

# LWVHC Positions

*The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation of citizens in their government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*

LAND USE POSITION

APRIL 1988

**BACKGROUND:** Land is a finite resource, not a commodity, and carries with it the responsibility of stewardship. This stewardship of land requires a knowledge of and respect for not only the limitations of this natural resource but also for the secondary impact of land use on human resources.

This respect for environmental, economic and social consequences of land use should be the base for all planning, regulations, implementation and enforcement. These aspects of land stewardship by both elected and appointed officials require identification and limitations in use of fragile environments, acquisition of public lands for recreation and preservation, implementation of land use goals and plans, and priority ranking and financing of the infrastructures necessary for land development. The elected officials are also accountable and responsible for the secondary impacts of growth and development on the human resources.

The electorate, in turn, has the responsibility to identify the goals for land use, to monitor the implementation of these community goals, and to support financially the stewardship of the resources - natural and human.

With the challenge grant of a member, the Henderson County League of Women Voters with the support of other environmental organizations initiated a natural heritage inventory. As a result the Natural Heritage Trust of Henderson County was founded. Because land ownership often crosses county borders, the name was changed to Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy which "works directly with private landowners to preserve our regions' natural beauty and diversity for future generations".

The League of Women Voters of Henderson County supports:

- Identification and limitations in use of fragile environments.
- Acquisition of public lands for recreation and preservation.
- Implementation of land use goals and plans.
- Priority ranking and financing of the infrastructures necessary for land use.
- Review of environmental, social, and economic impacts of major and private developments.
- Appointment of a full-time professional planner with the staff and funding necessary to prepare a land use plan.
- Adoption of a Flood Plain ordinance.
- Land use plan implementation - including county-wide zoning.
- Adoption of a local soil erosion and sedimentation control ordinance.
- Continuation of joint meetings of city/county officials to develop a joint city/county thoroughfare plan.

## SOLID WASTE POSITION

9/13/89 Revised - 9/11/91, 4/9/98

### BACKGROUND:

#### INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT IS:

Handling solid waste in the best way possible, in an ongoing process, using all available options and taking into account the environment, cost, and what seems practical and evaluating new technology as it becomes available. It also involves everybody: all units of government, the private sector, and general public.

#### ECONOMICS:

The cost of a landfill must be weighed against the cost of transporting waste. Landfill expenses could be recovered by, and not limited to, a household tax, a surcharge, a local sales tax, an impact fee for newcomers to the community, user fees. The consideration must be whether the charge is reasonable and is borne by all members of the community.

The aim of the reasonable cost should be to encourage, not discourage, the reduction of waste, reuse of materials, recycling and composting. It should exclude "free" use by out-of-county handlers. It should cover the operating costs.

Because of time and the need for suitable land for a Henderson County landfill, not only should regional cooperation be considered but there should be immediate steps taken for siting a landfill in Henderson County. There should be an expansion of the recycling program.

The League of Women Voters of Henderson County supports:

An integrated solid waste management program. We believe such a program should include:

- Reduction of waste at the source
- Reuse
- Recycle
- Compost
- Landfill
- Incineration (as a last resort)
- An experienced professional city/county waste coordinator to recommend the goals, needs and the technology required to manage solid and hazardous waste disposal in Hendersonville/Henderson County.
- The creative utilization of every resource available to uniformly distribute to the entire community the burden of payment for solid waste disposal.

#### ADVOCACY FOR SOLID WASTE POSITION:

- Support of community/school education on the solid waste problem.
- Talks on recycling, plus distribution of brochures on acceptable recycling practices.
- Support of state mandates on solid waste reduction.
- Support for a MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) in Henderson County.
- Support for siting a landfill in Henderson County for immediate, or future, use.

## SEEKING SOLUTIONS FOR SCHOOL FACILITIES

NOVEMBER 12, 1998

The League of Women Voters of Henderson County supports:

### FACILITIES:

Facilities should be well planned and expandable for long term use and meet recognized standards. They should be educationally suitable, providing a climate for learning. Schools should be safe, clean, comfortable, accessible and well maintained.

Buildings should avoid extremes - not palaces, but not just bare necessities. There should be enough appropriately equipped space for all curriculum needs. It is essential that the planning of these facilities be a continuous process, periodically reviewed.

### FUNDING:

It is important that any plans for funding school facilities be based on timely communication between the Board of Commissioners, the Board of Education and the public, and that these plans be cost-effective, realistic and equitable. This should include short and long term planning for all the schools and long term funding sources for new buildings as well as expansion, repair and maintenance of existing buildings.

Elected officials must build trust and provide the forum for public input and consensus.

## BUDGET PROCESS

DECEMBER 1989

### BACKGROUND:

After two years of exploring the Henderson County/Hendersonville budget processes, the budget committee developed a consensus discussion that dealt in three areas related to budget development for the communities studied. There appeared to be a lack of long range planning and community participation in the process. Information was not always easy to find or understand. Finally, the committee felt that there should be some determination by the community as to what was a NEED and what was a WANT, a wish that goes beyond a basic service. This issue should be discussed throughout the community, as well as the determination as to whom should be responsible for funding needs and wants.

