



Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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President's Message



Welcome to the recently-elected board of directors for 2018-19 of our Santa Cruz County League of Women Voters. I will continue as president and Dottie Fry and Sue Becker will continue as first vice president and second vice president/voter service co-chairs; we will be joined by two new officers, Marilyn McCusker, secretary, and Geri McGillicuddy, treasurer. Also elected to the board were Pam Newbury, editor of the Santa Cruz VOTER newsletter, Lydia Nogales Parker, membership chair, and Stephanie Harlan, program chair, who will serve as directors.

Our fifty-third Annual Meeting was very successful, with the keynote speaker, Carlos Palacios, Santa Cruz County Administrative Officer, providing some personal history and insights, as well as covering the topic Vision Santa Cruz County-A Strategic Plan. Thank you to all who contributed to this terrific start to our coming year.

—Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

Calendar

Tuesday, July 10, 2018
10 a.m.—noon
LWVSCC Board Meeting
Santa Cruz County Bank
720 Front Street, Santa Cruz

Right: Incoming and outgoing board members at our June annual meeting. Left to right: Nancy Litvak, Dottie Fry, Sue Becker, Barbara Lewis, Karen Smith, Lydia Nogales Parker, Jan Karwin, Stephanie Harlan (seated), Marilyn McCusker, and Pam Newbury.



Membership Report

It's that time of the year again! If you haven't already done so, it's time to [renew your annual membership](#) in our local League of Women Voters. To make renewal even easier, this year you can renew and pay online via our website [lwvsc.org/membership](#) (we do have to charge a small convenience fee to recover costs, but you come out ahead saving postage and time).

If you wish to make an additional donation to our League's general fund [lwvsc.org/donate](#) (not tax-deductible), you can do that online as well. Tax deductible donations must still be made by separate check made out to LWV Education Fund and mailed to our post office box: P.O. Box 1745, Capitola, CA 95010. Find more info on tax-deductible donations to the League's education fund here [lwvsc.org/donate](#).

Membership rates remain the same this year, with the exception of reduced student dues of \$10 per year. To encourage participation of younger members, our state and national Leagues have waived annual per-member payments for students. Consider giving a membership as a gift to a high school or college graduate! Continue the legacy of involved membership in the League. Join our many members who have parents (possibly grandparents) as League members!

—*Lydia Nogales Parker*
Membership Chair

Voter Service Report

We had a busy May before the June 5 primary election with voter registration events at Garfield Park Village and the Patagonia store in Santa Cruz. We also made Pros and Cons presentations on the state ballot measures at Dominican Oaks and La Posada retirement facilities. Over 400 Easy Voter Guides in English and Spanish were distributed throughout the county before the primary.

Coming up in July and August are three voter registration event dates:

1. July 4 Celebrations: Watsonville, City Plaza Park, 1:00pm–5:00pm; Scotts Valley, Skypark, 3:00pm–8:00pm
2. August 4—Strawberry Festival: Watsonville, City Park Plaza, 10:00am–8:00pm
3. August 7—National Night Out: Watsonville, locations to be determined, 5:00pm–9:00pm; Capitola, Jade St. Park, 5:00pm–7:00pm

National Night Out is an annual community-building event sponsored by local law enforcement to promote community-police relationships. It's a family event with activity booths and a free BBQ. Last year I went to the Jade St. Park site, sponsored by the Capitola Police Department, and had a fun time talking with the neighbors and registering voters. I even had a free BBQ dinner grilled by the local police!

Also, mark your calendar for National Voter Registration Day on September 25. We will again be at Starbucks with five locations county-wide. Look for more details on locations and times in the next VOTER newsletter.

If you are interested in volunteering to help with voter registration at any of the above events, contact Dottie Fry at 831-688-9234 (email: fryfrydl@comcast.net) or Sue Becker at 831-462-4160 (email: suebecker108@sbcglobal.net).

—*Dottie Fry, Voter Service Co-Chair*



Sue Becker and Eve Roberson register voters at Patagonia in Santa Cruz on May 15.

Rowing in the Same Direction: *Focusing Community Wisdom to Guide a Vision*

An overview of Santa Cruz County's first-ever strategic planning process

At the LWVSCC annual meeting in June, Santa Cruz County Administrative Officer (CAO) Carlos Palacios spoke about Vision Santa Cruz County, the county's first-ever strategic planning process to establish a defined vision and mission for county government. Starting out on the CAO job in June 2017, Palacios wanted to hear directly from the community about their priorities and goals. After a year of community outreach, on June 5, 2018, Palacios presented [the final draft](#) to the county Board of Supervisors.

Palacios spent more than two decades as city manager of Watsonville before moving to the County to become Assistant CAO in 2015. His experience in Watsonville laid the groundwork for his plans for the county. Palacios arrived in Watsonville right after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Downtown Watsonville was completely devastated; key economic pillars, such as Ford's department store, were gone in an instant, and 30% of the city's housing was uninhabitable.

