

# **League of Women Voters of Louisville**

## **Café LOUIE Report Participant Questions to Panelists**

**June 2023**

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### **Background**

Each year beginning in 2014 the Louisville Free Public Library (LFPL) Foundation and Friends of the Library, with the active support of the League of Women Voters of Louisville (LWVL), sponsor informal gatherings at which elected officials are invited to discuss issues with the public. Referred to collectively as Café LOUIE (Louisvillians: Organized, United, Informed & Engaged), the forums are held at the Main Library and at each of the 17 branch libraries. All forums are publicized and promoted by the Friends, the LWVL, and the LFPL.

The Foundation recruits panelists and the Friends provides volunteer moderators. Representatives of the LWVL officiate at a special table registering voters, distributing League literature, and assisting as needed. The hosting branch Friends group generally provides coffee and refreshments creating an informal and cordial atmosphere in which friends and neighbors meet and greet.

At each session panelists are introduced by the moderator and asked to present opening comments. Attendees are invited to raise questions to the officials by submitting them on index cards. Contents of the cards are then read aloud, one at a time, by the moderator. The Friends may initially raise ‘starter’ questions to stimulate participation. Speakers respond to questions orally.

In previous years, the note cards featuring questions were discarded following each session. However, in 2023 the LWVL suggested retaining the cards, noting that question contents offered an indication of the concerns of community members. An analysis of participant questions might prove useful to both organizations. The League then offered to conduct such an analysis. The Friends agreed and supported the project. Accordingly, question cards were collected and retained following each session.

### **Method**

All 17 branch libraries and the Main Library participated in Café LOUIE 2023. Sessions began on January 14. The last session, at the Jeffersontown Library, was held on April 1, 2023. A list of Café LOUIE venues, dates, and members representing the LWVL is provided at the end of this report.

Citizens attended the forums to voice their concerns and hear the views of their elected representatives. Attendees, therefore, did not constitute a random or representative sample of the citizens of Louisville or of LFPL users. Nor were attendee questions necessarily independent of one another, since some participants submitted more than one question. Bias may have been introduced in multiple ways. First, as in any discussion, participants may have influenced each other. Second, the Friends who officiated at the sessions, as well as representatives of the LWVL, in some instances, may have worn two hats, i.e., that of their respective organization and that of a Kentucky/Louisville resident. Whether raised by participants, by the Friends, or by LWVL representatives, all questions, apart from ‘starter’ questions, were included in the data analysis.

**Procedure.** The questions on the index cards from each library were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. For the most part, individuals wrote one question on each card. In some instances, however, two or more unrelated questions appeared on one card. In this event, each question was entered independently (on a separate line or as a separate case). If multiple questions on one card appeared to be elaboration or restatement (one question of the other), the entire text was entered as one question.

**Analysis.** Following data entry, questions were sorted into categories determined by the author in collaboration with another League member. An attempt was made to choose general categories that captured the content of the question. Twenty-five (25) categories were used in the classification to maximize information. ‘Starter’ questions, (if identified by the Friends), constituted a 26<sup>th</sup> category. Frequency analysis was then conducted.

## Results

The number of participant questions corresponding to each category and the number of libraries contributing those questions is presented in the table on the following page.

**Question Categories: Number of Questions and Number of Libraries**  
**Café LOUIE 2023**

Question Category	Number of Questions	Number of Libraries
Traffic	12	9
Guns and Gun Violence	10	6
Process/Policy Inquiry to Official	9	8
Civic Involvement	8	3
Public Safety	7	5
Housing	7	4
Death Penalty	6	6
Streetlights	5	2
Library	5	5
Education	5	4
Youth Detention and Programs	5	3
Roads	4	3
New Mayor	4	4
Neighborhoods	4	4
Police	4	4
Personal Inquiry to Official	3	2
Homelessness	3	3
Home Ownership	3	2
Elections	3	3
Sidewalks	2	2
Marijuana	2	2
Friends of Library	2	2
Metro Council and Budget	2	2
Transgender Rights	2	2
Other	49	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	
<b>Starters</b>	<b>22</b>	
Note: There are 18 libraries including the Main Library in the LFPL system.		

Note that forty-nine (49) of the total 166 questions ('Starters' excluded) were categorized 'Other,' i.e., not reflecting designated categories.

Example questions representing the higher-frequency categories are presented in the tables below.

**Traffic**

Twelve (12) questions reflected traffic issues raised at nine (9) different libraries.

