

the VOTER

JUNE 2020
Volume 52, Issue 2



INSIDE

Orientation Reminder	2	Board Mtg. Minutes	5-6
Upcoming Events	2	Observer Reports	7-10
Vote411 in Primary	3	League Historian	10
Dues Reminder	4	Immigration Story	11
Social Media/The Voter	4	Book Club Link	11

Co-Presidents' Messages

"Sometimes a breakdown can be the beginning of a kind of breakthrough, a way of living in advance through a trauma that prepares you for a future of radical transformation."

—Cherrie Moraga (Born 1952 in California; Chicana feminist, activist poet, playwright, essayist, and memoirist; founder of La Red Xicana Indigena)

We may be feeling like we are living a "breakdown" with the pandemic that has no clear-cut ending. We can learn from Moraga to consider it a breakthrough that may prepare us to make fundamental and positive changes in our lives. We can do that together in the League as well. Our recent unit meeting conversations about justice, equity, diversity, (JEDI) support such systemic changes.



Eileen VanWie

At the unit meeting there was discussion about how the "culture" (communication, social norms, customs, patterns, behaviors, and values gained through social learning) of the League may not feel welcoming to diverse populations. Ideas shared that may help us be more inviting to diverse people (age, ethnicity, and volunteer skills) include continuing to talk honestly about diversity and inclusion, examining our own individual biases, learning more about multiculturalism and cultural competence, collaborating with the Children's Reading Alliance, engaging with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and inviting high school and/or college students to teach us about social media. With our next JEDI conversation, we may talk about how we can connect the \$1,000 diversity fund with significant actions.

The LWVSNM Education Committee has been providing leadership to the State League Action

June's Meeting Features Creator of Borderlands & Ethnic Studies Program

The **Monday, June 8** meeting of the LWVSNM features Dr. Dulcinea Lara who grew up in Berino. She is currently an Associate Professor in the Criminal Justice Department at New Mexico State University. Prior to that, she was an assistant professor in the university's History Department for three years. She earned her doctorate in Ethnic Studies at the University of California at Berkeley in 2006.



Dulcinea Lara

Dr. Lara is also the creator of the Borderlands and Ethnic Studies Program which attracts students from a variety of majors. Dulcinea will share with League members information about the program and will give insight into the Yazzie/Martinez lawsuit and court findings; she will also provide us with a brief history of education in New Mexico.

Watch for an email that invites you to the general meeting and **log on by 3:50 pm on June 8. The meeting begins at 4:00 p.m.**

Committee, advocating for continued court oversight of the Yazzie/Martinez compliance of the constitutional right of all New Mexico students to a "sufficient education." The advocacy also addresses significant investment of funds to achieve the outcomes expected from the court findings to support students who are the most vulnerable. Changing major systems takes time and with the pandemic, the inequities are glaring. More evidence is needed to show that the outcomes cited by the Court have been met for all students in our public schools.

—continued next page

Co-Presidents' Messages (cont.)

Be watching for op-ed articles about the subject in New Mexico newspapers. The State Action Committee has also invited the LWVSNM Education Committee to be an informal State Education Committee, with members from the three other State Leagues. Hopefully, this will provide resources to support strong advocacy for NM education.

If you have a computer with speakers and Internet service and haven't participated in a League Zoom meeting yet, please give it a try. I'd be happy to work with you to get it set up. We could also try to get you included through a phone line. It's not like being in the same room, but these are good substitutes. Please let me know how I may support your participation in League activities.



It is the LWVSNM's turn to host the LWV New Mexico State Convention on Sat., April 24, 2021. It's not too early to begin thinking of ideas to make this event special and memorable for those attending, hopefully in person, but maybe via Zoom.

—With warm regards,
Eileen VanWie



Dear League Members,

I hope you are all healthy and persevering under the stay-at-home restrictions. In addition to absentee voting for the second time in my life, I've learned to order stamps and assorted other products for home delivery.

I want to extend special thanks to Bob Burn who recently delivered to me the Treasurer's files along with LWV flags and banners and to Sadie Valverde for taking over the Treasurer's position (and letting me deliver the files to her).



