

**Centralized Purchasing  
1958**

APPLETON LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS POSITION PAPER

Centralized Purchasing

Support of a system of centralized purchasing for the City of Appleton.

Adoption: In 1958 we adopted a study of the possible need for a system of centralized municipal purchasing in Appleton.

Study: League spent a year interviewing officials of city departments. We contacted cities in Wisconsin for comparison of methods and areas of savings.

In January 1968, the League updated its study. We interviewed the purchasing agent of Green Bay, the business manager of the Appleton school system, the Appleton Finance Director, and the Mayor of Appleton.

The updated background material was presented to members in the January 1968 bulletin. A general meeting was held, and we re-affirmed the original position based on the following consensus:

Consensus:

1. Establishment of a system of centralized purchasing for the city of Appleton.
2. Selection of a qualified purchasing agent by appointment of the mayor with the approval of the common council from candidates successfully completing a written and oral examination.
3. Favored cooperative purchasing to the fullest extent possible with the public schools and the water department.
4. Provision for warehousing facilities at the earliest possible date, but that lack of such facilities should not delay the establishment of the system.

Action: From 1958 until the present time we have supported any proposals for instituting centralized purchasing.



(Centralized purchasing - continued)

What about purchasing for the rest of Appleton? Among his many other duties, Mr. Shreve, finance officer, handles the purchases for the city departments, except for the for the water department, library, and the parks and recreations departments.

How do Green Bay and other cities handle school purchases? Mr. Petreat, purchasing agent says that in Green Bay (and in other cities) the schools are not included, except on a voluntary cooperative basis. This cooperative buying is gradually increasing. However, in Green Bay, they do not have a centralized purchasing office in the school system as Appleton does. However, wherever possible, and on many items, the school system is purchasing through the centralized purchasing office and taking advantage of the volume buying prices. In no cases are textbooks included either for the schools or for the libraries. Books have completely remained within the jurisdiction of the schools and libraries. The purchasing agent does not enter into this field at all.

What savings can be anticipated through centralized purchasing? 15% of total city purchases is the figure most commonly quoted; however, "hidden savings" are indicated, which are not normally reflected when speaking of "savings." Some of the intangibles listed are: (1) shopping services performed by purchasing agent for all departments--many hours of time saved for department heads. Salesmen now work through one purchasing department and many hours of department head's time is saved as he does not have to see all of the multitude of salesmen who call on city officials. (2) Purchasing agent engages in testing materials and products to make the best possible purchases. (3) Purchasing agent expedites shipments--time is saved for department head. (4) Purchasing agent sells obsolete city merchandise at a profit for city.

By centralizing purchasing many activities formerly consuming hours of time for department heads are now done in one office, and relieves other employees of many hours of time-consuming work, and work is being done by a professional qualified to get the best product at the best price, for the city.

What items are being "cooperatively purchased by purchasing agent for independent bodies not presently covered (schools, sewage, and water departments)? Under an "open end" contract, the city purchasing agent buys at its volume prices for the schools, water and sewage departments such items as gasoline, fuel oil, batteries, light bulbs, paper towels, tires, cleaning supplies, grass seed, typewriters, office equipment.

Miscellaneous notes:

The City of Green Bay is able to buy directly from manufacturer on volume purchases and in some cases gets discounts of 50%. A good purchasing agent has to "fight" for these big discounts--also purchasing agent has to be willing to be unpopular with many department heads who wish to continue to do business in the "old way" and are reluctant to relinquish any of their responsibilities and authority.

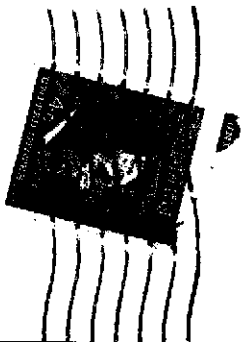
The City of Green Bay hopes eventually for metropolitan purchasing. At present, Green Bay buys certain items for DePere under Green Bay's "open end" contract.

(Continued)



LETTERS OF THE MONTH  
APRIL, 1954

Mrs. Walter Wieckert  
43 S. Meadows  
Appleton, Wis. 54911



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## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF APPLETON

September 2, 1959

### Mayor Mitchell and members of the Common Council:

Since the Committee of the Whole of the Common Council is meeting this evening to discuss possible changes in the office of Clerk-Comptroller, the League of Women Voters of Appleton has requested to be heard on a related matter.

