



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

**BULLETIN**

Volume 38, Issue 5  
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P.O. Box 10133, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0133  
<http://www.lwvmcva.org>

Breakfast with

**Montgomery County Board of Supervisors  
and  
F. Craig Meadows, new County Administrator**

Tuesday, March 30, 7 a.m.

Holiday Inn University, Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg

Cost: \$10. (League is subsidizing the cost for members and friends)

Because this event is so close, make reservations immediately with Mary Houska, email to [mfdh@aol.com](mailto:mfdh@aol.com) or call 552-2717. Send check, made out to LVWMC, to her at 2301 Spring Hollow Lane, Blacksburg



Annette Perkins  
District A



Doug Marrs  
District B



Gary Creed  
District C



James D. Politis  
District D



William (Bill) H.  
Brown  
District E



Mary Biggs  
District F



John A. Muffo  
District G

Candidate Forum

**Christiansburg Town Council and Christiansburg Mayor**

Thursday, April 15, 7 to 9 p.m.

Montgomery County Government Building, Supervisors' Chambers, Christiansburg

Moderator: Carl McDaniels, Blacksburg. (Only League members from outside the voting jurisdiction will help with the forum to insure impartiality.)

***Candidates for three seats***

Dan R. Canada  
R. Cord Hall  
Steve H. Huppert  
Bradford J. "Brad" Stipes\*  
H. Earnest Wade\*

***Candidates for Mayor***

Richard G. Ballengee\*  
Margaret H. "Meghan" Dorsett

*\*Incumbent*

**First Tuesday Lunch  
April 6**

Join your League friends for lunch, noon, at Bull and Bones restaurant, First and Main Shopping Center. Talk about hot public policy issues, League activities, or ourselves.

## *To Contact the League*

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[dfalleno1@gmail.com](mailto:dfalleno1@gmail.com)

## *Radford City Candidate Forums*

# Mayor and Council, Thursday, April 8; School Board, Thursday, April 15

The League is a co-sponsor of two candidate forums in Radford that will be run as League forums. Janet Hahn is handling our share of this responsibility, with help from other experienced League members.

The forum for candidates for Mayor and Radford City Council will take place Thursday, April 8, 7 to 9 p.m., at the Radford High School auditorium. The forum for candidates for the Radford School Board will take place Thursday, April 15, 7 – 9 p.m., also at the Radford High School auditorium.

### *President's Message from Mary Houska*

## Handbooks Sent To 'most' Members

Thanks to Mary Holliman and Virginia Tech intern, Alexandria Pirillo, the LWV MC Member Handbooks have been printed and most have been mailed to our members. They were mailed with the book, *Virginia Women & The Vote 1909 – 2009* by Bernice Colvard, a history of the Equal Suffrage League and The League of Women Voters of Virginia.

Unfortunately, because our membership is growing, we ran out of copies of the book so a few of you have not received the mailing yet. Olga has put more copies of the book in the mail, so, with some luck, all of our members will have the Handbook within a week.

## Nominating Committee Report

These are the nominations made by the Nominating Committee. Additional nominations for these positions may be made by members at the Annual Meeting. The positions with an asterisk need to be elected by the membership at the May, 2010,

President 2009 – 2011: Mary Houska

1<sup>st</sup> Vice Presidents (Program) 2009 – 2011: Karen Cronin and B. Amy Mauldon

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President (Voter Service)\* 2010 – 2012: Nancy Warren

Secretary\* 2010 – 2012: Janet Hahn

Treasurer 2009 – 2011: B. June Schmidt

Action Co-Chairs 2009 – 2011: Carol Lindstrom and Judy Snoke

Membership\* 2010 – 2012: Betty Williams

Publicity Co-Chairs 2009 – 2011: Tacy Newell-Foutz and David Scheim

Webmaster\* 2010 – 2011: Carol Lindstrom

Bulletin Editor\* 2010 – 2011: Mary Ann Johnson

Finance Chair\* 2010 – 2011: Harriett Cooper

Facts for Voters Chair\* 2010 – 2011: Darlene Allen

Nominating Committee Chair\* 2010 – 2011: Beverly Fleming

Nominating Committee Members (off Board)\* 2010 – 2011: Jane Sprague and Joan Zajac

2009 – 2010 Nominating Committee: Off Board: Beverly Fleming, Chair, Jane Sprague and Joan Zajac; On Board: Barbara Boyd and Amy Mauldon, Mary Houska (advisory)

Bulletin sponsor: Education Programs & Services LLC, Wayne "Dempsey" Worner (540) 552-8807

# Learn your rights – and use them

*Carol Lindstrom*

*Lindstrom, of Christiansburg, won the Virginia Coalition for Open Government's 2009 Laurence E. Richardson award for individual citizen contributions to open government.*

This article appeared in the Roanoke Times, Sunday, March 14, 2010.

