



# League of Women Voters<sup>®</sup> of Falmouth Bulletin

July/August 2023

## Steering Committee Report

All things great and small —but all significant.

Many events have happened over the course of June! Let's start with the great.

The Supreme Court of the US, SCOTUS, rejected Independent State Legislative Theory, ISL, 6 – 3. State legislators cannot determine federal election rules or improve partisan maps and voting laws. That's a victory for voters everywhere and a defeat for those trying to undermine elections by suppressing voters.

LWVMA held their state convention in June, "Convention 2023: Better Together Building an Inclusive Electorate." The LWVMA adopted action priorities and goals for the next biennium. Go to the LWVMA website (<http://lwmvma.org>) for highlights of the program.

The Observer Corps presented their year-end reports on the following: Board of Health; Library Board of Trustees; Zoning Board of Appeals; Falmouth Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC); and Affordable Housing. The Observer Corps is the eyes and ears of the League, dedicated to ensuring compliance with the open meeting law. (See their reports in this issue.) The Observer Corps is looking for members to cover other town committees; what better way to keep the League informed of local issues? In addition, the Local Study Transportation Committee is reconvening to consider recent developments in that area.

As a result of COVID, more public meetings have become remote, which allows greater participation. The LWVF supports Hybrid Public Meeting H3040/S2024, which would mandate hybrid public meetings to be phased in over several years. The bill provides

## Table of Contents

Steering Committee Report.....	1
Observer Corps: Zoning Board of Appeals.....	2
Observer Corps: Board of Health .....	3
Observer Corps: Economic Development .....	5
Observer Corps: Library .....	6
Observer Corps: Affordable Housing .....	8
Natural Resources .....	10
Civics Committee .....	11
Legislative Committee .....	12
LWVF Statement on Hybrid Public Meetings .....	13
Legislative and Press Directory.....	14
Board of Directors .....	15
Meeting and Event Calendar .....	15

the opportunity for committee members to meet and vote remotely along with in-person members. This also allows the public to attend in person or remotely. See the letter on hybrid meetings on page 12 of this newsletter.

**"Democracy is not a spectator sport!"**

**—Janet Lauer**

Chair, Steering Committee



Have you renewed your membership yet? It's not too late. Go to our website at <https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts/falmouth/join-or-renew> to learn more and to join or renew your membership.

## **Observer Corps Reports: Zoning Board of Appeals, June 6, 2023**

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is appointed by the Select Board to rule on appeals from the Planning Board or Building Commissioner, variances from the Zoning Code and special permits. There are five full members and two associate members, each appointed for a five-year term; there is a full-time Zoning Administrator. The Board typically meets on the first and third Thursday of the month; meetings are public and agendas must be published 48 hours or more in advance on the Town website. There have been 25 meetings plus a site visit since my last report in June 2022; I attended 22 of these.



*Richard Johnson*

Currently James Morse serves as Chair, Scott Peterson as Vice Chair, Susanne Murphy as Clerk, Frank Duffy and Marc Finneran as full members, and Gerald Potamis as Associate Member: there is a vacancy for another Associate Member. Decisions require a supermajority (four of five votes); associates are designated to vote on applications whenever fewer than the five full members are present. The Board also rules on 40-B affordable housing projects, which require a simple majority (three of five).

The majority of cases heard are special permits related to pre-existing non-conforming lots — lots and buildings existing before May 19, 1959, according to the adoption (1979) or modification of the Zoning Bylaws (periodic). These were for modifications to structures, additions, raze, and re-construct, etc., in cases where the lot size, lot coverage by structures, or setbacks do not comply with current bylaws. A great many homes in Falmouth were built before the Zoning Code raised the minimum lot size to 40,000 square feet; modification to any of those homes requires a special permit. In these cases, the Board's goal is to make sure the requested changes do not make the structure less compliant and do not adversely affect the neighbors. Abutters' expressed

concerns or support are taken under consideration before a decision is reached. The Board often requests changes to the design to meet these goals, and applications are typically approved with conditions.

Variances are required to do something not permitted by the Zoning Code; these are rare and may be approved if a hardship can be demonstrated, such as placing an accessory structure in the front yard when the back yard is constrained due to wetland issues.