Adding to Watsonville's economic distress was the loss of its food processing industry. Once considered the frozen food capital of the world, much of that industry was lost in the early 1980s to mid-1990s to overseas competition. Five thousand local jobs disappeared, a serious concern for a city of 55,000 and 20,000 jobs. Those workers, many of whom were Teamsters with full-time jobs earning \$18 to \$19 per hour with benefits and vacations, were unemployed.

"You had all these people unemployed, then the earthquake hit and we lose all of downtown, lose one-third of the housing stock. And that's when I came to Watsonville and became city manager," said Palacios.

Palacios began to talk to people about what the city should be doing. "I've always believed there's a lot of wisdom in the community. I remember people being so discouraged, ... they couldn't see a way out," Palacios said. "I realized

that we had to mobilize the city government and the community to get on the same page with the same goals. ... If we focused our efforts and we had everybody rowing in the same direction, we could achieve a lot. So, we started a strategic planning effort in the city."

The first thing on everybody's mind was the need for more jobs. Unemployment had soared from 11 percent to 26 percent, and the city had to rebuild downtown to create a new economic center. Their six-year strategic plan laid out a primary goal of creating jobs through economic development. The plan included an operations plan with specific projects tied to a two-year budget.



CAO Carlos Palacios addresses the League.

While they had some success using redevelopment resources to attract new businesses, such as a manufacturing facility for Fox Shox (motocross shock absorbers), the city found that many employers wouldn't come because of workforce education needs. At the time, only half of Watsonville's working-age adults had a high school diploma. Realizing that educational

attainment was key to economic development, Watsonville took an unusual step: for many years the city put all their redevelopment money into partnerships with Cabrillo College and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District.

Palacios spoke to John Hurd, then Cabrillo College's president, and offered to pay for a satellite campus in downtown Watsonville if Cabrillo would build it. It was an offer Hurd couldn't refuse. Now, about 1,000 students attend college at Cabrillo's Watsonville campus.

A tougher nut to crack was to build a third high school in the city. With two very overcrowded high schools, the need was obvious. However, even with full funding from the state, no site could be agreed on: no one wanted a high school in their neighborhood. Finally, a site was picked that brought no objections from neighbors, mainly because there weren't any. The site, located on the other side of Highway 1 from most of Watsonville, had one major drawback: it was located in the California Coastal Zone and would have to clear many environmental hurdles. The city used over a quarter of a million dollars from its general fund to hire planners to help the project get through environmental review and get approval from the Coastal Commission. Finally, after a year of attending Coastal Commission meetings, the high school was approved.

Watsonville's efforts to improve educational achievement have attracted many new businesses, and the city's unemployment rate is now under 10 percent, even in the agricultural community.

Palacios emphasized the importance of focusing on long-term goals based on community input and support. When everybody understands how a project fits into the plan and why they are doing it, otherwise controversial actions, such as using general-fund money for environmental planners, can receive the support needed to address them. In this way, many objectives were achieved, including a new city hall, a new library, and a water recycling plant that keeps over 2,000 acres of agricultural land in production.

With his experience in planning, Palacios approached the position of County Administrative Officer by asking folks all over the county what they thought the biggest issues were.

"It was the strangest thing that ever happened to me, because I've done that before in my prior jobs and there's never been agreement," Palacios said, "But here in this county, there was one issue that everybody agreed was absolutely the number one problem we have to face. Everyone I talked to, all over the county, from south county all the way to north county."

"What was the issue?" Palacios asked the audience. The audience unanimously answered: "Housing."

Everybody from conservatives to progressives, from manufacturing to tourism, from retail to the public sector, all agreed that we're in a crisis: we have to do something about housing, Palacios said.

Knowing that there was consensus about the issues facing the county, Palacios sought to hear from the community so that the Board of Supervisors could hear their voice. Vision Santa Cruz County was born. It has now been adopted by the Board of Supervisors as the county's final strategic plan (download a copy at www.santacruzcounty.us/sp).

Through focus groups in each supervisor's district, outreach at venues such as farmers' markets and parent meetings, and online surveys where over 2500 responded, Palacios and his staff developed the strategic plan guided by a vision, mission, and values. Overarching goals were set in six focus areas: comprehensive health and safety, attainable housing, reliable transportation, sustainable environment, dynamic economy, and county operational excellence.

Over the next year, Palacios will work to develop an operations plan with a set of specific goals for the next six years, set out in three two-year increments. A two-year budget will be tied to each operations plan.

Palacios encouraged a hopeful outlook about the county's ability to solve its more challenging issues, citing the county's achievements in juvenile justice. He pointed out how the population of SCC's Juvenile Hall today is half what it was 30 years ago, because we've learned to provide counseling, job training, and education to get kids out of the cycle and reduce the recidivism rate (for an in-depth look at this issue and many of the other topics addressed in the strategic plan, see the

sidebar to link to articles and videos from past issues of the VOTER).