<http://www.roanoke.com/editorials/commentary/wb/239671>

Today marks the beginning of Sunshine Week, a celebration of open government, the importance of public information to a lively and active democracy, and the role of the Freedom of Information Act in guaranteeing citizens' access to government documents.

While an annual celebration and recognition of progress is important, it should also be a time to recognize that there is still a long way to go before governments learn to function in the open. Sunshine Week is only one week of the 52 weeks each year in which freedom of information and public participation must be exercised in order to keep them healthy.

In 2008, I began exercising my own open-government muscles in Christiansburg when I had questions about a developer's request to locate a townhouse development in the core area of the Cambria historic district.

After having problems finding information on past conditional-use requests and basic town documents, I requested copies of the town code, the charter, the comprehensive plan and the minutes and agendas from town council and the planning commission. I was interested in how the town had handled such requests in the past and whether the requests were in line with the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance.

As I looked into FOIA and learned more about open government and public information, I decided to post all of the information I received on line. The town had charged me \$1,200 for the documents, and I thought I would share freely, even if the town would not. At the time, comprehensive plans and town and county codes were posted on most of the surrounding jurisdictions' Web sites, but not on Christiansburg's.

Now, nearly two years later, I'm still waiting for some of the documents I requested. The collection of papers I received from the town included multiple copies of some documents but left gaps between others. Since I started this adventure, the town has launched a new Web site, and some of the missing documents are now available there.

Prior to starting myvaresources.com, I had never built a Web site, never used a scanner and, to be honest, rarely had paid attention to or been involved in local government. Sure, I paid attention to national races, but

local government hadn't really been on my radar screen. I doubt my experience was all that much different than most people's.

As I read through the town materials, though, I started blogging and further researching the issues I found.

In July 2008, I began audio recording both the planning commission and town council meetings and posting them on my Web site. I realized, as I attended meetings, that many people couldn't attend because of conflicting work hours, the inability to physically make it to the meetings or a reluctance to come out to a meeting at night.

In response to a number of blog readers and older friends who said they wished they could see who was speaking, I started video recording in January 2009.

I knew nothing about audio or video recordings when I started, but as with the Web site, I learned. Now, in 2010, I track some state information as well.

Despite occasional bouts of exhaustion, a symptom of lupus, I have missed very few meetings in the past two years. While I may not be able to do this forever, I feel even more strongly now than when I started that citizens should, for the health of our democracy, have full access to public documents, whether at the local, state or federal level.

Who knows where I'll go from here, but a moment of curiosity two years ago has grown into a passion for open government and a firm belief that we all need to pay more attention. Democracy and the efficacy of government is, after all, ultimately our responsibility.

Every citizen of Virginia has the right to access public documents. Unfortunately, FOIA often falls victim to partisan politics. As changes in elected officials occur, you can count on new limits or expansions in FOIA to develop as well. It is important to make sure FOIA remains a viable tool for citizens and the media if people are to be kept informed and have an open and responsive government.

Local newspapers like this one, the Virginia Coalition for Open Government and the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council are great watchdogs over our FOIA rights, but each of us individually can help. Learn about your rights under FOIA and use them.

Bulletin sponsor: Phyllis Albritton, Wells Fargo Advisors - (540) 552-6222

Bulletin sponsor: Companion Animal Clinic (540) 552-6800

LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA  
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LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

## 2010 - League 90th Anniversary

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### Calendar

March 24 11:30 a.m.	Great Decisions, Mary Fessler Community Room, Public Library in Blacksburg
March 25, 7 p.m.	Take Back the Night, rally on the Virginia Tech Drill Field in front of the Chapel
March 30 7 a.m.	Breakfast with the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, Holiday Inn University, Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg.
April 7 11:30 a.m.	Great Decisions, Mary Fessler Community Room, Public Library in Blacksburg
April 6 noon	First Tuesday Lunch, Bull and Bones restaurant, First and Main Shopping Center, South Main Street, Blacksburg
April 8 7 p.m.	Radford City Candidate Forum for Mayor and City Council, Radford High School auditorium
April 15 7 p.m.	Candidate Forum for Christiansburg Mayor and Town Council, County Government Center, Christiansburg
April 15 7 p.m.	Radford City Candidate Forum for School Board, Radford High School auditorium
May 10, 7 p.m.	Annual Meeting

### JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TODAY

Become a member of the League of Women Voters. The annual membership fee is \$40 for new members (half year dues from January 1 to May 31 are \$20). This payment includes local, state, and national membership dues. Members receive The National Voter, The Virginia Voter, and The Montgomery County Bulletin. Annual dues for renewing LWVMC members are \$45. Mail to: Betty Williams, Membership Chair, 607 Progress St., Blacksburg, VA 24060, or call 552-2357, or email Mary Houska at mfdh@aol.com