We are familiar with the resolution dealing with the proposed changes as set forth in the Official Journal of the Appleton City Council for November, 1958. And the League is aware that the ordinance covering the Clerk-Comptroller's position cannot be modified before May of 1960.

The Appleton League's interest in this subject stems from the decision of its members to study during 1958-59 the possible need for a system of Centralized Municipal Purchasing in Appleton. May I say at the outset that the concern of the League with the position of Clerk-Comptroller relates entirely to the question of administrative organization; we have in no way sought to evaluate the incumbent's efficiency. The present Clerk and Mayor have been most generous with their time and knowledge in furthering our study of the basic facts of Appleton's municipal organization.

In Wisconsin there are nine cities with centralized municipal purchasing systems in operation. We chose to study the experience of four municipalities which seemed to be most like Appleton; namely, Beloit, Eau Claire, Green Bay, and West Allis. A large amount of resource material was collected and placed in the Public Library for our use. We arranged a public meeting with experts in the field of centralized purchasing, both industrial and municipal, and were happy to see so many aldermen and city officials present. Interviews with local department heads were also conducted to familiarize us with Appleton's existing system of purchasing, and the information collected was discussed at length in membership study meetings held throughout the year. Both efficiencies and inefficiencies in present local procedures were thus made evident to us.

From this brief account of our procedure you can see that the Appleton League has not taken this subject of study lightly! Our concern this evening is to present the stand we have taken as a result of our year's work. At its Annual Meeting for 1959 the Appleton League of Women Voters voted in favor of "Establishment of a system of centralized municipal purchasing in the City of Appleton, with proper personnel and the necessary authority, to further efficiency and economy in government through:

- a. Selection of a qualified purchasing agent by appointment of the mayor with approval of the common council from candidates successfully completing a written and oral qualifying examination;

- b. Cooperative purchasing to the fullest possible extent with Appleton public schools and Water Department, which are covered by State statutes; and
- c. Provision for warehousing facilities at the earliest possible date. Lack of such facilities should not delay establishment of the system."

(There are vacant buildings for rent and for sale in the area which have possibilities for such warehousing.)

You will note that the Appleton League is more specific in its recommendations than is the resolution of November 1958 presented to the Common Council, dealing as it does only with changes in the position of Clerk-Comptroller. The question of centralized purchasing for Appleton was raised by the League in its Candidate Questionnaire of April 1958. With two exceptions, all the contesting candidates answering the question favored a system of centralized purchasing if it would make possible greater efficiency for the city. Our research indicates that both in private business and in municipalities with established programs, greater efficiency and economy can indeed be achieved. In the words of Publication No. 104 of the Public Administration Service (1951):

Centralized purchasing definitely locates responsibility for purchasing and encourages expertness in buying . . . . .  
Competent authorities estimate that efficiently directed centralized purchasing results in reduction on the average of from 10 to 15 per cent of cost.

In our city, with a budget of over \$7,000,000 annually, the yearly savings on purchases could be very significant.

We realize that change is not always popular, that greater efficiency is hard to establish and maintain, and especially that the easiest course is simply to retain the familiar way of doing things. Strong and able leadership from the Common Council can bring great benefits to Appleton. We sincerely hope that whatever action you take on the resolution presently before you will not so bind the city as to prevent the later establishment of a centralized municipal purchasing system.

In closing, may I repeat the stand of the Appleton League of Women Voters favoring "Establishment of a system of centralized municipal purchasing in the City of Appleton, with proper personnel and the necessary authority, to further efficiency and economy in government."

Thank you for your attention and time.

Appleton League of Women Voters

Mrs. James Ming, President

SUGGESTED READING

(available in reference room of public library)

- Municipal Affairs, E.W. Steel: Chapter, "Centralized vs. Decentralized Purchasing", S. F. Heinritz
- Pamphlet: Purchasing for Small Cities, #104, Public Administration Service
- Periodical: League of Municipalities, Sept., 1955: "Basic Purchasing Procedures"



**A Study of the Need for Centralized Municipal  
Purchasing in Appleton**

Mrs. Chandler W. Rowe, chairman, with a committee composed of Mrs. Richard Adams, Mrs. Roger Baird, Mrs. M.M. Sealts, Jr., and Mrs. Walter Tippet developed a program of study which was outlined at the General Membership meeting in November followed by two morning and evening unit discussion meetings during ~~December~~ and a public meeting in February with a panel composed of the Mayor of Appleton, Director of Finance of Beloit and the Purchasing Agent of Green Bay, and moderated by Mr. Harold Adams, president of the First National Bank of Appleton.