The Zoning Code was re-codified in October 2021, and that effort is continuing. The purpose was to correct inconsistencies and clarify meanings. There are areas of ambiguity: wood decks and stairs have always been considered structures while stone walls, steps, and pavements have not (except in Historic Districts). Last year, stone or masonry steps needed to enter a building were newly being interpreted as structures, impacting setbacks to lot lines and maximum lot coverage by structure on small lots. This position was reversed at a hearing in May 2023. There is confusion about where to measure structures: foundations are typical but corner boards or roof overhangs may apply in non-conforming setbacks; window wells seem to be ignored. The Board consistently advises applicants to meet with abutters and resolve noise and screening concerns prior to a decision, often requesting landscaping plans to be submitted.

The ZBA membership was relatively new at the start of this reporting period and needed to come to agreement on procedural issues such as staking of the full lot boundaries as well as proposed work before site visits; many hearings were continued to have the property bounds fully staked. There were several court-ordered remands upon appeal of ZBA denials, and board members are sometimes in disagreement as to the intent of certain Zoning Code

Continued on Page 9

## Observer Corps Reports: Board of Health, 2023

The Board of Health (BoH) has two new members: returning member John Waterbury replaced Steven Rafferty, whose term expired; Amy Roth replaced Ben Van Mooy, who had to leave the Board due to time constraints from his job. Amy has appeared before the Board frequently as a member of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee.



*Stephanie Miele*

The AutoCamp at 836 Palmer Avenue has been before the Board continuously since last year to explain the ongoing efforts to remedy the noncompliance of the conditions of the original approval to install an alternative septic system. Members of the public from Sippewissett spoke before the Board urging the closure of the AutoCamp until all problems are rectified. Representatives from the AutoCamp were required to appear before the Board once a month to present updates to their ongoing efforts to come into compliance. Some requirements are: to provide a timeline for treatment, pump wastewater off site for treatment, test daily for nitrogen percentages, and upgrade treatment equipment.

As more engineers appear before the Board seeking approval to install Innovative/Alternative (I/A) systems either in new construction or to replace existing systems, the Board is trying to steer them to manufacturers with proven records of the required nitrogen reduction. The property owner is responsible for the required amount of testing per year and payment of any fines if the system fails. The Board is trying to prevent these problems that could arise with a substandard system.

The owners of the Falmouth Heights Motor Lodge were called before the Board due to a drowning in their pool, which occurred prior to its opening last May. The pool was not yet open for the season and

had not yet been inspected. It was discovered that the code to access the pool was available to anyone as it was on the board in the office and there was no second lock in use at the time. The owners were given until July 1 to remedy the situation, with one member believing that this was too lenient for a drowning.

The SMART (Southeast Massachusetts Regional Transportation) Citizens Task Force has appeared before the Board to try to find a solution to the truck traffic, noise, and pollution on Woods Hole Road. Discussions have followed about licensing trucks, whether it is the responsibility of the state or town to set the guidelines, and whether the responsibility falls on Falmouth or the Vineyard. Mr. Scott McGann, Falmouth Health Agent, reviewed the nuisance regulations currently in place under MGL (Massachusetts General Laws), and how the Health Department staff has the ability to address those concerns. The concern of the Board of Health is mainly toward making sure the septage trucks are sealed to prevent leakage, not necessarily toward traffic and mechanical issues of the trucks. Mr. George Heufelder advocated that the town use embarkation fee funds to at least have a police officer in the area almost full time to monitor idling. Mr. Heufelder, Board of Health member, stated that he would be in favor of the Board of Health supporting and writing to the Select Board about using the embarkation fee funds, as idling is a health issue.

Smoke shop violations have come up on various occasions. Kappy's failed to obtain an annual tobacco sales permit when they did not realize that the license had expired. They were granted a temporary license while getting the proper paperwork. There was also a violation for an underage sale. The Falmouth Smoke Shop had three violations for selling flavored vapes. They had to close for 30 days. Four violations would mean permanent closure. In the midst of this the shop was sold to people with the same name. There had to be proof that there was no financial connection between the new and previous

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## ***Observer Corps Reports: Board of Health, 2023, cont.***

owners so that previous violations would not carry over to the new owners. If a license is suspended it is gone. There are only a certain number of licenses that will be granted in the town. The Village Pantry in North Falmouth was also cited for a second violation within 36 months, which requires a fine of \$2,000 and a one-week license suspension.