Also, many thanks to Dale Yeo for steering us through the VOTE411 process and organizing a meeting with the Las Cruces Bulletin to plan for a printed Voters' Guide in the fall.

—Kathy Brook

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 2020

June 6: **New Member Orientation**, 10am, Zoom, email [Maryellen Kebbell](mailto:Maryellen.Kebbel@gmail.com) if you plan to attend virtually so a link can be sent to you.

June 8: **Regular Monthly Meeting 4pm, Zoom, with Dr. Dulcinea Lara regarding Education**

June 15: **LWVSNM Board meeting**, 2pm, Zoom

JULY 2020

No Meetings

AUGUST 2020

August 8: **General Meeting, Saturday**, via Zoom, 10-11:30am

August 15: **Board Workshop, Sat.**, Zoom, 9:30am-12:00pm

Orientation Reminder

An Orientation Meeting for new League members will be held Saturday, June 6, 2020 from 10:00-11:30 am via ZOOM. The meeting is open to all members who want to know about the many volunteer opportunities in our organization. Please register with Maryellen Kebbel - maryellen.kebbel@gmail.com or call 575-528-9891. We will send you info prior to the meeting regarding ZOOM conferencing.

2020/21 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO BOARD:

Eileen VanWie & Kathy Brook – Co-Presidents
OPEN – Vice President

Bonnie Votaw – Secretary

Sadie Valverde – Treasurer

Kim Sorensen – Immediate Past President

Maryellen Kebbel & Laura Harper – Membership Directors

Erika Graf-Webster – Youth Engagement Director

Dale Yeo, Helen Zagona & Lizz Taylor – Voter Services Directors

Jo Galván Nash – Public Relations Director

Sharon Thomas (chair) & Judith LaPointe – Nominating Committee

P.O. Box 15142 • Las Cruces, NM 88004

575.524.VOTE (8683)

www.lwvsnm.org

We're hearing from the Doña Ana County Clerk's Office that absentee ballots are continuing to flow into the Elections Bureau. Our League, LWVNM, the Doña Ana County Clerk and the New Mexico Secretary of State were among those who encouraged voters to avoid the six-feet-apart lines and instead, vote absentee.

The news release sent in May by the LWV NM was localized by LWVSNM and re-sent to newspapers, radio and television in southern New Mexico. That release, in part, reads ...



Vote411, the League of Women Voters Online Voter Guide, is Live

For the first time, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) is providing a free and easy to use online Primary Election Voters Guide. The guide, Vote411.org, covers the whole country.

"Early voting for the New Mexico Primary Election began on May 5 and the Vote411 site is a good resource for voters to find a variety of information ranging from precinct locations to a list of candidates," said Dale Yeo, Director of the Voter Services Committee of the League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico (LWVSNM).

"Due to the pandemic, voting via absentee ballot is encouraged by the Doña Ana County Clerk and the League of Women Voters," Yeo said.

Applications for an absentee ballot were sent earlier this month ... [and] according to officials, ballots must be turned in by 7 pm on June 2.

In addition to absentee voting information, the Vote411 site provides candidate responses to several questions sent to local candidates in contested races by the LWVSNM.

"The League has been active in providing voters with information about candidates and issues for 100 years, believing that we empower voters and support democracy through these activities," said Kathy Brook, co-president of the LWVSNM. "The responses by candidates to questions from the League are unedited."

After entering your address, the Vote411 website shows the applicable local candidates for that voter and it also has candidates from the Presidential race on down. The online voters' guide lists the candidates side-by-side so that voters can compare the answers for those who responded.

"Candidates can update their information throughout the election process," Yeo added.

LWVSNM will not print paper copies of the Voters' Guide for the Primary Election, but "the Vote411 website is very comprehensive and is definitely worth reviewing," Yeo said. "The local League will print the guide for the November general election, and use Vote411 for it, as well."

For information about the Vote411 guide, contact Yeo at y.dale43@gmail.com. For additional information about the Primary Election, contact the DAC Bureau of Elections website at www.donaanacounty.org/elections/elections-info, or the Secretary of State voter information portal at www.sos.state.nm.us/voting-and-elections/voter-information/.