The Public Administration Service pamphlet "Purchasing For Small Cities" by Russell Forbes was used as a text to outline the ideal Centralized Purchasing Authority, procedures and steps necessary for its establishment. Appleton's purchasing procedures were studied through conferences with the Mayor; City Clerk; heads of the Water Department, Public Library and the Park Department; Director of the Vocational School; and the Director of Business Affairs and Purchasing Agent of the Appleton Public Schools by the committee and presented to the membership in the unit studies. Also presented for unit study was correspondence with purchasing personnel of four cities comparable to Appleton (Beloit, Eau Claire, Green Bay and Wauwatosa) which had successfully adopted Centralized Purchasing, outlining their purchasing procedures.

To conclude this study, the committee recommended to the Board of the League of Women Voters the following to be voted upon by the membership for a concensus at the Annual Meeting:

Establishment of a system of centralized municipal purchasing in the City of Appleton, with proper personnel and the necessary authority, to further efficiency and economy in government. *through*

- a. Selection of a qualified purchasing agent by appointment of the mayor with approval of the common council from candidates successfully completing a written and oral qualifying examination.
- b. Cooperative purchasing to the fullest possible extent with Appleton public schools and Water Department, which are covered by State Statutes.

- c. Provision for warehousing facilities at the earliest possible date.
- Lack of such facilities should not delay establishment of the system.

The committee further recommended the following as a continuing responsibility:

Establishment of a system of centralized purchasing in the City of Appleton, with proper personnel and the necessary authority, to further efficiency and economy in government.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret S. Rowe  
 Mrs. Chandler W. Rowe, Chm.  
 Local Agenda Committee

at conclusion of study, a copy of the attached letter was written by secy. over the name of the Pres. of LUV of Appleton to the Mayor advising of results of this study.

June '59 - Alderman Stiering advised Anna Weiss (in her ward) V.P. of LUV that thing looked a bit "illegal" in that welfare & Ordinance Comm. instructed by Resolution (passed 17 to 3 at Nov. ~~2nd~~ <sup>1st</sup> mtg (see copy of minutes) to draft necessary Ordinance to separate Dept of Clerk-Comp & provide for Accountant. Had not written same. A. Weiss & P. Rowe called on Mayor Mitchell who advised no accountants hadn't been hired as of July 1<sup>st</sup> - according to Council's wishes. Due to ordinance not having been written to create office. Interviews had not started with applicants or laymen in Comm. Con-

Quited as he had planned because he felt it would be ~~waste~~ waste of time until Ordinance passed. Perhaps politics causing delay as rumor in City Hall had it that when eye of Clerk Comptroller is separated there are those who would want to cut salary of Clerk. The Mayor advised he will veto any such cut. (Some members of League talked to Alderman about this resolution in the following week)

I also talked to the Mayor about the best use we could make of the four remaining booklets at Conkey - "Purchasing for Small Cities". No copy had gone out of his hands so I left one of the four copies with him. The three remaining copies he suggested might be most effectively <sup>used</sup> put at the disposal of the Chairman of the Finance Comm. after the business of the accountant had been settled. (I turned over booklets to J. Pooling to send at the appropriate time)

Twelve & Ordinance Comm.

Hanneman, Chair

Stueghauer

Schumaker

Mueller

Jucker

The way that purchasing for the City of Appleton is handled at the present time has been described by Mayor Mitchell as "hit or miss." All purchasing is done through the Clerk-Comptroller, Eldon Broehm, except for the five departments which we shall discuss shortly. By city ordinance, all purchases of \$500 and over are made on receipt of bids, but often these bids may be submitted informally by only two firms: in this case the lower is usually taken, provided that it comes from an Appleton firm. Any purchase of \$1,000 and over requires advertising for bids—sealed, of course. But in the case of emergency purchases the city is not required to advertise for bids regardless of the amount involved.

The five departments doing their own purchasing are these:

Park Department  
Water Department  
Library  
Vocational School  
Public Schools

*Own budget*

Information gathered from interviews with officials of these departments will be presented at the January Unit meetings.