Housing issues are always interesting. One property had been in violation of the code for Maintenance of Areas Free from Garbage and Rubbish since 2015. They were cited for an excess of junk on the property making it look like a demolition project. It appears that it goes in cycles from being better to being bad. Another property was in violation of the State Housing Code: a leak in an unoccupied upstairs apartment was causing damage to the apartment downstairs where the tenants were without water and electricity. The landlord was refusing access. The owner stated that she did not know about the problem until a notice was posted on the door. She paid a fine with a promise that the problem would be remedied. All of this requires time for site visits, letters, and fines. The Board's policy is to try to get compliance rather than charge a hefty fine. They always try to work with the person in violation.

After the defeat of Article #18 to eliminate single-use plastic, it was determined that a committee should be formed to develop methods for working with restaurants, groceries, markets, and other large users of single-use plastic to help them voluntarily ease away from the plastics and find alternatives. The Select Board suggested that there should be a representative from the BOH on this new committee. Amy Roth will be the representative.

The Board continued to work with the Solid Waste Advisory Committee on issues concerning the collection and disposal of solid waste, recyclable materials, and compost. The differences between residential and commercial generators, all of which must recycle, should be made clear. The Board has worked with the Solid Waste Advisory Committee to form a regulation to clarify these distinctions. The Board is allowed to create rules and regulations re-

garding these issues. The Mass DEP has made it illegal to put recyclables in the trash, but without a regulation there is no way to enforce it. The question was discussed about what to do when customers are not in compliance because it is the hauler who gets the ticket when the load is in violation. The hauler needs to make the Board aware of serious waste ban violations, repeat offenders, and any noncompliance. Alan Robinson from the Solid Waste Advisory Committee inquired about the best way to educate the public. Distribution of tip sheets was suggested. Mr. Robinson is working to encourage the DPW to restore recycling drop-off for cans/bottles. This measure is being discussed and considered with the DPW, and there is a new contractor who supports the idea. The restoring of recycling and conversations between the DPW may be a topic that Mr. McGann can advise on.

The AIDS Support Group of Cape Cod went before the Board with an update on its activities. They will be leaving their brick and mortar quarters in Teaticket and becoming entirely mobile. They provide Narcan, a shower program, clean clothing, counseling, housing, and recovery aid.

Representatives from Learn to Cope and Support Group of Cape Cod discussed an initiative to install NaloxBoxes in places such as municipal buildings, schools, beaches, bath houses, and targeted businesses to help respond to overdoses. The pros and cons were discussed about having Narcan readily available without any monitoring and making sure that the boxes are always stocked. The intent is to have no barriers to access, like a first aid kit. The Board voted to support this initiative.

The former police chief from Woburn came before the Board outlining his proposal to open a training building for police in Technology Park. It would only be used for training off-season but would be available for community use.

A representative from The Air Force Civil Engineer Center appeared before the Board to give an up-

## **Observer Corps Reports:**

### ***Economic Development & Industrial Corporation***

The Falmouth Economic Development & Industrial Corporation (EDIC) is the Town of Falmouth's primary agency responsible for creating and developing increased economic opportunities for both the present and the future.



Carol Chittenden

Much of this year's report repeats what has been said in previous years, so those routine checkpoints and ongoing efforts are relegated to the end of this one. Onward to the blood, thunder, and glory!

Blood: none.

Thunder: some, much of it hidden in executive sessions surrounding the lease of the Station Grill. Executive session minutes remain unreleased past July 2020 pending completion of those lease discussions with Grill owners John and Marion Marcellino. Judging from public comment on the issue, one gathers that the members struggle with maintaining both the wish to support the Café's continued operations, and the need to uphold the public's trust in its fiscal responsibility in the face of mounting rent arrears and increasing maintenance costs. Despite compromise measures, the dilemma remains unresolved.

Glory (potential): Adjacent to the Falmouth Station property, EDIC owns an undeveloped parcel that would, in many ways, be an ideal location for workforce housing. An engineering study was presented at a community meeting in January, 2022, and nearby neighbors expressed many doubts and anxieties about traffic and social consequences of proposed rental housing.

In early 2023, EDIC gladly accepted the offer from Jill Neubauer, architect and neighbor, to hold a workshop and information session in late March on designing the housing to accommodate as many and varied concerns as possible. Ms. Neubauer was

joined by David Quinn of the Housing Assistance Corporation, and Bob Mascali, Select Board member and the Falmouth representative to the Cape Cod Commission. Ms. Neubauer emphasized again and again the importance of setting priorities and holding to them throughout the thousands upon thousands of decisions, large and small, that will be necessary as such a project proceeds. Subsequently, the members agreed that the project is very important, but a big lift, requiring real commitment and stamina for the work over several years. With that in mind, Executive Director Wayne Lingafelter was authorized to proceed with exploring and engaging official and voluntary channels for support, communication, expertise, funding, and community involvement.