<b>Traffic</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Fern Creek	Need to add a turn lane in front of Walmart to go into the shopping center.
South Central	Traffic is terrible in our area.
Middletown	People turning out of shopping center with right turn onto Shelbyville Rd then doing a U-turn at Thorntons.
St Matthews	Clifton traffic: Trying to pause the Mellwood Ave right-sizing project in order to study the inclusion of Spring St. in the 2-way conversion. Spring St. is crucial yet hardly used resource being wasted.
Main Library	What is the process of getting road humps on residential streets? Norene continuously has cars doing more than the speed limit, while Carolyn and Meld have humps.

## Guns and Gun Violence

Ten (10) questions raised at six (6) libraries addressed gun violence.

<b>Gun Violence</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Iroquois	Guns in schools? Whose idea was that? Guns in senate chambers?
St Matthews	Gun violence is now the leading cause of death for kids in KY. What work is being done to address this epidemic?
Portland	Is democracy being hijacked by 2nd Amendment re: gun laws?
South Central	Is violence due to gangs?
NE Regional	I have worked on college campuses for over 20 years. All college presidents in Kentucky and all chiefs of campus security are opposed to the gun proposal to end 'gun free zones' on college campuses. Why is this bill receiving your support?

## Process/Police Inquiry to Official

The nine (9) questions categorized as 'Process/Policy Inquiry to Official' capture a wide variety of topics raised at eight (8) libraries.

<b>Process/Policy Inquiry to Official</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Fairdale	Will you be at Forest Fest?
Fern Creek	Will you continue having meetings on the 1st and 3rd Mondays at the Fish House on Smyrna?
Iroquois	What is your position on SB50 and HB50 which wants to make all elections in KY partisan elections?
Western	If you had to rank the most significant (top 3) issues your constituents face, what would those top 3 issues be?

## Civic Involvement

Three (3) libraries contributed eight (8) questions reflecting civic involvement.

<b>Civic Involvement</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Crescent Hill	Is there a dedicated District 9 building or meeting place? Physical space?
Newburg	We heard about your convictions that led you to run for office. I see a lot of people checking out of politics because they feel like they can't make a difference or don't have enough time. With your leadership position as a public official, what can you do to cultivate that same conviction in others?
Newburg	What can residents of Louisville do to bridge the urban/rural divide?

## Public Safety

Public Safety was reflected in seven (7) questions observed at five (5) libraries.

<b>Public Safety</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Fern Creek	Crime in the area
Crescent Hill	As a former bicyclist, how to get more current bikers to obey the bicycle rules? Not (1) running stop signs & red lights (2) riding 2 & 3 abreast, blocking driving lane
NE Regional	Are our stoplights managed by timers, sensors, or city employees watching on cameras?
Jeffersontown	When will a light be put in at Fairground and Belton Road?

## Housing

Housing was the subject of seven (7) questions submitted by four (4) libraries.

<b>Housing</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Fairdale	Explain your plan of creating more affordable housing for seniors.
Southwest	Why are we allowing houses to be demolished in Lawton Court? (Spelling?)
Shawnee	I'm not sure if Congress can do anything, but how do we stop out-of-state and out-of-neighborhood from buying our next-door neighbor's home before it is properly offered to the community? Morgan.
Newburg	When I look at housing proposals at the planning commission, no single-family homes are being proposed in West Louisville, only multi-family homes. This prevents generational wealth. What can be done to get developers to propose ownership housing?

## Death Penalty

Six (6) questions reflecting six (6) different libraries addressed the Kentucky death penalty.

<b>Death Penalty</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Fairdale	What is the chance to end the death penalty in Kentucky?
South Central	As most death row inmates are more likely to die from natural causes and our prison system takes a large chunk of the state budget, has a cost analysis been prepared comparing the cost to keep people on death row or give life sentences and put in with other longer sentences?
Southwest	What is the chance that the death penalty will be eliminated this year? Tax dollars will be saved by eliminating the death penalty.

## Streetlights

The issue of streetlights was addressed in five (5) questions submitted at two (2) different libraries.

<b>Streetlights</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Middletown	Why not add streetlights on the park pathways and loops?
Fern Creek	How about a streetlight at Beulah and East Manslick? What is the status on Beulah and Fegenbush relocation?

## Louisville Free Public Libraries

Five (5) questions from five (5) libraries addressed Louisville Free Public Library issues.

<b>Louisville Free Public Libraries</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Fern Creek	What is the timetable for the library?
Portland	What is Metro Council doing about safety and security inside our libraries?
South Central	Violence in libraries -- What is being done?
Newburg	What can locals and local firms do to help facilitate and support the needs and wish-list for the LFPL and Newburg as a community?
Shively	When will Shively get a larger library?



## Education

Another five (5) questions from four (4) libraries addressed education issues.