If you decided to vote early at the election polls or you're going to vote on Election Day, June 2, you can verify where to vote by clicking here. There is a list of all voting locations on the Bureau of Elections website. And, you can also read about pro-visual voting.

Get Out The Vote

League members can help with the 11th-hour push to get people to the polls. Social media is important, so anyone who utilizes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others, should post a simple message reminding everyone to VOTE, June 2, in the NM Primary Election. Polls are open 7am-7pm on election day.

Calling your friends and neighbors with a reminder or giving them a ride to the polls can also help with the voting outcome.

Look on the LWVSNM website for guidelines that were sent from LWVUS regarding state and local League debates. It's posted online under "Resources"

Dues Can Be Paid Online or Through Mail

It is now time to renew your League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico Membership. Renewals are \$65.00 for the first household member and \$32.50 for the second household member. Students are free but must enter the school they attend on the membership form.

There are two ways to renew. **First**, you can renew online at www.lwvsnm.org and follow the directions under “Members” link. (Hover your mouse over “Members” and then click on “Join”.) **Second**, you can renew via U.S. mail; send your current contact info and check to LWVSNM, P.O. Box 15142, Las Cruces, NM 88004. Full details are in our [May VOTER newsletter](#). You can always email me at Maryellen.kebbel@gmail.com, or Laura Harper at hikinggrrl@hotmail.com. There will be an online New Member Orientation on Sat., June 6. Contact either Maryellen or Laura if you are interested in learning how to become more involved with the league as we move toward an exciting Presidential election year.



Maryellen
Kebbel

Regards, Maryellen Kebbel

Next Steps for Social Media

As you may know, we have been looking for a volunteer to coordinate our use of social media with the goal of increasing our visibility especially to a more diverse audience. Lacking a volunteer with expertise, I have been stumbling my way toward activating the LWVSNM Instagram account. If you already have your own Instagram account, please consider following us on lwvsnm and “liking” our posts. This will be a step forward in creating a social media presence.

In looking at what other Leagues are doing I found that LWVNM is using Twitter so you might be interested in following them as well as @VOTE411, providing voter information throughout the country, and @FairMexico, focusing on redistricting in NM.

—Kathy Brook, Co-President

SAVE THE DATE

General Meetings on Saturdays

Saturday, Aug. 8, 2020

10-11:30 am

Tentatively via Zoom

The VOTER Needs Your Input!

This publication — The Voter — turned 52 years old in May and we’re proud of that milestone! Recently, the LWV Board has been discussing how to keep *The Voter* fresh while fulfilling the interests and needs of our members.



Jo Galván Nash

When LWSNM members were surveyed last year, they indicated that the newsletter is widely read. But, one thing the survey forgot to include was a question about the monthly Observer Reports. These reports are meeting summaries of the City Council, County Commission, LCPS School Board, South Central Solid Waste Authority Board, Housing Authority and others.

While it’s important that LWVSNM maintains a presence in front of these organizations, we want to know from our members:

1. **How often do you read the Observer Reports?**
2. **What do you like about the Reports?**
3. **What would you like to change about the Reports, if anything?**
4. **Would you prefer the Reports to be shorter/more concise or longer/more in-depth?**

Your input is greatly appreciated! Please send me an email (jogalvan.nash@gmail.com) and give me your four answers. (Your name will not be included when the Board reviews the compilation of answers.)

We’re always interested in knowing about *any changes* you would like to see in the newsletter, or what you want to *keep* in the monthly publication. Maintaining communication is key to networking, particularly during the pandemic. Thanks!

—Jo Galván Nash, PR Director

PRESENT: Eileen VanWie and Kathy Brook, Co-Presidents; Sadie Valverde, Treasurer; Bonnie Votaw, Secretary; Jo Nash, PR; Maryellen Kebbel, Membership; Lizz Taylor, Dale Yeo and Helen Zagona, Voter Services

Eileen VanWie welcomed Zoom participants; Kathy Brook called the meeting to order, 2:03 p.m.