More glory: the EDIC website has been substantially updated and expanded.

Between the vastly improved website and the minutes posted there, thorough information is available to the public about ongoing projects: Main Street Gigabit service, the landfill solar array, Technology Park, Marine Renewal Energy Collaborative, Falmouth Station renovation, and Raymond Park; and the completed projects: 704 Main Street, a high-speed internet study, and Community Development Block Grants. The website's featured project descriptions include information on how to use or be included in their benefits.

Necessary Glory: The administrative staff, Wayne Lingafelter and Lynne Broderick, provide detailed financial data to the Treasurer, Kevin Holmes, and their teamwork keeps a sizable budget, including forecasting, under successful control. Mr. Lingafelter is unfailingly on top of potential funding opportunities and grant applications, and Ms. Broderick supplies analytical bookkeeping, including evaluations of prospective vendors. The staff appears to be responsive to the members, and well informed about legal and regulatory boundaries. They prepare a packet for members before each meeting; members appear

Continued on Page 9



## Observer Corps Reports: Falmouth Library Board of Trustees

Being the League Observer at the monthly meetings of the Library Board of Trustees during this past year has been a unique privilege. This has been an especially important, even historic, year for the Falmouth Libraries, the people of Falmouth, and the future well-being of all. Attendance at Board meetings continues to be available in person or via Zoom and will be until 2025. During the winter months, that choice is especially appreciated, but the choice is available all year.



*Marcia Easterling*

In June 2022, Judy Fenwick was unanimously elected by the Board to be the chair for 2022–23. The Board then presented the revised Library Grounds Policy, which protects the Main Library Lawn from further permanent installations to preserve and protect the valuable open green space. The Trustees' budget now includes funds to maintain the upkeep of benches on the lawn for the benefit of the public. Moreover, the grounds will continue to be available to local groups and organizations on written request but their events must be open and free for the public. The only sale allowed on the grounds is the annual Friends of the Falmouth Public Library summer book sale. Request forms and rules for use are on the Library's website.

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Copies of the important Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022–2027 were made available. The Strategic Plan provides an impressive overview and road map for the next five years, and a number of actions cited have been achieved in 2022–23. Perhaps the most immediately important actions have to do with staffing and responsibilities of new staff.

By June 2022, the search for a new Assistant Director was already underway and nine candidates applied; five were interviewed via Zoom, and two in person. In August an offer was made to Brian Stokes

from the New York Public Library system, who accepted and began work on September 19. He was formally introduced to the Trustees at the October meeting. In New York he had volunteered and later worked circulating library materials to prisoners in New York prisons. By April he had already succeeded in making the same kind of arrangement with the Barnstable County Correctional Facility, warmly supported by Sheriff Donna Buckley. Brian has reported the enthusiasm of Falmouth staff for this new program.

Brian's chief responsibilities in his first year were to manage the hiring of a new Circulation Director and to be in charge of a new Integrated Library System (ILS) that went into operation in late February 2023. Soon the search began for the renamed Head of Access Services to reflect the fact that the Library offers many more services than circulating books, videos, etc. In December the new head of Access Services, Sara Rose Bevilacqua, began work. In February she was introduced to the Board and assured the Trustees that the Library policy to no longer charge late fees would be upheld indefinitely.

Brian did a superlative job of directing the transition to the new ILS, Koha Library Software, an open-source integrated system for managing and transferring materials among libraries. CLAMS had voted to switch from the old Sierra system to Koha (which means "gift" in Maori). January and February were devoted to training staff and getting ready for the seamless transition, which occurred on February 27, 2023. The CLAMS network remained intact. Library patrons only needed to create new pins to use the system — the last four digits of their phone numbers. Kudos and thanks to Brian and the library staff for their hard work. The Library Trustees soon showed its appreciation by fulfilling the staff's desire for an environmentally friendly coffee maker and bottled water for it. The Trustees unanimously approved to fund these at not more than \$800 for the first year.