In tackling the homeless issue, Palacios expressed confidence that, in the next ten years we can make a huge difference in reducing homelessness and increasing affordable housing. The homeless situation in California is worse than in the rest of the nation because we haven't been building housing units; with no new housing, low-income and more affordable housing units have been converted to higher rent units. The plan emphasizes development of affordable housing through partnering, accessing new funding, lowering barriers to housing solutions, and increasing and diversifying housing options. Reducing homelessness by expanding services for those affected by mental illness and substance use disorders is another key element (see sidebar for links to articles on affordable housing, homelessness, and funding for mental health). Palacios also mentioned ongoing discussions with the faith community about the possibility of opening their parking lots (with appropriate monitoring of issues and concerns) to who are living in their vehicles.

Goals for promoting a safe, healthy community are based on access to basic support and social services, increased public safety, and increasing services for those with mental health and addiction disorders. Palacios traced some of our current problems in this area to Reagan-era cuts in services for those populations. The lack of adequate services has led to our jails being used as mental health hospitals. We are receiving new resources through Medi-Cal and federal programs for behavioral health issues. Local justice also includes transformative opportunities that respect victims and reduce recidivism. (See sidebar for links to articles on local public safety issues, health care funding, and addiction issues.)

Reliable transportation goals range from improving regional and community mobility through improving infrastructure to growing alternative transportation and enhancing public transportation. (See sidebar for an article on transportation in the county.)

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Learn More with the League

Many of the issues of concern for our county addressed by the strategic plan have been the subject of meetings sponsored by our local League. You can read articles reporting on these meetings in past issues of the Santa Cruz VOTER newsletter (past VOTER issues from 2009 to present can be accessed from the newsletter page of our website lwvsc.org/voter), and in some cases watch videos of the event through links on our "Videos" page lwvsc.org/videos.

Count on the League to keep you informed.

Here's a list of some relevant articles on topics related to general plan goals.

Juvenile Justice Forum Report: [December 2017](#), page 5

Homeless issues: [April 2014](#) page 3

Affordable housing: [April 2016](#) page 3

Transportation: [January 2017](#), page 3

Public safety: [October 2013](#), page 3

Healthcare: Affordable Care Act [October 2012](#), page 3

Climate change Sea Level Rise with Gary Griggs and Michael Orbach: [February 2016](#) page 3

Graceful Retreat with Ross Clark: [April 2017](#), page 5

Water Learning to live with the water we get: [May 2015](#), page 4

Keeping water flowing in Soquel Creek WD: [July 2014](#), page 3

Substance Use Disorders

Report on the opioid epidemic and Narcan kits: [November 2017](#), page 3

Report on recovering from substance use disorders: [May 2017](#), page 3

Five-part report on our May, 2015 Substance Use Disorders Forum featuring County Sheriff James Hart, Rod Libbey and Jessica Stone of Janus; and Vanessa de la Cruz, M.D., and Bill Manov, Ph.D., of the county health services department.

Part 1: [August 2015](#), page 4

Part 2: [September 2015](#), page 3

Part 3: [October 2015](#), page 5

Part 4: [December 2015](#), page 5

Part 5: [March 2016](#), page 5

An education about SUD prevention and treatment: [October 2014](#), page 4

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to men and women of voting age who are U.S. citizens. Others are welcome to join the League as associate members.

Join online at lwvsc.org/membership or send your check payable to League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County or LWVSCC with this form to LWVSCC, Box 1745, Capitola, CA 95010-1745.

\$65 Individual annual membership
 \$100.00 Two members in a household
 \$10.00 Student membership
 Contribution \$ _____

Checks made out to LWVSCC are not tax deductible.

To make a tax-deductible donation, write a separate check to LWV Education Fund.
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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Strategic Plan

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The plan's sustainable environment goals encompass access to outdoor experiences, protecting and restoring resources, supporting clean air and water and renewable energy, and increasing resilience to climate change impacts such as sea level rise. (See sidebar for articles on climate change, sea level rise, and water.)

A dynamic economy means creating a quality workforce, strengthening small businesses, stimulating community vitality, and supporting educational opportunities. County operational excellence includes providing efficient, effective services, embracing innovation and improvement, and maintaining county assets in support of community goals.

"There's no magic," stated Palacios, "[Through] working hard at it, working thoughtfully at it, and working smart, we can achieve an amazing number of things."

—Pam Newbury, *VOTER Editor*

To view a [video of this complete talk](#), go to the lwvsc.org "[Videos](#)" page.

Property Tax Reform Update

The effort to collect signatures to qualify the California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act for the 2020 ballot has come to a successful conclusion. Leagues statewide have collected almost 12,000 signatures, exceeding our original goal of 10,000. Our local League has collected 1,187 of those. We are proud to say that we are one of a handful of Leagues in the state that have gathered over 1000 signatures, a special achievement considering we are one of the smaller Leagues in the state. Many thanks to all those who participated in the effort: you are all superstars!

With the conclusion of signature gathering, we'll soon be moving on to educate the public about the need for this act that will close the corporate property tax loophole and bring \$11 billion annually back to California communities. We will be facing off against big-money interests who will certainly fight to prevent its passage. Educating voters is what the League does best, so in 2019 we will begin gearing up to get information out about this measure. Look for more information about how you can help with this in future issues of the VOTER.

For more information about the California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act, go to evolve-ca.org.