- Board developed a protocol for Conflict of Interest and initiated it: On the first meeting of the year, each Board Member will place on record with the secretary a signed document specifying any conflict of interest or the lack thereof related to the business of LWVSNM; at subsequent meetings each Board member will appraise the agenda and identify orally any conflict of interest or the lack thereof, and consequently abstain from decisions on topics where conflict exists.
- Jo moved and Bonnie seconded the motion to change the agenda to include discussion of the purpose and format of the Voter and to move the item back for discussion with the three position descriptions. Motion passed.
- Minutes of April 2 and 18, 2020, were approved.
- Treasurer's information is being transferred to Sadie Valverde and will be available in June; the May VOTER contained the most recent report.
- Because of LWVSNM's status as a 501(c) 3, a system is required to manage reporting related to lobbying expenditures and activities. Board members will need to clearly distinguish lobbying from advocacy activities.
- The annual financial review of records needs to be done. Sadie will find a member or two to assist in the review. She will be an ex-officio member of the Committee.
- Review Annual Meeting – Directions to Board: (a) Kathy will do a per member cost analysis; (b) two small unit meetings on Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) are scheduled; information from them will be brought for further planning at the next Board meeting; (c) advocating legislative approval for vote-by-mail is important; (d) addressing workforce groups at NM Workforce Solutions will be discussed later in the year.
- Position Descriptions for Treasurer, Public Relations and Historian were reviewed; revisions and approval to take place at next meeting for Treasurer and Public Relations. The description for the Historian volunteer position was approved. The Voter is part of the Public Relations position. Ideas about the purpose included: giving transparency of the League's activities and informing elected officials about our actions. The Voter needs to be shortened to about eight pages. Observer reports need to be short and provide information that applies to the League's priorities. The book group can provide information about the books being read for the next two months and leave out the long book list. The Co-Presidents are providing "flash news" to members, which can cut down on content in the Voter. Board minutes could be provided as a link on the website.
- Historian volunteer, Mina Kelley, was approved for the position.
- Volunteers are still needed: Observer Corps Coordinator, Social Media Coordinator, and Development Committee Chair
- Eileen announced that the LWVNM Convention – Saturday, April 24, 2021, will be hosted by the LWVSNM and would be in Las Cruces, assuming it occurs physically.
- Protocols for communication and responsibilities need to be developed further. The Treasurer is the main person to go to the post office box (15142) weekly. Management of information technology services is a challenging topic because the WeAreIT contracted service statement is not specific and understandable.

—continued next page

LWVSNM Board Minutes • DRAFT (cont.)

LWVSNM has not yet fully codified responsibility and reporting information. This is true also of recent transitions in membership payment, social media, PayPal. Part of the transitions being confronted relate to the new fiscal year and new officers, but part is related to adaptations LWVSNM is making with technology, tax-free status, and attempts to use social media to broaden communication and membership. It seems appropriate for the Vice President (which we do not have) to keep a record of our records. Bonnie will draft a plan.

- Voter Services reported that candidate information for contested offices in the Primary Election June 2 is posted on Vote411.org and the updated Who's Who is posted on the LWVSNM website.
- Public Relations discussed Vote411 progress as local announcement; regionally adapted copy is being distributed to newspapers in local communities in the southern part of the state.
- There were no questions or comments about Education Committee written report sent out before the Board meeting.
- The programs listed below were discussed and confirmed. Ideas for the Board Workshop were: strategic planning, setting priorities, actions to accomplish, program planning, diversity, and how we work together. The idea of having an "outside" facilitator received different opinions. An idea for a September meeting was to have a school representative present how the district is dealing with online learning for students and adapting education due to the pandemic.
- Membership Committee reported payments sent to mailbox; discussion of PayPal communications
- SUMMARY: Several topics related to newly identified needs for recordkeeping and legal responsibilities. LWVSNM needs to establish protocols for items that previously have been fairly informal.

Next Meeting Dates:

June 6 - New Member Orientation, 10:00 am, Zoom

June 8 – General Meeting, 4:00 PM, Zoom, Education Dr. Dulcinea Lara

June 15 – Board Meeting, 2:00-4:00 pm, Zoom

July – No meetings

August 8 – General Meeting, Saturday, 10:00-11:30

August 15 - Board Workshop, Saturday, 9:30-12:00

August 17 – Board Meeting, 2:00-4:00 p.m. Zoom

Adjournment

4:34 pm

- Minutes submitted by Bonnie Votaw

THE BOARD IS SCHEDULED TO VOTE ON THE MINUTES AT THE JUNE BOARD MEETING



SOUTH CENTRAL SOLID WASTE AUTHORITY • Board Meeting

April 16, 2020 • 9am via GoToMeeting

Observer: Johnnie R.Aldrich

A quorum was present for this first regular quarterly meeting of the SCSWA Board in 2020.