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## ***Falmouth Library Board of Trustees, cont.***

Linda Collins, Director of the Library, announced in December that a Managed Service Provider for cyber security would be added to the Library's operating budget. \$12,000 was designated, which is less than the actual cost! In March she reported that the town Finance Committee had approved the FPL Operating Budget and \$15,000 was added to support extending hours at the East Falmouth Library. Additional funding was added to enhance technological security. In April, Linda announced that she would begin a medical leave in May, and Brian would be Acting Director in her absence. All of us wish her a speedy recovery and look forward to her return.

Of course, there were other impressive accomplishments over the year:

1. Unspent capital appropriation from FPL 2006 renovation was returned to the town: \$991.00.

2. The Board approved a Library Support Fund grant to provide a flat screen TV for the Children's Room.

3. The Great Decisions program for summer 2023 was sold out by April.

4. Changing exhibits of works by local artists are displayed in the Main Library.

5. The Trustees voted unanimously in June 2022 to contribute \$1800 toward the 6 July – August Wednesday night summer Movies Under the Stars. The cost is \$3600 per night. This program will continue this summer.

6. The Friends of the Library 2022 Book Sale brought in \$61,553 and the Holiday Sale \$6100.

7. Reference Librarian Jessica O'Connor received a grant in Fiscal Year 2021–2022 from Cape Cod 5's Community Grant program to pay for last summer events involving board games. There were six events at the Library in July and August with more than 300 multi-generational participants. Funds were used to buy 14 games. Jessica plans to offer more game days

and also allow games to circulate.

8. The Donate button on the Library website has indeed generated donations. Linda Collins drafted thank you letters and tax information for donors.

9. The bronze plaque for the AirFoil sculpture on the lawn was ordered and put in place.

10. Digitization of local materials continued in-house; *The Falmouth Enterprise* is now complete for 1896 through 2017.

Subjects of continuing concern and discussion:

1. Replacement of broken windows and slate roof of Main Library

2. Staffing concerns: the high local cost of living discourages applicants and many commute to off-Cape affordable housing. Salary concerns lead to resignations.

3. Salary concerns and the need to update staff job descriptions

4. Renovation/new construction of the East Falmouth Library

5. Increase of annual price for digitization by the service company provider from \$3700 to \$78,000. Alternatives being considered.

As all the above makes clear, the Falmouth Public Library Board of Trustees and the Library Staff model openness and transparency. Indeed both exemplify the integrity and dedication to serving the public that deservedly earn the admiration and respect of the community. Being an Observer seems almost superfluous, but it has been an exceptional learning experience for which I am deeply grateful.

**— Marcia Easterling**

League Observer to the  
Library Board of Trustees

## Observer Corps Reports: Affordable Housing

The Mission Statement of the Affordable Housing Committee (AHC): “The Falmouth Affordable Housing Committee assists the Select Board in its efforts to provide a full range of housing choices for households of all incomes, ages, and abilities. The Committee works to identify our workforce housing needs, to reduce the out-migration of our younger residents, and to minimize the displacement of our elderly on fixed incomes.”



*Lynne Rozsa*

The AHC serves in an advisory capacity to support the Select Board. Its current members are: Kerry Walton (Chair), Jessica O’Brien (Vice-Chair), David Garrison (Clerk), Pamela Harting-Barrat, Gina Torielli, and Chinna Mapp. As of July 1, Kerry Walton stepped down as Chair and David Garrison became Chair; Chinna Mapp is the Clerk, and Jessica O’Brien has remained Vice Chair. A number of housing-related administrators, developers, and interested citizens also attend the monthly meetings. The AHC is staffed by a caring and talented group of Falmouth citizens who continue to seek out, propose, and monitor those housing projects that will best serve the town.

Falmouth is in a housing crisis. This is not an exaggeration or marketing drama. Rental units are at an all-time low, as are mid-priced homes. The people who staff our police and fire departments, our hospital, our schools, our restaurants, our retail establishments, and so on are unable to afford the purchase price of the few available homes, and there are shockingly few places to rent. Plus, there is a growing need for emergency and transitional housing, as well as permanent housing.

The Affordable Housing Committee is constantly on the lookout for the ways and means to build up the housing inventory in town. There have been some

very successful projects completed this year: Megansett Crossing in North Falmouth, with all 10 units affordable; Lewis Neck Road, with four affordable houses; the Willett Way community of six homes built by Habitat for Humanity; and a home on Pheasant Lane originally destined for demolition, which is now a deed-restricted affordable home.

