**LWVSJ Observer Corps\*: County Council May 16, 2023**

The Council **ended the Covid state of emergency and vaccination mandate** for county employees. The county has some of the highest vaccination rates in the state.

The Public Works dept. briefed the Council **on the Douglas/Bailer Hill Road project** which will widen, level and straighten the road, reduce flooding and widen the shoulders. Ninety percent of the cost is covered by a grant. Work is expected to start in 2025 and take four months and to keep one lane open during construction. County staff are communicating with affected property owners. A public hearing is scheduled for the June 6 meeting.

Assessor Kulseth provided an overview of the four **open space tax programs** Farm and Ag, Open Space, Timber, and Forest Land, for land that is being farmed, produces or is being managed for timber, or preserved as open space for public benefit. The timber and forest programs are very similar; both require that timber be harvested and sold. Kulseth suggested that the Council could consider altering the county code to allow forested land preserved not for harvest but for forest cover to be eligible for the Open Space designation.

The Council will make a proclamation recognizing **Juneteenth** at the June 13 Council Meeting. Health and Human Services got Council approval for a small state Consolidated Homeless Grant totaling $24k to go directly to the County.

Prosecuting Attorney Amy Vira will be **reviewing all Boards, Commissions, and Advisory Committees with the Council**, identifying issues that need action for each. When the exercise is complete, the Council can adopt uniform rules to create consistency among all the bodies. She presented a form she proposed using to review the Agricultural Resources Committee.

Juvenile Court Director Anderson and Public Defender Alex Frick reviewed the **Law and Justice Council**. Originally mandated at the state level for coordination among law and justice agencies to oversee how people are detained in jail, in San Juan County, the Council began with several issues including Court security, public defense screening and establishing a parole body. It is operating without a charter, by-laws or set procedures and has formed an ad hoc committee to make recommendations to create **more formal by-laws, goals, and structure.**

An **interim director for the Department of Community Development will start June 1** for 3-4 months while a permanent director is recruited.

The **League of Women Voters,** a nonpartisan organization encourages informed participation in government. The Observer Corps attends and takes notes at government meetings to expand public understanding of public policy and decisions. The notes do not necessarily reflect the views of the League or its members.