Since the chairmanship of the Board changes annually, rotating between City Council and County Commission members, the selection of this year's leaders topped the agenda. County Commissioner Lynn Ellins will serve as chair and City Councilor Gabriel Vasquez as Vice-Chair.

Authority Director Patrick Peck reported that springtime home- and yard-cleanup activities even before the state declaration of health orders on March 23 meant heavy public use of all solid waste facilities during the quarter. Then, in compliance with COVID-19 requirements, public access had to be curtailed so that essential businesses could be efficiently served by the rotating workforce. The administrative workload has been heavy during the quarter, with the offices receiving over 300 calls per day in the early stages of the shutdown. "Essential businesses" requiring access to the facilities had to make application and receive a letter of approval for facility use. Over 300 of these were issued.

In the early days of the COVID-19 closure, illegal dumping revived and was widespread. However, this practice has slowed again in past weeks. Dumpsters at schools and unused office buildings still are accessible to the public.

A Board member reported receiving calls about glass recycling and reasons for halting it. Director Peck stated that research has shown that glass retains virus contamination for at least five days. The collected glass can be processed for public use only once weekly. Furthermore, the very slowness of the process of sorting glass by color into the proper collection bins results in reduced traffic flow and too many users at the facility during the process. Customers using those facilities are asked just to hold glass items until the Authority is back to "business as usual."

Estimated "financial impact" engendered by COVID-19 preventive measures: \$10,000 weekly. In further business (detailed in a packet of 200+ pages for Board members), the budget for 2021, which was formed and approved long before COVID-19 expenditures, was accepted — with the understanding that "pandemic costs will mean that considerable adjustments" will be needed. The 5% hike in collection charges, scheduled to go into effect on July 1, may or may not be implemented, according to Director Peck.

Meeting Adjourned: 10:40 a.m.

Las Cruces City Council • Special Meeting

April 24, 2020 • Observer: Kathy Brook

Extension of the mayor's emergency proclamation to May 8, 2020 was approved unanimously.

Electronic Public Comments - Based on the Open Meetings Act, the Attorney General has indicated that the public should be given access to electronic meetings. This resolution was intended as a first step in adding public participation. Email comments will be reviewed by the mayor, who will decide which comments should be read during the meeting. Comments are included in the meeting minutes and must comply with city manager policy on social media.

Habitat for Humanity Project - Since the Council recently approved emergency assistance for Habitat, there had been a request for more information. Support is provided to families based on assessments of need, ability to pay and willingness to contribute sweat equity or work at ReStore. Habitat holds its own mortgages and is currently providing mortgage relief during the pandemic.



OBSERVER REPORTS

Las Cruces City Council Work Session

April 27, 2020

Observer: Kathy Brook

Topics included the building inspection process and the Las Cruces energy transition. The latter topic included a presentation by city sustainability officer Lisa Laroque. The goal of the plan is to create a resilient, equitable, thriving community involving movement away from fossil fuel and large central generators to zero greenhouse gasses, a mix of central and local generation and storage. Strategies were described for transportation, buildings, renewable energy, and waste with the largest potential impacts coming from electric vehicles, low- and moderate-income solar adoption, and development of active transportation (walking, biking). Those who are interested in the details can find the slide presentation embedded in the video presentation of the meeting. There is also a PDF of the city's Climate Action Plan attached to the agenda.

Las Cruces City Council Special Work Session

May 8, 2020 • Observer: Kathy Brook

Primary Election Update - County Clerk Amanda López Askin and Deputy Clerk Lindsey Bachman provided an overview of plans for the primary election, especially the in-person voting process. There was considerable discussion about the use of the City Hall lobby as a polling place and whether masks should be required of all voters.

Other topics were the proposed opening of city parks on a phased basis and a possible requirement for masks to be worn on city property.

