**LWVSJ Observer Corps\*: County Council May 2, 2023**

The Council approved letters of support for a UW Public Health **study on the impact of military noise on human health** and for **the Northwest Straits Initiative Reauthorization.**

A representative of the **Hannah Heights HOA** spoke on **the impact of the discovery of PFAS in their water system.** The state and county provided technical and informational support. The HOA is buying water and households face $72-96 cost per person per month. As the system is privately owned and the contaminant is reportable, but not regulated, there is no public financial support to cover potable water until a new system is in place. The HOA is applying for a state loan to pay for a new water system.

The Environmental Health officer reported that on May 2-3 they were helping potentially affected **class B and individual well owners take samples to be tested.** The state Dept of Environment now takes the lead to determine the cause, advise on clean-up, and possibly determine responsibility for the contamination. A state Dept. of Health official commended the HOA and the county for their work.

The Friends of San Juans spoke on the **permitting process** noting errors in the permit applications were often caught too late in the process, contributing to delays and unnecessary costs, and urged fully staffing and training department personnel to address the issue. A citizen from Lopez said permitting was a significant driver of increased costs and called for more leadership and pre-development access to permitting staff.

The **Planning Director gave an overview of the permitting process.** Permits issued were 428 in 2022 vs. 222 in 2019. Eight weeks ago, they introduced a new process to speed up the process, improve communication, and strengthen consistency. The Department is launching a customer satisfaction survey and setting up training with contractors on new codes coming into effect in July. He acknowledged that there are challenges; they have three vacant positions, half the staff have been in their jobs less than 18 months and are still training, conflicts among state and county codes are confusing both for consumers and staff, and most county plots have critical areas requiring more complex permitting.

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.