



APRIL 2010

Congratulations to All Newly Elected And Re-Elected Officials!

April 22 League Meeting at the Lodge Des Peres

Upcoming League Meetings

- Thursday, April 22, Membership Meeting, 7:30 pm, Lodge Des Peres
- Thursday, April 29, Newly Elected Officials Seminar, 4:30 pm, Sheraton Westport
- Friday, May 21, Installation Dinner, Holiday Inn Viking
- Tuesday, June 29, Golf Tournament, Florissant

The next membership meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on Thursday, April 22 at the Lodge Des Peres. (Directions: from I-270 exit onto westbound Manchester Rd. Take the first exit, which is Des Peres Rd. At the bottom of the ramp turn right (south) passing under Manchester Rd. The Lodge will be the first building on the left.)

Program: As the legislative session enters the final weeks, it is important to hear what issues will be debated, particularly those of importance to local govern-

ments. We have invited Representative Rick Stream (R-Kirkwood) to provide his insights.



Rep. Rick Stream

There are two items of business on the agenda. The first will be

the election of officers and Board members for the 2010-2011 year. The report of the Nominating Committee will be mailed or emailed prior to the meeting. Nominations may also be made from the floor.

The second business item involves consideration of a modest 3% dues increase for all municipalities. This proposal was presented for discussion at the March meeting.

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Innovation Awards Applications Due April 23

As announced in the March Newsletter, applications are being accepted for the 2nd Annual St. Louis County Municipal League Innovation Awards. The purpose of the Awards program is to highlight municipal projects that solve city problems creatively.

Projects will be judged by a panel appointed by the League Board.

The Application has been sent to all member municipalities and is available on the League's website, www.stlmuni.org under the *Current Events* link.

Please return applications to the League office by Friday, April 23, 2010 by email, fax (314-726-1520) or mail.

Winners will be recognized at the Annual Installation Dinner.

March Meeting Synopsis

At the March meeting the membership heard a presentation from Bob Lewis, Principal at Development Strategies, who provided insights into how the St. Louis area is faring during the current economic downturn. Mr. Lewis indicated that the region demonstrates a slower and steadier economy than "growth" areas, so the economic highs and lows are not as pronounced here. He believes that commercial real estate will suffer during the remainder of 2010 and consumer consumption will remain low.

Mr. Lewis presented charts showing that most of the regional wealth is in the Missouri part of the region, particularly in St. Louis County. In terms of retail growth, St. Charles County shows a higher rate, but St.

Louis County has higher per capita sales. He noted that retail development has been beneficial to the County as a whole. St. Charles County is currently overbuilt for retail.

Mr. Lewis also pointed out that the region did not get a fair share of state stimulus funds and should lobby state officials should future funds become available.

Lastly, he pointed out that the sales tax base in the region may not be enough to support local governments. A discussion of a revised tax structure that is less volatile is needed.

Also at the meeting League lobbyist Jon Dalton highlighted some of the major issues for the state and local governments. He indicated that budget problems are prevalent in Jefferson City and leading to discussions about elimi-

nating tax credits. Replacing the income tax with a sales tax has also been discussed.

For cities, contacts with legislators are important to explain the impact of state legislation on local governments and to develop good relationships with senators and representatives, some of whom are relatively new.

Lastly, the membership heard a presentation on a proposed 3% dues increase and discussed the issue. It will be on the agenda for final consideration at the April meeting.

We would like to thank Mayor Roy Robinson and the officials and employees of the City of Crestwood for hosting the meeting.

Newly Elected Officials Seminar Set for April 29

The League will hold its Annual Seminar for Newly Elected Officials at 4:30 pm on Thursday, April 29 at the Sheraton Plaza Tower Hotel (not the chalet) at Westport Plaza in Maryland Heights. The cost is \$60, which includes materials and a buffet dinner.

We hope all of our new elected officials will join us for an informative introduction to municipal government presented by League Vice President Rich Magee Mayor of Glendale and municipal attorneys from the Curtis, Heinz, Garrett and O'Keefe law firm.

While the program is designed

for new officials, experienced officials are welcome as well. The deadline for reservations and cancellations is Monday, April 26.

Invitations and registration materials have been sent to all newly elected League members and to all municipal clerks.

Mark Your Calendar

The League's Annual Installation of Officers Dinner will be held on Friday, May 21 at the Holiday Inn Viking in Sunset Hills. The guest speaker will be Kevin Demoff, President of Football Operations for the St. Louis Rams. Registration materials will be sent to municipal clerks in late April.

On Tuesday, June 29 the City of Florissant will again host our Annual Golf Tournament. The registration information for this event is on the League website www.stlmuni.org under the *Current Events* link. Sign up your group today!

Board Members Retire

When the current program year ends there will be 5 members retiring from the League Board. They are:

Mayor Joe Adams, University City
Mayor Bill Bergfeld, Warson Woods
Mayor Virginia Bira, Vinita Park
Mayor Bert Gates, Shrewsbury, and
Mayor Julie Morgan, Rock Hill.

We thank them for their service.

2010 Bills of Municipal Interest

Most of the main bills that will be priorities for the legislature have had hearings and are being debated on the floor.

The League continues to send weekly email updates to those members for whom we have email addresses.