<b>Education</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Iroquois	What Education issues are being addressed by the legislature and why?
Southwest	There is an effort to have 'school choice' as a voter choice after it was stricken down under other efforts. They have it in Indiana. Any thoughts?
Southwest	When the General Assembly votes for raises for teachers, can substitute teachers be included?

## Youth Detention and Programs

Another five (5) questions from three (3) libraries reflected concerns about youth detention.

<b>Youth Detention and Programs</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Portland	What advice would you give to the new administration ... [re] closing of youth detention center?
Western	What action is happening to shift juvenile detention center back to Louisville? How will both of your legislative bodies be involved with the new juvenile center in Louisville.
Shively	HB 96 encourages programming for youth in urban city. Can you speak more about that? Anyone else support this?

The next fourteen categories, appearing in the table on page 3, each included two to four questions spanning diverse topics.

Examples of the forty-nine (49) questions categorized as 'Other,' are provided below.

<b>Other</b>	
<b>Library</b>	<b>Citizen Question</b>
Jeffersontown	How do [we figure out] how to serve on Jefferson County Republican Committee?
Bon Air	What source of income does the legislature plan to tap to replace the income tax?
Jeffersontown	Deer Creek concerns over recent juveniles making mischief in the neighborhood.
Shawnee	Council Person Purvis: What plans are made for those moved because of/due to Urban Renewal?
NE Regional	Due to gang violence & children's behavior in school. Let's have music on the school buses to release tension of the students.
St Matthews	Seneca Park is the most populated park in Louisville. "Everyone" uses Seneca Park. It is also the most respected park according to park workers. It needs a facelift. The bollards need to be replaced, the lampposts need to be replaced, and the basketball courts need much attention! Can you allocate funds for 2023 to be spent towards Seneca Park?

### **Concluding Comments**

It should be no surprise that many and diverse topics were raised by Café LOUIE participants. One might observe, however, that the largest number of questions to officials, Traffic (12) and Gun Violence (10), reflected issues often addressed in the local news media and in day-to-day conversations. (One might note here that Café LOUIE sessions *preceded* the Old National Bank tragedy of April 10.) Civic Involvement (8), Public Safety (7), and Housing (7), may be thought of as ‘runners-up.’

As indicated previously, the issues raised by members of the public at the Café LOUIE sessions, though a reflection of citizen concerns at the time, are not to be interpreted as a *full or up-to-date* picture of Louisville residents’ concerns. The author suggests, however, that they comprise a noteworthy part of Louisville public discourse to be considered in the context of other information.

This report may provide an occasion to brainstorm ways to encourage additional input on the part of participants as well as to produce more useful and timely results. New cell phone-based technologies allow immediate compilation of participant input as well as sharing of that input. Consideration by Friends and LWVL of the review and deployment of phone-based survey administration and management software is encouraged.

## **Note of Appreciation**

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## Café LOUIE Schedule, 2023

Date	Library	Address	Volunteers
January 14	Middletown Library	12556 Shelbyville Rd.	Teena Halbig
January 14	Fern Creek	Fern Creek High School	Marcy Allman & Laura Weinstein
January 21	Crescent Hill Library	2762 Frankfort Ave.	Bill & Sylvia Lieshoff
January 21	Fairdale Library	10620 W. Manslick Rd.	Bonnie Robinson
January 28	Portland Library	3305 Northwestern Pkwy.	JoAnn Bealer & Denise Bartholomew
January 28	South Central Library	7300 Jefferson Blvd.	Felicia Ray
February 4	Iroquois Library	601 W. Woodlawn Ave.	Pat Murrell
February 4	Western Library	604 S. Tenth St.	Judy Lippmann
February 18	Highlands Library	1250 Bardstown Rd.	Janet Dakan
February 18	Southwest Regional Library	9725 Dixie Hwy.	Bonnie Robinson
February 25	St. Matthews Library	3940 Grandview Ave.	Joanie McGuire
February 25	Shawnee Library	3912 W. Broadway	Brenda Tuckson
March 4	Main Library	301 York St.	Dee Pregliasco
March 11	Bon Air Library	2816 Del Rio Pl.	Marcy Allman
March 11	Northeast Regional Library	15 Bellevoir Cir.	JoAnn Bealer
March 18	Newburg Library	4800 Exeter Ave.	Deborah Watt
March 18	Shively Library	3920 Dixie Hwy.	Bonnie Robinson
April 1	Jeffersontown Library*	10635 Watterson Tr.	Jeanine Ashley

**\*Note:** The Jeffersontown Library Café LOUIE session originally scheduled for March 4 was cancelled due to an electricity outage. It was held April 1.