There are a number of ongoing projects that are either completely affordable or that include some affordable units. Brick Kiln Road, Scranton and Main Street, and the Crooked Meadow condominiums are among these. And there are some projects currently in the development pipeline: these include the Sax-on Partners proposal to build a 40-B multi-apartment rental complex off Sandwich Road and the conversion of the former Royal Nursing Home into rental workforce housing.

The issues that challenge these proposals are the universal bugaboos: traffic congestion, wastewater complications, and changes in neighborhood quality of life. The Affordable Housing Committee has listened to these project presentations and is searching out alternative answers to counter the community objections. It is clear that Falmouth needs to upgrade and streamline its permitting process to allow ecologically innovative construction and to encourage renovation and repurposing of existing but unused buildings. Design guidelines are another necessary component of a successful attainable housing future for Falmouth: neighbors will be more accepting of new rental buildings if those buildings are attractive and welcoming to both the renters and the neighbors.

The future of Falmouth, and the Cape in general, lies in the production of housing stock accessible to people of all economic levels. The Affordable Housing Committee remains vigilant and committed to the return of a well-housed community.

— **Lynne Rozsa**

League Observer to the  
Affordable Housing Committee



## ***Economic Development & Industrial Corporation, cont.***

to be well prepared, which allows routine business to proceed in a rapid, orderly fashion. Your observer does not request such packets in advance of meetings, though she may do so in the future.

Demands on staff time must be budgeted carefully, and some assignments absorb disproportionate amounts of attention as needs surge and subside. The Station property requires continuous attention to keep it in good repair, make any necessary structural improvements, attend to its historic significance, and maintain lease relationships with the DOT, Peter Pan, and Plymouth & Brockton bus services. Over several years now, EDIC ownership of a buildable parcel in the Tech Park has required far more time than anticipated to complete all the necessary steps preparing to offer it for sale.

EDIC membership continues to turn over, with further changes directly ahead. Longstanding members set a high and conscientious standard for engagement with EDIC's efforts and overall goals. If the newer members can meet that standard, Falmouth will continue to be very well served by the organization. EDIC's interests are necessarily interlocking with many elements of the community, and the members take seriously the need to consider the whole as they lay groundwork for smaller parts.

EDIC's mission is: To attract, advocate and support economic vitality and seek to constantly improve the business climate in Falmouth. It is important to remember that EDIC is, technically, a public non-profit corporation and not a town committee. In some respects it functions as a committee, though with aspects of an agency or department.

— ***Carol Chittenden***

League Observer to the EDIC

## ***Zoning Board of Appeals, cont.***

sections. For example, do changes to a building height or length in a location where it is closer to the property line than set-backs allow increase the non-conformity?

More than 100 cases (appeals, variances, special permits) are typically filed each year. 40-B applications for affordable housing were rare in this reporting period, although the need for affordable housing is increasing. At a few hearings, one full member and the associate member were absent, requiring a unanimous decision to approve a project. A few applicants chose to continue to a later date rather than risk a split vote and denial. One hearing date had only three members present, causing all the hearings to be continued.

— ***Richard Johnson***

## ***Board of Health, cont.***

date on the environmental clean-up at Joint Base Cape Cod.

Meg Paine from the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) gave a presentation regarding its public health program under an annual contract with Falmouth. Some of the services offered are: wellness programs at the Senior Center, maternal and child health, peri and prenatal visits, home visits for those who qualify, mental health programs, vaccines, and communicable disease surveillance.

The Board is always professional, patient, and courteous to members of the community who appear before it. The members of the Board work well together and discussions are always thorough.

— ***Stephanie Miele***

League Observer to  
the Board of Health

**CORRECTION:** In the June Bulletin, the name of Moira Powers was incorrectly listed. We apologize for this error, and we welcome Moira and all our new members to the League.

## Natural Resources

### Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Testing Center Site Visit

*Report on a visit by the Natural Resources Committee (Denise Morreale, Kathy Mortenson, Sally Palmer, John Carroll, Pam Polloni, and Richard Johnson) with a group from the Six Ponds Improvement Association in Plymouth, June 29, 2023.*

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently issued new regulations for Cape Cod, requiring towns to submit watershed permits to deal with pollution in ponds and coastal waters within two years, to be fully implemented within 20 years, or replace existing septic systems with an Innovative/Alternative system. The LWVF Natural Resources Committee wanted to learn more about these Innovative/Alternative systems and asked to tour the Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center (MASSTC), founded in 1998 by George Heufelder.



