President’s Column
November-December, 2013

Progress is not automatic; the world grows better because people wish that it should, and take the right steps to make it better. - Jane Addams

The Ames League of Women Voters is fast acquiring a reputation for being an activist group -- studying an issue (check) establishing a position (check), and then acting to make the position part of public policy. We’ve registered voters, and made our positions known to legislators via our Legislative Wake-ups. We have made statements to city boards and commissions.

Are you willing to give some of your time or the price of a few fancy coffees to help make some progress? We have opportunities for you to

- Influence the future of energy production in Ames and Story County,
- Recruit the next generation of Leaguers by sponsoring memberships for students, and
- Plan the League’s participation in the Ames Sesquicentennial

Please read on and let us know how you would like to be involved.

The Future of Energy Production in Ames and Story County – The City of Ames recently held two public hearings about the choices Ames is facing in planning to meet the new EPA standards on carbon emissions. (See page three for a brief summary and the statement I made at the public hearings.)

We need members to track this issue and find ways we can work with the city and county to influence long-range planning for our energy future, to include reducing waste and increasing use of

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renewables. If interested, contact me at lindamurken@gmail.com. I will arrange a meeting and help the group get started on identifying goals and a plan, consistent with LWVUS positions on energy and the environment.

**Helping Students Join the League** – One of the goals the Board has been working on is recruiting younger members. One of our League members took the initiative of paying the membership for some ISU students she recruited in the last year.

Would you be willing to sponsor a student? (A student membership is $30 for July-June; $15 for Jan-June.) If so, please contact one of our Membership Co-Chairs Barbara Brodie dbbrodie@msn.com, 232-0817 or Nancy Halvorson mnhalvors@msn.com, 233-3219. They will place your name on a list and will contact you when we need a sponsor.

If you are recruiting a student and would like to offer that person a sponsored membership, you can either sponsor her or him yourself by sending your check to Treasurer Karen Shimp with that person’s application, or contact Nancy or Barbara to see if they have a sponsor available.

**Participating in the Ames Sesquicentennial** – What an opportunity to showcase the value of the League of Women Voters of Ames - past, present and future! We need a small group of members who like to have fun to get the ball rolling. If interested, please contact me at lindamurken@gmail.com. I will put volunteers in touch with each other and help organize the first meeting.

Here’s a link to an article that might help with inspiration:


Help us continue our development as a League that not only studies and establishes positions, but acts on them as well! Pick an action that suits your time and talents, and pitch in!

- Linda

**MORE WEBSITE PROGRESS**

Have you logged on the the Ames League website recently? Please DO try it out. You will find some helpful new features and a great new look. You will also find some glitches and some places where content is needed, but we're making progress every day, thanks to the Herculean efforts of website administrator Jim Noland and our tech consultant, Tim Gossett.

Be sure to look at the blog posts, and make comments, too. (Don't expect them to appear right away: our chief website administrator has to actually approve their posting. This is to prevent malicious or irrelevant posts by anonymous members of the public from marring the site.)

Things are nearly all in place for you to sign in as members and access pages and information not available to the public. More information on that by the time of the next general meeting.

*Note from the editor:* Be patient when your computer is loading the website: mine takes a long while for the pictures to appear. In fact, sometimes I just close it and start over, and they appear right away.

“**When you put your hand to the plow, you can't put it down until you get to the end of the row.**”

-- Alice Paul
Ames Electric Utility Proposals

Information from the City’s Website:

The Electric Utility Operations Review and Advisory Board (EUORAB) recently hosted two public forums regarding future power production in Ames. Changes to the electric industry and proposed federal regulations have caused the City of Ames to reassess future electric production methods.

The City of Ames has been studying electric generating and power supply options to meet the community’s future needs. Under consideration are current, pending, and anticipated environmental rules, as well as increased availability and reduced pricing of natural gas.

Based on the results of the study, the two most viable options are to continue to burn coal in the Ames Power Plant or to convert the boilers to burn natural gas. Both options would include using RDF as a supplemental fuel source. Ames Electric Services staff will detail these two options at the public forum, and EUORAB members will gather public comments.

Summary of Information given at October 28 and 30 Forums:

The proposed changes are because of new EPA rules (adopted and proposed) plus new supplies and cheaper prices of natural gas. The City has hired a consulting firm to make recommendations.

Currently, about half of the energy Ames consumes is generated at the Arnold O. Chatland power plant. An additional 16% of energy is purchased from a wind farm, with the remainder off the grid.

Ames is exploring three options: retirement of base-load units (most costly), retrofit and run on coal or change to natural gas. The consultant’s recommendation is to convert to natural gas. (City Council has now voted to do that.) We would continue to have the capability to continue to burn refuse-derived fuel (RDF); however, the RDF capability will go down by about 13%. We need to look at ways to reduce the amount of material going into the waste stream.

