

HOUSING NEEDS OF TIFFIN

The League of Women Voters of the Tiffin Area believes that safe, decent, healthy, affordable housing should be available to all citizens. It further believes that government should play an essential role in addressing housing needs with an emphasis on the needs of the elderly, the low-income, persons with disabilities, and homeless.

Position:

The League believes that the government should:

1. Continue to evaluate and update Comprehensive Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS) which would address housing problems especially those of the elderly, low-income, and persons with disabilities;
2. Seek funding, public and private, to implement the Housing Action Plan (CHIS);
3. Study, develop, and implement a minimum housing maintenance code and building code in order to assure safe, decent, healthy, and adequate housing for all citizens;
4. Develop policies, procedures, and practices in addressing homeless individuals and families in the Tiffin Area and Seneca County.

The League believes that the government should assist homeless in providing a safe and secure emergency housing facility for citizens. The facility needs to be accessible to employment, training services, and transportation.

Funding for homeless services should be from grants, donations, organizations, and foundations. Homeless services should be maintained by a not-for-profit, non-governmental agency.

The League believes that government should provide leadership in the development of a private, non-for-profit Housing Consortium. This consortium shall consist of citizens, organizations and agencies, private and public, which would address local housing needs including rehabilitation and expansion of the housing stock for the elderly, the low-income, and persons with disabilities.

Background on Position:

A two-year study was adopted in May 1981 to identify the specific housing needs in Tiffin, especially as they were related to the elderly, low-income families, single parent families, and the handicapped (physically and mentally disabled).

In July 1981 background activities were begun: review of pertinent literature, analysis of housing studies and census data, interviews with key informants in the community, review of federal housing programs and review of information gathered from adjacent communities. Informational units were held in February 1982 and February 1983 with consensus taken at the time. Position was adopted in March 1983. In June 1983 after a presentation to the City Planning Commission, the League began to compile information on housing maintenance codes. Informational units were presented in February 1984.

Late in 1984 a task force of various citizens was formed to examine housing maintenance codes. Two major issues were identified: the need for a housing maintenance code and the possible establishment of a housing authority. Because the City Planning Commission had included maintenance codes in its work plan, the task force decided to look into the possibility of establishing a housing authority. A nucleus of ten community persons, in addition to League members, was formed to take steps to establish this housing authority. In 1984-85 League continued working with community persons to develop an

application for the establishment of a County Housing Authority. State, county, and local officials were consulted, and letters of support were received from various groups and organizations.

The application, including a resolution from the Tiffin City Council, was submitted to the State Housing Board in March 1985. Authorization from the Housing Authority was granted in April 1985. Over the years League members have served as Board members.

In February 1993 unit meetings featured the director of the local Housing Authority discussing operation of the office.

The September 1994 general meeting was held at the Fort Ball Bed and Breakfast featuring Tricia Valentine speaking on “City Planning as Regards Historic districts.” In March 1995 City Engineer Curtis Eagle presented a program on a proposed housing maintenance code. League supported the proposed code but it was not acceptable to the City Council. However, in 1996 the city contracted with the County Health Department to handle housing maintenance issues through their regulations.

A Homeless Coalition was initiated in 1996 to address housing and supportive needs for persons who are or may become homeless. Agencies which serve low-income families were involved in the planning.

In 1994 and 1998, the City of Tiffin developed a Comprehensive Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS) to address the community’s housing needs. Applications for a Community Housing Improvement Program Grant (CHIP) were submitted both years but the 1994 application was not approved due to administrative weakness. However, in 1999 the city was awarded approximately \$700,000 for a three-year period. Included in the action plan are: homeowner rehabilitation, transitional housing, emergency home repair, lead-based paint abatement, and home purchase counseling.

The Seneca Metropolitan Housing Authority was awarded twenty vouchers (housing subsidies) to be used for persons with disabilities in the late fall of 2000. It should be noted that three League members serve on its Board.

The League, in March 2001, reviewed the housing changes in Tiffin since 1983 as well as the continued needs especially for the low-income population. Consensus was taken and an update of the Housing Position was adopted in April.

The updated Housing Position was presented to the City Council in July 2001.

The County Commissioners were notified in the summer of 2001 that the CHIP (Community Housing Improvement Program) Grant Application was approved by the State Department of Development. The amount of the award was approximately \$500,000, which is to cover a three-year period. WSOS Community Action Agency will be administering the grant.

Members voted at the May 2018 Annual Meeting to expand the housing position by studying homelessness in the Tiffin area. Two membership meetings were held in February and March 2019 on the topic and consensus was reached. The membership approved the consensus at the May 2019 Annual Meeting.