Major issues that we are tracking include:

Fire District Sales Tax and Governance - SB 826 (Griesheimer) would allow fire districts in St. Louis County to have **sales tax** authority. The bill was perfected in the Senate on April 6 and was placed on the 3rd reading calendar.

Because of this action, League President Rick Lahr convened a press conference on April 9 with Senators Joan Bray and Jane Cunningham and Representatives John Diehl and Mike Leara to express concerns about the legislation. A few districts and unions are strongly lobbying for a ½ cent sales tax. However, we have received little information from the districts about the need for a major increase in sales taxes. State Auditor reports indicate that the fire district salaries can be about 150% higher than municipal salaries for firefighters. Early figures show that a few fire districts would collect the majority of the tax – but those are the same districts that have a strong property tax base.

We appreciate the offer from Senators Griesheimer and Schmitt to meet and review this tax issue.

Please express your appreciation to Senators Bray and Cunningham and Representatives Diehl and Leara for their leadership.

SB 881 (Green) - Prohibits fire district contract personnel from receiving severance and reduces the percentage of signature on petition to remove fire board members.

HB 1578 (Calloway) – Increases fire district board to 5 members and reduces term to 3 years.

Sunshine Law - HCS HB 1445 (Tim Jones) require 5 days notice before a meeting to vote on any planning and zoning, TDD, TIF, improvement districts or eminent domain. Also requiring more notice are votes on tax and fee increases. In addition, the bill sets minimum fines of \$1,000 and up to \$8,000 for purposeful violations of the Sunshine Law, and forces the city to pay the legal fees of the plaintiff. Lastly, the bill requires 1-2 hours of Sunshine Law training for officials with a course approved by the Attorney General that covers at least 6 major items in the Sunshine Act. HCS HB 1445 has been voted out of the General Laws Committee, but at press time had not been placed on the perfection calendar for debate.

Other bills which only contain 4-day meeting notice provisions are:

- SB 851 (Schmitt), which has passed the Senate and been heard in the House General Laws Committee.
- HB 1444 (T. Jones), which has passed the House General Laws Committee; and
- SB 580 (Griesheimer) which has passed the Senate and been heard in the House Local Government Committee.

Date for Setting Property Tax Rates - SB 860 (Bray) and HB

1392 (Kirkton) - Correct an error in the law relating to the date for setting property tax rates in charter counties. The new date would be October 1. This language was also added to SB 580, which has become an omnibus local government bill.

E-911 Sales Tax Food Exemption - HB 2475 (Diehl) – Would eliminate food from E-911 sales tax. In 2008, the League supported exempting food from the statute that would provide funding for the radio communications system. Even with the downturn in sales, a modified approach to retiring the bond debt and paying for operations will still allow for this exemption.

Speed Cameras - Several bills proposing limiting the use of speed cameras to construction or school zones. These bills are HB 1947 (Corcoran), HB 1205 (Schad) and SB 881 (Green).

Billboards - HB 2097 (Dixon) – Would severely limit local control over billboards. Cities should continue to have local control over lighting, spacing and size.

Bidding Procedures - SB 729 (McKenna) – Creates the Political Subdivision Construction Bidding Standards Act" for entities that do not have specific state or local competitive bidding requirements when soliciting construction bids and awarding contracts of \$6,000 or more and creates a central repository for bids within the state. This language was also added to SB 580.

A similar bill the House, HB 2218, does not set up a central registry and requires advertising. Both include language that allows cities to be sued.

St. Louis County Municipal League
121 S. Meramec Ave.
Clayton, MO 63105

Please join us at the next membership meeting on April 22 at the Lodge Des Peres.

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www.stlmuni.org*

Hazardous Waste Collection Events

The St. Louis County Department of Health will be holding three household hazardous waste collections in late spring. Each collection runs from 8 am to 3 pm. There is no charge. The dates and locations are:

- Saturday, April 24 - South County Center shopping mall, near Dillard's and Sears
- Saturday, May 8 - St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, 1-270 at W. Florissant Ave.;
- Saturday, May 15 - Parkway Central High School, on Highway 141 north of I-64/Hwy 40

In late April see the website www.recyclesaintlouis.com for more information.

Items that will be collected include: paints, pesticides, gasoline, motor oil, fluorescent tubes, rechargeable batteries, antifreeze driveway sealant and items containing mercury.

Washington University Grad Student Works on Foreclosure Prevention

Certain areas in the St. Louis region have been hard hit by foreclosures. And while there are a number of local, state and federal agencies that can provide assistance to residents, news reports indicate that loan modifications are not happening at a fast pace.

For the last few months, Nina Kobakhidze, from the Republic of Georgia and a graduate student at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University, has been working in the League office to study foreclosure issues and to help us develop a plan to help our members work with citizens on this difficult issue. Neighborhood stabilization is affected when there are too many vacant homes.

She will be organizing a conference on the current foreclosure trends and the policy responses in place. Invitees to the June 2010 panel discussion will include representatives of: government, nonprofit foreclosure intervention services, mortgage companies, as well as community groups. The event will contribute to the ongoing dialogue between the different stakeholders in foreclosure prevention by searching for the matched policy/program interventions to help the homeowners at risk. Individuals should call 2-1-1 for a referral to legitimate housing counseling agencies.