It is the responsibility of all citizens to support long range community goals through various funding avenues whether through taxes for explicit community needs, or through charity and private donations for the quality of life the community wants.

The League of Women Voters of Henderson County supports:

- Better communication through better education of the public with circulation of detailed budget information.
- Continued efforts of a professional planner.
- Combined local government (county and municipalities) efforts to develop long range community goals which differentiate between community needs and community wants.
- Local funding for definite (or definable) community needs.
- Citizen interaction early in the budget process and throughout the hearings.

#### ADVOCACY FOR BUDGET PROCESS POSITION:

- Publish information on the budget process - no deadline set.
- Get LWVHC members to attend budget public hearings.
- Support retreat for commissioners.
- Support a planning forum.
- Support citizen boards working with local government in the budget process.

#### JUSTICE POSITIONS

##### BACKGROUND:

The League of Women Voters of Henderson County has been concerned with and about the Henderson County court system since before 1983. In August of 1983, the League of Women Voters of Henderson County concluded a study of the Criminal Justice system and came to consensus in four areas: provision for a Criminal Justice Center, fair and adequate compensation to law enforcement personnel, formation of a local Judicial Council, and use of modern office technology in management of Court paperwork.

In 1984-85 League members worked with others in the community to develop the Dispute Settlement Center which has helped to relieve the court system of cases.

In May 1989 and November 1990, this League conducted with the Times-News forums to explore with all relevant parties the designing and financing of a new Henderson County Criminal Justice Center. Finding that a number of issues relevant to the construction of the facility were not being addressed nor resolved, LWVHC reached consensus to reaffirm the support for a new Criminal Justice Center. The following was adopted:

- We re-emphasize our support for citizen participation, as well as representatives of all courthouse users, in considering the planning and financing choices for the Center.
- We urge a court-management study be made first to determine how to better utilize the present courthouse facilities, technology and the scheduling impact when planning for the Center.
- We recommend that the site selection be re-examined and that an "Impact Statement" be made for each site considered which should include statistics and facts on its impact on the neighborhood, on the proposed thoroughfare plan, on land use plans, and on traffic and parking, as well as any other consequences that become evident and relevant during such a process.

-We urge a study to determine alternate uses of the present courthouse and facilities and the cost of maintaining this historic landmark and downtown anchor.

In October of 1994, a study of the NC Judicial system was begun with LWVHC members and Council for Women members joining AAUW members. It was prompted by a concern for Henderson County women and children being adversely affected by the local judicial system. The thrust was to study family courts to see if one could be implemented in Henderson County. After a two year study, the following was adopted by all three groups, and the criteria are compatible to those developed by the Family Issues Committee of the Futures Commission. That report was released in the fall of 1996.

The League of Women Voters of Henderson County supports the following:

Realizing there is no one perfect template for any court system, North Carolina should develop its own appropriate plan with a common theme. Before Advocacy, any plan for change or new approach in the court system will be subjected to examination to determine whether it incorporates the following criteria:

- Requires specialized training and higher standards for court personnel.
- Encourages a unified, coordinated court.
- Supports a pro-active role for the judge.
- Provides resources for support services.
- Reduces unnecessary delays in adjudication and service causing family and children to suffer unnecessarily or not to receive vital services.
- Provides the means to identify, report, and protect children, women and other victims at risk of domestic violence, prevent further injury, even death.
- Eliminates forcing children to testify unnecessarily.
- Limits multiple interviews of children by different interviewers resulting in further distress.
- Eliminates conflicting duplicative orders.
- Requires alternative dispute resolution.

ADVOCACY ON THE POSITION:

- Support improvements in the present court system in Henderson County. Several League members served on a committee formed by Chief District Judge Robert Cilley and DSS Director Liston Smith in 1996 to "Achieve Permanence for Children on a Timely Basis". A follow up was held in 1999 to review the changes implemented in the system and to address areas still needing to be addressed.
- Lobby for additional judges, support staff and technology in Henderson County and the 29th District so that both are in line with staffing of other counties and districts. The late Representative Larry Justus and District Attorney Jeff Hunt were apprised of our concern which they shared, and they were able to acquire an additional district judge to help alleviate the court load in this district.
- Consider asking that Henderson County, or one of the other counties in the 29th Judicial District, or all of the 29th Judicial District be considered for a pilot program should the Legislature adopt and fund the recommendations of the Family Issues Section of the

Futures Commission. Two court systems were selected but neither was in the 29th District.

- Lobby for a Family Court. In the 29th Judicial District the judges rotate from county to county. The Chief Judge schedules the calendar and rotation of the judges on a quarterly basis. The only courts with true family courts are located in larger cities such as Asheville and Charlotte.
- Monitor the court system to implement as many of the desired criteria as possible. Be especially alert if the legislature considers enlarging the judicial districts---especially the 29th for the distance to travel may undermine the improvements already implemented.

In June and July of 2003, LWVHC worked with the Administrative Office of the Courts to measure court performance standards in Henderson County. Observers, and staff in the court system completed surveys which were mailed directly to the AOC. Users of the court completed surveys in English or Spanish, and they, too, were sent to the AOC. There is a final report on file with the project's results in the participating counties.