*Bryan Horsley of MASSTC led the tour.*

On-site septic systems are the largest contributor to degrading water quality in Cape Cod's ponds, streams, and estuaries. Nitrogen (N) and Phosphorous (P) are the greatest problem, nitrogen more so in coastal waters, phosphorus more so in fresh waters. Urine contains 80% of the N and 60% of the P in wastewater. A typical septic system is designed to effectively remove pathogens, but is relatively poor at removing N and P. Innovative/Alternative (I/A)

systems to maximize removal of N and P are tested at MASSTC, which is the largest third-party testing center for these systems. Some of the systems tested were designed at MASSTC, others are tested for private firms for a fee. The Center is adjacent to the Camp Edwards wastewater treatment plant and uses its wastewater stream to supply its testing needs. Some of the I/A systems use tanks to convert much of the nitrogen into a harmless gas, others are based in soil absorption systems.

MASSTC is also studying hydroponic systems to utilize N and P in treated wastewater as fertilizer as well as anaerobic digestion of waste to harvest methane gas. The Rich Earth Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, is a pioneer in collecting human urine, pasteurizing it, and then selling it to farmers as fertilizer. (See <http://richearthinstitute.org/>.)

Waterless urinals and urine diverting toilets facilitate this use. Falmouth Wastewater Division just announced their intent to establish a pilot project on urine diversion.

DEP has three stages for approving I/A systems: pilot, provisional, and general use. Pilot studies are conducted at MASSTC to do initial testing and data collection. Promising systems are bumped up to provisional, which allows installation in real-world settings with frequent testing to monitor effectiveness. When a minimum of 50 provisional installations are documented successes, the system is approved for general use, which does not require frequent monitoring. At the moment, only older, less effective technology is approved for general use; newer systems are still in the provisional category and require frequent testing. The costs for testing are a significant deterrent for homeowners seeking to retrofit their systems.

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## ***Civics: Lessons from 2023 and Plans for 2024***

Bob Haskell, a member of the Civics Committee, and I met with Social Studies Chair Mike Feeney at the High School on June 5. He brought us up to date on the completion of the 2023 Civics Projects by Falmouth High School sophomores. We also discussed future plans.

1. Falmouth High School will continue promoting small projects within each class rather than class-wide projects. They will continue this year's timetable, where the project period roughly coincided with the period between the spring Town Meeting warrant and Town Meeting itself. Mike Feeney is encouraging students to take on projects related to Town Meeting issues.

2. Shortly before the 2024 Spring Town Meeting, our Civics Committee will provide a letter/email to chairs of various town committees and to chairs of other community groups advising them of the student projects and requesting their cooperation if they receive requests from students. Virtually all student requests are in the form of an email from the student's teacher because students are not permitted to send emails themselves. Teachers are working with students on how to compose appropriate emails.

3. We advised that we will continue to be available to facilitate communications with members of the community when it would be helpful. This past school year, Mike Feeney matched each of four members of our committee with one of the four teachers teaching sophomore social studies, which was helpful. We learned the project topics at the outset. However, we generally did not know which student groups were having trouble with community contact. This coming year, he will try to set it up so that we will learn which student groups are having a communications problem so we can focus on them as early as possible.

4. Mike Feeney said that this year members of the Select Board and the School Board were responsive to the students when they received inquiries. Students can watch meetings on TV or social media.

Efforts are being made to insure that next year students have access to an online subscription to *The Falmouth Enterprise* during the period when they are working on projects.

5. Our "Guide to Advocacy," prepared from a Needham League template, is provided to all students and has been well received.

6. Teachers reported that, when League members attended the 2023 presentations, our presence energized the students. We will work this coming year to involve more League members so that virtually all presentations can be covered by one or two members of our League. Teachers also give us the opportunity to describe the League to the students and give us the chance to comment or ask questions. We are welcomed into the classrooms, and attending presentations becomes an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Please keep this opportunity in mind when spring rolls around.

**— Judy Ziss**

## ***Natural Resources, cont.***

The LWVF Natural Resources Committee had considered asking for a second tour in November for our general membership. Although such a tour would be excellent, we thought it might be too rigorous for the general membership—standing and walking outdoors for 60–90 minutes. Instead, we will ask the MASSTC team to make a public presentation on their work in October. Their website is excellent, and one can learn more about all of the projects being tested at <https://www.masstc.org/projects>.

