

January 26, 2021

Dear Mayor Shubert,

The League of Women Voters Hudson is raising awareness of Sunshine Week, March 14-20, 2021. The Week occurs each year in mid-March, coinciding with James Madison's birthday and National Freedom of Information Day. It is a national initiative spearheaded by the American Society of News Editors to educate the public about the importance of open government and the dangers of excessive and unnecessary secrecy. It was established in March 2005, with funding from the John S. and James L Knight Foundation. **During Sunshine Week, media organizations, civic groups, libraries, nonprofits, schools and other participants engage in public discussion on the importance of open government.** The purpose of the week is to highlight the fact that "government functions best when it operates in the open". Each organization and or citizen chooses the ways they want to participate. The Sunshine Week website, <http://sunshineweek.org/>, offers a list of suggested activities and events including a tool kit with ideas to participate.

Since 1967, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has provided the right to request access to records from any federal agency. All states have since created some version of Sunshine Laws. In Ohio, Sunshine Laws come under the purview of the Attorney General; the AG website contains the Manual of Laws and training for public officials which is free and open to the public. Ohio's Sunshine Laws cover both the Open Meetings Act and Public Records Act. Each public body creates their own policies that make them compliant with the Ohio Revised Code for Sunshine Laws.

LWV has long been a champion of government transparency since our founding in 1920. It is one of our core principles and a vital part of our mission. Our efforts in this area reinforce our reputation of fairness, nonpartisanship and trust. It serves as the foundation for League action in promoting good government and in out lobbying and advocacy.

League of Women Voters Hudson has created a local Observer Corps program based on LWV resources and Ohio's Sunshine Laws. Our members are encouraged to take the Ohio Attorney General's Sunshine Laws training, the same training required for public officials. Our LWVH trains and mentors our members in how to observe City, Library and School District public meetings as defined in the Laws. Regular observation and reporting provide our League with knowledge of local issues and the ability to take timely action; it builds expertise in how government works and effective interaction with public officials; and serves the community by monitoring Sunshine Laws compliance.

Our observations have shown that Hudson is fortunate to have public officials who go above and beyond basic Sunshine Laws. Hudson's public officials have adopted many best practices that enhance transparency, accountability and citizen engagement. Supporting a Community TV station that provides livestreaming and video record of public meetings is a best practice and valuable service.

We invite and encourage you to participate in Sunshine Week by providing some form of service that raises awareness of the Week.

Thank you.

Best Regards,

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cc Elizabeth Slagle, Clerk of Council
cc Carol O'Connell, LWVH President