Do you know that—

1. ~~The City of Appleton~~ has two kinds of ordinances, charter and city?
2. The following are appointive offices: Deputy Health Officer, City Physician, Director of Public Works, Director of Recreation Commission, Librarian, Superintendent of Parks, Relief and Welfare Director, Plumbing and Building Inspector? If we have a Purchasing Director, he too will be an appointed official.
3. It has been discovered that the billed wholesale price to the city for Kleenex was higher than either you or I could buy the same item for in the store?
4. The city pays 13.13¢ per gallon, the police department pays 17.4¢ per gallon, and the park department pays 17 to 18¢ per gallon, all for the same quality of regular gas?
5. Mayor Mitchell bought on a bid basis and secured 20 barrels of DDT at a savings of \$500 over what was paid out for the same amount on hit or miss purchasing?
6. Separate bids were taken on school board, park board, and recreation department projects for the same type of hot-sheet asphalt coverings for streets, tennis courts, parking lots, etc.?

7. There is a difference between "centralized purchasing" and "cooperative buying"?

Since our interview with Mayor Mitchell, several changes have been made in purchasing procedure. All departments now must buy their gasoline through the City Clerk. All departments at City Hall must purchase stationery and office supplies through the City Clerk. These two changes have already led to substantial savings.

Since our agenda item was adopted in April, Alderman Stillings has introduced a resolution for a separate Comptroller position. At the November 19 Council meeting it was ruled that the city could not split the Clerk-Comptroller job until May 1, 1960, when the present incumbent's elected term expires. However, the alderman, by an 11-9 vote, approved hiring an accountant about June or July of 1959 and set up \$5,000 to pay part of his annual salary. It was said that he could be given a purchasing agent's duties and, after the ordinances are amended, be appointed by the Mayor, with Council approval, to the position of Comptroller.

Just how, at what duties, and from which office the Purchasing Agent should work are only a few of the questions that must be answered. The Appleton League's Local Agenda item is a very timely one, and action will be assured after our study has been completed.

Mrs. Karl Behling  
Rt 3 Box 365  
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

*Central Purchasing*

Dear Mrs. Behling:

Thank you for reminding me about your request for information on Centralized municipal purchasing. Please accept my apologies for not sending the materials to you immediately.

I am enclosing a copy of the booklet we used for our study. At the time we used ~~it~~ Purchasing for Small Cities it was already out of print, but somehow we managed to find twenty copies. This is the only copy we have on file so we are asking that you return it to us. Perhaps

I am also sending you my only copies of our agenda report and a statement we made ~~at-the-e~~ before the Common Council of Appleton. I was going to make additional copies for you but since you have waited so long for this information I ~~am~~ sending my copies and ask that you return them.

The following information is an outline of the material covered in our uni meetings.

- Storage room--do we have it--cost to rent or buy storage room
- Fixed price contract--good or bad
- Problems of setting up centralized purchasing dept.
- Clerk-Comptroller (In Appleton this position is combined & at His jobs the time of our study there was a move in Sec. to Council the council to separate the position. This Sec. to Public W we felt would be the first step in eventually Works & Board of getting centralized purchasing for the city.
- Review
- Council Correspondent
- All elections details
- License fees & contracts
- Comptroller--budget
- Audit & bills

Advantages of a centralized purchasing dept.

Duties of a purchasing agent

Qualifications of a purchasing agent--(we decided that the type of person hired was all

School Board was not included in study important

as it had such a dept already--being an independently elected body

we had a public meeting with the purchasing agent from Green Bay as speaker--a newly established dept.

We hope this will be helpful to you in setting up your study of the need for a county centralized purchasing Dept.

Sincerely,

R. 3 Box 365  
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin  
February 27, 1962

Mrs. L. W. Weis,  
1501 S. Alicia Drive  
Appleton, Wisconsin

Dear Mrs. Weis,

Thank you so much for forwarding your precious material on centralized purchasing. I am returning your copies of the report and address to the council, having taken from them excerpts that I feel may be of use to us. I will return the booklet "Purchasing for Small Cities" as soon as we have finished with it. In case you should have other requests similar to mine, this booklet is available, I think. It is included in a book that deals with governmental purchasing, the whole book being a collection of similar pamphlets. This book, of which I am sorry to say I do not know the name, is available from the traveling library at Madison, and can be obtained (for a three-week period) through local libraries. I'm sure anyone requesting the book including the "Purchasing for Small Cities" by Russell Forbes would receive the right book. My librarian merely asked for anything they had on centralized purchasing and related subjects, and the book was sent. The period of time you can keep it is rather a deterrent to its extensive use, but at least it is available. Thought this might save you sending yours out again, since it is the only copy you have left.

