



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF DANE COUNTY

720 Hill Street, Suite 200, Madison, WI 53705-3539 ☆ 608.232.9447  
office@lwvdanecounty.org ☆ www.lwvdanecounty.org

## **LWVDC Supports Proposed Revisions to Chapter 37 Madison Stormwater Ordinance**

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The League of Women Voters of Dane County (the League) supports adoption of the proposed revisions to Chapter 37 Stormwater Ordinance, Madison General Ordinances. In addition, the League encourages other municipalities throughout Dane County adopt similar stormwater ordinance revisions of their own. This will ensure a level playing field for builders and developers countywide. This will recognize that stormwater flows downhill and does not respect municipal boundaries. We are all in the same boat when it floods. We need to look out for each other.

Recent flooding in Madison in July 21, 2016 (2.41" in 2 hours), June 16, 2018 (1.54" in 2 hours) and August 20, 2018 (6.72" in 14 hours) had devastating impacts on our neighbors and their homes, on businesses and their property, and on public infrastructure such as roads, bridges and public buildings. The sheer volume and powerful rate of flood flow of the August 2018 flooding even took the life of a Madison resident.

Extreme weather (storm frequency and intensity), flash flooding, flooding of low-lying areas, and higher lake levels are projected to increase as part of climate change. As a society, we need to pay attention to this "new normal" and its costly impacts on the safety and health of our families and communities, on the durability of private and municipal properties, and on the productive farmland and the prairie and wooded landscapes that are the basis for regional livelihoods and quality of life.

The League believes that climate change is a serious threat facing our nation and planet. The League supports climate goals and policies that are consistent with the best available climate science and that will ensure a stable climate system for future generations. ([2018-20 Impact on Issues](#), LWVUS)

The League believes water quality and quantity standards need to be addressed in terms of whole basin management and the hydrologic cycle. ([2014 Water Quality and Quantity](#), LWVWI)

The League commends the City of Madison Engineering Division for undertaking a series of watershed studies to consider the extent of damage from extreme weather events and how well or poorly existing stormwater facilities worked to counter these extreme events. These studies included multiple public information sessions, which some of our members attended, to gather resident experiences with flooding and to share practical solutions like rain gardens, rain barrels, attention to gutter cleaning, and extending downspouts away from impervious areas, window wells and foundation walls. (<https://www.cityofmadison.com/flooding/resources/prepare-your-home-general-flooding> )

The League supports stormwater standards and management that utilize sustainable practices and green infrastructure that mimic natural hydrologic processes to augment natural processes to control runoff. By providing natural areas and green roofs, runoff from impermeable surfaces and extreme precipitation events can soak into the soil instead of being released directly to lakes, streams, wetlands or overloading storm sewers and constructed detention ponds. Using natural areas promotes replenishment of the hydrologic cycle as well as harvesting rainwater for immediate uses

(such as drinking water, irrigation and livestock). Providing grass swales, green roofs, rain gardens and other natural areas prevents trash, bacteria, phosphorus, heavy metals, pharmaceuticals and other pollutants from unrestricted entry into bodies of water. The League also supports protecting and enhancing the biological integrity of wetlands and other naturally occurring hydrologic resources that provide water quality, flood protection and habitat benefits. (2014 Water Quality and Quantity, LWVWI)

The League commends the Engineering Division for asking what design standards were out of date and took the time to evaluate and rethink stormwater practices and regulations. This resulted in the Stormwater Ordinance revisions.

1. The League applauds the attention in the City Stormwater Ordinance to a first principle of stormwater management – *“Manage water (precipitation) where it lands”* – in the standards that increase water retention - Peak Detention and Infiltration.
2. The League applauds the Ordinance revisions that relate to the second important principle of stormwater management – *“Improve quality of runoff entering our lakes, rivers and streams”* – by measures that focus on Total Suspended Solids and Oil & Grease Control.
3. The League supports the attention to green infrastructure in the Stormwater Ordinance. The revised Ordinance requires an intensive green roof and pervious pavement and encourages use of additional green infrastructure practices, all subject to recording of a maintenance agreement.
4. The League supports applying the revised ordinance to both new development and redevelopment. Madison and other Dane County communities are experiencing rapid growth. Both types of development are responsible for the increase in impervious area and thus both need to be covered by improved stormwater management.
5. The League asks that the City of Madison and other municipalities recognize the need for future changes in the Stormwater Ordinance. The current changes are incremental steps that allow all parties to learn and develop improved Best Practices to deal with stormwater. The League recognizes that there are likely to be new design standards prepared by NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) in a few years. We can also expect relevant updated and peer-reviewed analyses by WICCI (Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts). The League supports using the best available climate science and urges updates to the Stormwater Ordinance as reliable science is available.
6. The League appreciates the many public meetings explaining the Stormwater Ordinance changes. These complement the series of individual area Watershed Plans and meetings by the City. We also appreciate the public outreach and education through **MadisonWaterWays** newsletter and “Everyday Engineering” podcasts.

If there are any comments or questions, please contact Georgiana Hernandez, the chair of the LWVDC Climate Crisis Program Committee at [georgiana.hernandez@gmail.com](mailto:georgiana.hernandez@gmail.com)

Aileen Nettleton,

President, League of Women Voters of Dane County