reducing the number of clients receiving care.

Mandy Chapman, Emergency Shelter, described the plight of individuals and families struggling to find homes. The shelter is now receiving ten to fifteen families a week.

Bernie Hayen, City of Manhattan Finance Director, requested an appropriation of \$45,000 to help support the animal shelter.

### June 8, 2009

The commission heard a report on the county's geographical information system. It will soon be possible to obtain color maps of neighborhoods, 36" x 36" for \$25.

Gregg Eyestone, Extension, reported that the Master Gardener Tour was very successful, with a turnout of over 300.

Public Works Director Hobson reported on county road improvements, including Tuttle Cove Road and the Marlatt/Tuttle Creek intersection.

Youth Court Coordinator Jenny Trudeau reported on the Teen Court, which hears non-violent and non-drug-related misdemeanor cases for young first offenders. A district court judge presides, and the jury comprises other teenagers.

The commission approved Museum Director Collins' request to submit an application for inclusion in the National Heritage Area, one of 41 so designated at the federal level.

Museum Archivist Linda Glasgow reported on the Kansas Historical Preservation Conference, where a major issue was the Kansas Legislature's restriction of

tax credits for preservation of historical sites. In the next session preservationists intend to lobby for removal of the new limit, which is a severe disincentive for likely contributors to such projects.

### June 11, 2009

The commission discussed the possibility of establishing a public building commission, an entity allowed by statute to issue bonds for large capital projects the cost of which is not factored into the conventional budget. The distressed economy is a deterrent, although borrowing rates are favorable.

### June 15, 2009

The commission heard presentations on a possible frisbee park and a dog park. The latter was approved for Fairmont Park.

Assistant Public Works Director reported that the Rocky Ford improvements are almost finished. The Konza Sewer project and jail expansion are under way, with other shovel-ready projects eligible for stimulus funds.

Court Clerk Becky Topliff reported that budget reductions have required shortened office hours. Moreover, the courts are short two staff members and don't have the usual temporary workers for data entry in traffic cases.

Jan Garton explained opportunities for help in weatherizing homes in Riley County. The commission suggested that this information be widely distributed and that the program be given publicity.

Appropriation requests were heard from Lori Feldkamp, Big Lakes Development Center; Pat Collins, Emergency Management, Fire District, and 911 services; Rich Vargo, County Clerk; and Jennifer Wilson, Extension.

### June 18, 2009

County Clerk Vargo presented the 2009 property valuations, telling that increases have been smaller since 2007, with only 0.4% from 2008 to 2009. The tax levy has decreased from 34.628 mills in 2002 to the current 30.03.

Pat Collins presented plans for three rural fire stations, with a training room in one. The Tatarax station will be merged with the Tuttle Cove station, and a new station will be built at the south end of Tuttle

## Riley County Commission, continued...

Cove Road.

The commission seemed to react favorably to Counselor Holeman's recommendation that a public building commission be established as an entity to handle bonding for specific capital projects without compromising the county's debt authority in financing regular expenditures such as for roads and bridges. At present, such a commission would be helpful in completing the funding of the jail's expansion.

### June 22, 2009

Commissioner McCulloh suggested that the commission consider establishing building codes for businesses in the county, particularly with the possibility of having newly established businesses related to NBAF.

Fireworks may be sold in the county July 1 - 4. Sellers must be able to identify the source of fireworks.

The commission was concerned with the impact that increased building activity might be having on Wildcat Creek, and they agreed to seek the advice of several experts.

The commission will be meeting with local legislators on June 25. Among the topics for discussion will be proposed amendments to a law that would require paving benefit districts to be responsible for generating funds to repave roads. Representative Hawk will be unable to attend.

Apparently complaints are coming from Rocky Ford area residents about young people from a nearby trailer park. They have created a path to Rocky Ford and reportedly are breaking into cars and creating problems.

County Engineer Leon Hobson discussed recommendations from the building and roads advisory committee regarding new housing developments in the county. It is suggested that developers be required to build subdivisions along existing paved roads or be required to assume responsibility for building such roads. Since requiring the builder to build the roads would most likely be cost-prohibitive, it is felt that new standards would encourage development close to existing development while discouraging spotty growth in non-developed areas.

### June 25, 2009

County attorney Barry Wilkerson said funding cutbacks for the courts are affecting the length of time prisoners spend in the Riley County jail before they can be sentenced and sent to a state prison. It is not unusual for an inmate to be held in jail for a year or more prior to sentencing. Felony cases generally involve drugs, forgeries, sexual assaults and burglaries.

His office is spending extensive time inputting data for a statewide offender tracking system. The new system will be updated daily and provide officers immediate access to information on persons with criminal records. The state's old tracking system often was a year or more out of date.

Katie Morris and John Leatherman, K-State Extension, presented a report comparing revenues and expenditures of Riley County with nine other counties. The report states that "of the 10 counties in this study, Riley County had the lowest per capita expenditures and revenues in 2007." Riley had the lowest property tax revenues per capita of the 10 and ranked below the average in other revenues, demand transfers, and sales tax. The report credits the consolidation of law enforcement for the fact that Riley spent the least of its peers on public safety. The other counties included in the report are Shawnee, Douglas, Leavenworth, Butler, Reno, Saline, Crawford, Finney, and Lyon.