I am finding out fascinating things about county purchasing...and having just paid a whopping tax bill on our farm, it is most interesting to see how the money is being managed....or mis-managed.

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

*Ruth W. Behling*  
Ruth W. Behling

*sent stamps for postage*

**CENTRALIZED MUNICIPAL PURCHASING**

Unit Meeting Covered the following things:

Storage room--do we have it? Would it cost more to rent or buy?

Fixed price contract good or bad

Problems of setting up such a dept.

Clerk-Comptroller -- His jobs

- Secretary to Council
- Secretary to Public Works & Board of Review
- Council Correspondent
- All election details
- License fees and contracts
- Comptroller -- budget
- Audit and bills

Advantages of:

- Fixes responsibility
- Lowers cost
- Assures quality
- Controls inventories
- Saves time

Duties of Purchasing Agent

Qualifications -- person hired--all important

School Board an independently elected Board which has its own purchasing agent was not included in this study

Centralized purchasing just established in Green Bay--purchasing agent a panel speaker



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF APPLETON

September 2, 1959

*Mr. Broehm*

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*L. W. V. of Appleton*

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Respectfully submitted,

*Margaret W. Rowe*  
Mrs. Chandler W. Rowe, Chm.  
Local Agenda Committee



## *The League of Women Voters of Appleton*

APPLETON, WISCONSIN 54911

### STATEMENT OF THE APPLETON LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TO THE CITY COUNCIL -- NOVEMBER 26, 1979

I am Betty Breunig, President of the Appleton League of Women Voters.

As most of you are aware, the League does not comment item by item on the budget but, instead, concentrates on certain aspects of fiscal policy and future planning which we believe the city council should review periodically. For this reason, much of what I have to say looks ahead to next year.

But first, I would like to compliment Alderman Schwaller and his Committee on publicizing the committee hearings and on their openness and cordiality during the actual meetings.

Last year we said that our highest priority was for the Council to set a deadline for a comprehensive plan. We still say it. We understand that the Plan Commission has now formulated comprehensive plan policies which, along with projections by the city planners, will eventually be presented to the Council. This is well and good. But the League wants to convey to you now our great sense of urgency about action on this matter.

We are in the midst of a downtown crisis. You will shortly be asked to make a critical decision about National Redevelopment Company plans. It really would be unwise if you reacted to those plans without considering their long range implications. And how can you consider long range implications if you haven't looked at a plan for future development? We urge you to use your considerable influence to get the comprehensive plan from the Plan Commission, study it carefully and then....use it.

Community Block Grant funds have been earmarked for city planning. The League thinks that they should be used, in conjunction with the City's comprehensive plan, to hire an outside expert to help with decisions in this very complicated process. Traffic flow, green spots, parking, bus service, street widening, zoning, hotel space -- you name it -- all have to be examined in relation to each other. The next few years are crucial to all of Appleton, not just the downtown. We need a plan now.

As I proceed in my statement you are going to be humming, "I've heard that song before." True. In fact, it was in 1959

that we first brought up the subject of centralized purchasing. We are delighted that there is a move afoot to act on this issue. We had thought that the establishment of a Finance Department would virtually insure centralized purchasing as a cost-saving device but such seems not to have been the case. We endorse hiring a qualified purchasing agent who has successfully completed written and oral examinations. We are convinced that savings would far outweigh the salary of the agent.

Now, let me turn to the present budget. The League supports the continuation and improvement of public transportation as an important factor in conserving energy, improving the environment and serving the welfare of the population. For these reasons, we are in favor of spending \$8000 of city funds for a two-way radio system for buses. This sum seems little to pay for such an improvement of operational services.

Next, we suggest that, in the future, the city budget record the real cost of governmental services. Federal and state funds such as community block grants, transit assistance, bridge and street reconstruction subsidies, among others, are in and out capital expenditures which should, we believe, be recorded for public scrutiny. Would it be possible to add an appendix to the budget noting the anticipated use of these monies?

Finally, we support the library budget which we think is commensurate with the improved services it should offer. And, we congratulate you, members of the City Council, for implementing the decision to construct a new library building which will add an exciting dimension to our downtown.