The new guidelines must be met by April 2016.

Statement given by President of the League of Women Voters of Ames at public hearings regarding the city-owned electric utility on October 28 and 29, 2013

The League of Women Voters of Ames was a strong supporter of the development of the city-owned utility that became known as the Arnold O. Chatland Resource Recovery Plant. This plant was the first in the nation to utilize the technology of refuse-derived fuel, or RDF. However, the majority of the electricity, as we know, is generated from coal.

In the more than three decades since this plant was built, much has been learned about greenhouse gases and their effect on our environment. We are encouraged that the City is considering a move away from coal, which is a major contributor to greenhouse gas admissions and climate change. In addition, current methods of extracting coal from mountains, such as blasting, contribute to runoff and water pollution.

The League of Women Voters of the United States’ position on Energy calls for

- use of a variety of energy sources, with emphasis on conserving energy and using energy-efficient technologies;
- predominant reliance on renewable resources; and (Continued on page four)
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• action by appropriate levels of government to encourage the use of renewable resources and energy conservation.

In addition, the League of Women Voters of the United States’ position on Water Resources calls for:

✓ programs and policies that . . . address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies;
✓ stringent controls to protect the quality of current and potential drinking-water supplies . . .

Natural gas is certainly cleaner than coal, but is still a non-renewable resource. It is a more abundant resource now, primarily due to the technology called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. However, concerns have been raised about pollution of groundwater through the technology used in fracking.

This proposed plan does not chart a path for the City to make a transition to renewable resources. Perhaps it was not the intention to do so. But here in Iowa, with 25-30% of our electricity currently being generated by wind, we can all see the tremendous potential of wind energy. A combination of renewable resources, including solar and geothermal, could provide even more of our energy needs.

A few days ago on the News Hour, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said “When we build a power plant, we expect it to be around for 70 years. Why aren’t we addressing that issue today and making sure we’re building a clean energy future? And, at the same time, we have to look at the power plants that are generating electricity today. We need to look at the technologies available to them. We need to make sure that we work with states to get as clean a mix as we can today and lower carbon pollution moving forward.”

The recommendations in this report deal with the issue of today only. We need goals and deadlines to make the changes that are necessary to move forward in combating air and water pollution and climate change. It is hoped that the primarily one-source solutions being recommended here do not constrain us in moving forward.

We’re Not Giving Up!

During program planning for this year, one chosen local topic was “Victim Services in Story County.” However, when the call went out for Leaguers who would be interested in participating in the study, too few people signed up to make a viable study group.

Perhaps this title sounds too vague? The study would explore services and supports available to victims of violence, both domestic and stranger.

Maybe we just don’t want to believe that this problem exists in our community, or that we just don’t want to deal with ‘the bad stuff’? That doesn’t really sound like an LWV response! So, think about your potential service on such a committee.

The proposal will be proffered again at the next planning meeting, in January.

“Everybody counts in applying democracy. And there will never be a true democracy until every responsible and law-abiding adult in it, without regard to race, sex, color or creed has his or her own inalienable and unpurchasable voice in government.”

--Carrie Chapman Catt
Meet Board Member Mary Sand
Mary and her husband, Von Kaster, have lived in Ames since the 1970’s. They raised three children in Ames and are enjoying their grandchildren. They have been actively involved with the Ames chapter of Amnesty International for over 30 years. Mary joined the League in 2012 after repeated, gentle coaxing by Jan Beran. “Thank you, Jan! The League of Women Voters gives me another channel for my interest in justice issues and the opportunity to work with some really smart, devoted, and energetic folks.”

November General Meeting
7 p.m. Thursday, November 21, Northminster Presbyterian Church

Topic: Housing Issues in Story County: the Surprising and Uncomfortable Facts

Speakers:

Vic Moss, long-time director of the Ames Emergency Residence Project,

Trish Stauble, Board Member, Story County Community Housing Corporation

Stay after to visit with the speakers and your fellow Leaguers.

Meeting of the Ames League Agriculture Study group

left to right: Angie Carter, Jan and Neal Flora, Jane Halliburton, Barb Brodie, Jeannette Bohnenkamp, George Beran, Jackie Runyan, Jean Prestemon. Not pictured: Etha Hutchcroft and Jan Beran.

photo submitted by Jan Beran.
Keep an eye on democracy—be part of the Observer Corps.

The Observer Corps needs YOU, either regularly, or once or twice a month, or as an occasional substitute, to sit in on one of these meetings: Story County Board of Supervisors; Ames School Board, or Ames City Council.

League observers cannot participate in the meetings they are observing. Contact Nancy Marks for more information: nancy.marks@me.com, 515-233-6953