Las Cruces City Council Special Meeting

May 15, 2020 • Observer: Kathy Brook

COVID-19 – Discussion took place with Dawn Sanchez, Dr. Landen, and David Morgan of the Health Department (DOH). At this point the transmission rate in Doña Ana County was 1.17 (above the 1.15 rate for the state) as a result of the situation in the southern portion of the county. The state's focus has been on the northwest part of the state and that situation seems to be improving. Doña Ana County, however, is continuing to increase. DOH has been assisting with testing at the ICE facility and the meat plant, but the prison is doing its own testing. Questions were raised about the prospects for getting faster test results and better contact tracing.

Dr. Landen had received the plan for opening city parks.

Las Cruces City Council Regular Meeting

May 18, 2020 • Observer: Kathy Brook

Approved Resolutions - Action plan amendments for CDBG-Coronavirus funding from the federal government in the amount of \$560,525 (allocated to entities including Mesilla Valley Casa, Jardin de los Niños, La Casa, and Community of Hope substantially for housing assistance); adoption of the municipal budget for FY 2020-2021, totaling \$414.1 million (up 0.9% from the current year); six-year capital improvement program; proposed budget adjustments for FY 2019-2020, involving no new programs or policy initiatives; acceptance of three new grants (Parks and Recreation, Quality of Life, and Police) with amendments to the current year budget; authorization of issuance and sale of revenue bonds related to energy efficiency and utility improvements.

—continued next page



OBSERVER REPORTS

Councilor comments dealt with misinformation about the pandemic restrictions contained in emails to councilors, interest in hiring people to conduct contact tracing, reduction of the population at the detention center.

Las Cruces City Council Special Meeting

May 18, 2020 • Observer: Kathy Brook

Extension of Emergency Proclamation originally issued on March 15, 2020 was approved unanimously with one councilor absent.

Las Cruces Board of Education (BOE) • Regular Meeting

May 19, 2020 • 6pm, Zoom

Observer: Cathy Burn

Superintendent Karen Trujillo and all board members were present.

Care Act Funds (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act) - Input will be needed on how best to spend the money, such as technology equipment, etc.

Summer Classes for K-5+ - The summer classes for K-5+ will not take place. The money will be used for getting the school buildings ready for next school year. There will be a Re-entry Task Force to make plans for the fall opening.

Meals Served - During the last ten weeks while schools have been closed, 601,484 meals have been served, 60,000 per week and 13,200 a day. On May 27, summer meal participation will begin.

US Department of Agriculture - The US Department of Agriculture has provided \$97,000,000 to New Mexico for additional benefits to students for food. All elementary and middle school students are provided free meals. High school students may apply.

Changes in Alternative Education - The Mesilla Valley Learning Academy has been meeting in portable units; they are moving to the CrossRoads building on Lohman. The CrossRoads Program, for high school students who are suspended from their regular home schools, will be moving to Rio Grande Preparatory Institute in Mesilla.

Dual-Credit Programs – The number of students enrolling in dual-credit classes is going down. (In dual-credit, high school students can take college classes at NMSU/DACC while still enrolled in high school.) The funding from DACC will be cut and students in previous years could choose electives; recently, they have had to choose courses in a pathway which has led to fewer students selecting this option.

South Central Solid Waste Authority Special Meeting

May 21, 2020, 9:00 a.m., via GoToMeeting livestream

Observer: Johnnie R. Aldrich

Chair, Lynn Ellins; Quorum Present

This meeting was called primarily because of the need to authorize three financial transactions before preparation of the year-end fiscal report before the next regular quarterly meeting.

—continued next page



OBSERVER REPORTS

After the opening formalities, Director Patrick Peck reported that on June 1, current restrictions will be lifted so that all collection sites will be open to the public. Work at the Corralitos Landfill, including a major 14-acre addition to the site, continues, with one major goal being the reduction of methane emissions from this primary dumping ground. Only essential workers have been on duty during the weeks of restricted activity, but those workers have moved no less than 32,000 tons of “material,” much of it from the Sonoma Ranch collection site.

The three financial resolutions involved the disposal of worn out, obsolete, or surplus equipment, a required budget adjustment, and correction of a clerical error. All were approved with minimal discussion.