### June 29, 2009

Larry Couchman, Emergency Medical Services, reported on the June 25 - 28 Country Stampede. There were totally different crowds daily, coming from many states. Medical Services worked diligently to care for the enormous crowds.

Jennifer Wilson, Riley County Extension, reported that the Riley County Fair parade will start downtown on Thursday evening, July 23, to begin the four-day event.

Police Officer Shannon Williams, reported on the Update to the Gateway Plan fireworks scheduled for July 1 - 4.



## Manhattan Urban Area Planning Board

**Barbara Withee, Observer**

**May 18, 2009**

**Members Present:** Jerry Reynard, Chairperson; Stephanie Rolley, Vice-Chair; Linda Morse; Mike Kratochvil; Nikki Miller

**Members Absent:** Bill Meredith and Mike Hill.

A request from Bayer Construction Company to reinstate and extend the effective period of approval for the approved preliminary plat of the Stonehaven Addition passed 5-0.

In the following work session Susanne Siepl-Coates, K-State professor of architecture, presented an overview of her study and findings regarding means by which walking and bicycling in the downtown might be increased.

**June 1, 2009**

**Member absent:** Nikki Miller

A public hearing was held to rezone the eastern portion of an area to the south and east of Eisenhower School being developed by Russel Weisbender, owner

of Overlay Properties, Inc. from R-3, multiple-family residential, to R-2 two-family residential. This changes the set back from the street from six feet to eight feet. Doug DeMonbrun, representative of Overlay Properties, stated that their market has been lower density housing and thus the requested change. Staff recommended approval and vote was 6-0.

A plan for a public hearing on the rezoning of the proposed 17th Street Properties Commercial Planned Unit Development from C-2 Neighborhood Shopping District, and C-5 Highway Service Commercial District to a Planned Unit Development of the property. It is located on s. 17th Street and Yuma. The site currently includes a grocery store, church, self-storage units and a dog grooming business. The Planned Use will include a 4 story hotel and a retail commercial building being planned by Seventeenth Street Properties, LLC – David Maryott, Managing Member.

Motion to table the plan to the June 15 meeting passed 6-0.

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## Note of Thanks from Debbie Nuss

### 2009 Edith Stunkel Good Government Award

Please express my appreciation to the League of Women Voters of Manhattan/Riley County for selecting me as this year's recipient of the Edith L. Stunkel Good Government Award. To be nominated was truly an honor, but to be selected was both an honor and humbling. I know there are many who were inspired by Edith's desire and commitment to engage the public in their government, and she truly believed it was theirs in which to become engaged. I have always felt fortunate to have witnessed her acting upon her commitment and to have been able learn how I too could become engaged in the process. While I could never match her wit and wisdom, I hope that, like Edith, I can in some small way be an inspiration for others to remain involved or become involved in their government. If we're not involved, we have no one but ourselves to blame when our government doesn't function as it should.

Again, my deepest appreciation to the League for the honor.

Regards,  
Debbie L. Nuss

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEWSLETTER July 2009

## League Calendar

### *Keeping up with the League*

**July 14** - 12:00 - 1:00 pm, Lunch With League, Riley County Senior Center, Levanworth and 4th Streets, **Speaker: Anne Smith, ATA Bus Executive Director**

**July 28** - 7:00 -9:00 pm, LWVMRC Board Meeting, Radina's Cafe

**No August Lunch With League**

**August 25** - 7:00 -9:00 pm, LWVMRC Board Meeting, Radina's Cafe

*❧ Special Invitation to all League Members and Friends ❧*

On **Thursday 9 July at 6:30 pm**, the Manhattan Alliance for Peace and Justice will hold a public showing of Kevin Willmott's ***Bunker Hill*** at the **Manhattan Public Library Auditorium**. MAPJ extends an invitation to the Manhattan/Riley County League members to attend this event. Prof. Willmott, a native of Junction City, will moderate the film.

***Bunker Hill*** is the story of former Wall street executive Peter Salem (James McDaniel), who leaves prison and heads for the small town of Bunker Hill, Kansas, where his ex-wife (Laura Kirk) and their children have started a new life, alongside a powerful local leader, Jim McLain (Kevin Geer). Soon after Salem arrives in town, all power is lost - there is no electricity, and cars and computers suddenly shut down. Community leaders and the town sheriff (Scott Allegrucci) are at a loss to explain. Is it the rapture? A massive terrorist attack? Aliens? Cut off from the world, the town's militant past is reawakened and forces coalesce to protect citizens from an unseen enemy, represented to some by Mr. Farook (Saeed Jaffey), an elderly Pakistani immigrant who owns the local convenience store. The town's fear leads to the creation of a posse of gunmen led by McLain's brother Delmar (Blake Robbins), resulting in torture, illegal searches and eventually, murder. ***Bunker Hill*** is a journey into the soul of America in the post 9-11 era.