In response to a question from Chair Ellins, Director Peck reported that the search for additional office and equipment parking space is ongoing. The expected purchase of an ideal property last fall has been delayed by a lawsuit in progress regarding the former owner.

Several conversations were happening at once just before adjournment, but one person suggested the possibility of amending the Authority bylaws so that these livestream meetings could continue until a COVID-19 vaccine has been developed and distributed. Others made sounds of assent.

Las Cruces City Council • Special Meeting

May 22, 2020

Observer: Kathy Brook

Joint Mayoral Meeting – The meeting of Mayors of Sunland Park and Anthony, NM, and with Doña Ana County Commissioner Manny Sanchez, was organized to address councilors’ concerns about coordination across the county in getting resources to address the pandemic – including testing capacity and local processing. Problems in Anthony include lack of evening testing, lack of transportation to testing facilities, interactions of Doña Ana County residents with people from El Paso and Chihuahua. An outcome of the discussion was the plan to write a joint letter to Governor Lujan Grisham expressing the concerns of the Doña Ana County representatives.

LC Economic Recovery Ad Hoc Board - A resolution creating this board was approved with the goal of seeking applicants (from inside and outside the city) within the next week. The purpose of the group is to make recommendations concerning the gradual reopening of the Las Cruces economy.

Mina Kelley to Serve as Historian

Thanks to Mina Kelley for volunteering to be the LWVSNM Historian. She will review, archive, and update historical data of the LWVSNM (formerly the LWV of Greater Las Cruces), making sure that it gets placed in the NMSU Archives and Special Collections said Co-President Eileen VanWie. Mina has the background to be a good historian for the League.

“I have been a voracious reader of historical fiction, as well as other genre and nonfiction, all of my life,” Mina said. “For several years, I was also a document control specialist for a medical device manufacturer.”

Mina has a BA degree in English that concentrated on technical writing. At this time, she is semi-retired from her job as an insurance agent, giving her more time to devote to helping with LWVSNM functions.



Mina Kelley

The following article is one in a series, sponsored by the LWV Southern New Mexico, on individuals who accompanied asylum seekers in shelters in the Las Cruces area.

Sharing Spanish in the Showers

January/February 2020

By Pauline Hovey

At 89 years old and 5'1", LaJune Smith exuded grandmotherly kindness and comfort to the dozens of asylum seekers she guided to showers at Peace Lutheran Church every Tuesday. Yet despite her petite frame, most men who walked through the door at the hospitality site where she volunteered were smaller and thinner. Their faces exhausted, shy, apprehensive. Never did they convey anything that made her fearful.

"I felt so happy to be part of this," LaJune says of her 16 months accompanying refugees vetted by ICE. Often, her "shift" didn't end until 10:30 p.m., since taking guests to the showers was the last thing to be done, yet LaJune felt "elated" to be there. "All along I felt I was helping my neighbor and that we are all so much more alike than separate."

She'd been concerned about not knowing Spanish, but eventually learned enough to be touched by their stories. Like the woman who said LaJune's face saddened her because it reminded her of a neighbor she'd never see again. The woman's family had saved for eight years so she and her son could travel to them in the U.S. Now he would not be forced to join a gang.

A retired schoolteacher, LaJune was first exposed to migrant children during her early years in Gadsden where migrants came to pick lettuce. She'd teach the children for only six months until the families had to move on to pick produce in California.

"I always had a strong sense of social justice," says LaJune, who eagerly shared her experiences with friends outside New Mexico. "I wanted them to know that this is the reality of the people coming to our border, not what they were seeing on the news."

Now that asylum seekers are being sent to Mexico, she describes going through "withdrawal," as she and fellow volunteers miss these encounters. Despite volunteering in many capacities through the years, LaJune says nothing ever affected her like this experience.

*—Pauline Hovey, Las Cruces resident and writer,
accompanied refugees at temporary shelters.*

**THE BOOK CLUB LIST IS NOW POSTED ON THE LWVSNM WEBSITE UNDER
"RESOURCES" – IT WILL BE UPDATED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.
[CLICK THIS LINK TO SEE THE LATEST BOOK LIST.](#)**