*[Note that this description of the visit is from my notes and understanding, not a statement by MASSTC.]*

**—Richard Johnson**

Natural Resources Committee

## ***Legislative Committee***

The Legislative Committee is growing and there are now seven of us. Bob Mascali joined just before he was elected to the Select Board. New Falmouth League members Ann Holden and Moira Powers expressed interest and have now agreed to join as well. Moira's participation will be delayed but we will be happy to have her — and the other new members — as soon as they are ready to be involved.

Unless there are some surprises (Aren't there always surprises?), we have an agenda for next year. We will be supporting the following bills, but bill numbers are likely change:

- ◆ Common Start or its successor, H.489/S.301
- ◆ Act Relative to 3D Printed Weapons and Ghost Guns, H.2360/S.1509
- ◆ Affordable housing via fee on certain real estate transactions, H.2747/S.1771
- ◆ An Act to Modernize Participation in Public Meetings, H.3040/S.2024
- ◆ An Act to Increase Regional Transit Accessibility, H.3272/S.2277
- ◆ An Act Supporting Parents Running for Public Office, S.422/H.669; H.3579
- ◆ Facial recognition regulation, HB1728/SB927

We have been working for passage of Common Start from the time the bill was introduced; it was one of the bills featured at our public meeting last March. This bill would provide financing for child-care and for early childhood education to providers and to families themselves. At the March meeting we also highlighted the affordable housing problem. Then, some time ago, we responded to a communication from the Massachusetts League regarding firearm safety by endorsing legislation favored by Falmouth League members with expertise on this issue. We would like to continue working on these two very timely matters and, in each case, will be working for passage of the bill listed above, which the Massachusetts League has opted to sup-

port. Also, we will continue to support bills dealing with the shutdown of the Pilgrim facility in Plymouth, acting in association with the Cape and Plymouth Leagues.

Two of the bills we intend to support address issues of special importance to groups in our Falmouth League. We reached out to members who participated in the recent transportation study and were pleased to learn that the bill, which would improve funding options for regional transit, received their support. As for the public meetings bill, it would require, over time, that most meetings be hybrid. Here, we contacted Observer Corps and Voter Service members, both incoming and outgoing, to get their views. Again, we learned they favor the bill. However, Sylvia Szulkin (LWVF Spokesperson) would like to monitor the availability of financing for hybrid meetings and also consider provisions to deal with recalcitrant communities. We can keep those issues in mind as the debate develops.

The two remaining bills do not fit into a neat niche. The one pertaining to parents running for political office would permit campaign funds to be used when a parent needed childcare services due to a campaign. This bill would help mothers who are seeking elective office and would mesh with a federal law allowing use of campaign funds for this purpose in connection with a federal election. The final bill on our list limits the use of facial recognition software. Facial recognition software, like other computer-related “enablements” that are designed to help human beings perform functions, can become threatening if not regulated in some way. This bill would implement the recommendations of a special commission on facial recognition technology, would place certain limits on governmental access to and use of such software, and would mandate certain reporting requirements.

If you are interested in any of these bills or would like to see us support other bills listed on the LWVMA website, please get in touch.

**— Judy Ziss**

Chair, Legislative Committee





The League of Women Voters of Falmouth Supports Hybrid Public Meetings

We at the League of Women Voters of Falmouth have a robust Observer Corps program, where our members observe meetings of Falmouth public bodies and then report back to the general public and to appropriate committee chairs and officials. We were concerned about how public meetings would be handled post-pandemic. Thus, we were pleased and relieved to learn of H.3040/S.2024, which would mandate hybrid public meetings to be phased in over several years.

We write now to add our voices to other Massachusetts Leagues and to encourage passage of H.3040/S.2024 as expeditiously as possible. The bill provides an excellent balance between the need for people to meet together in person alongside a need to be able to participate remotely. Now that we have had the opportunity to meet remotely due to the pandemic, returning to the practice of requiring all meetings to be in-person no longer appears satisfactory. Although this bill encourages in-person meetings of committee members, it provides certain opportunities for committee members to participate and vote remotely. As for the general public, this bill allows members of the public to attend either remotely or in person. In sum, the proposed legislative solution offers the best of both worlds.

The bill wisely phases in the new meeting system and provides possible financing for the change. It has been suggested that the bill should be further strengthened by mandating consequences if a community becomes recalcitrant and such an amendment might be considered. However, we hope the statutory provision for financial assistance would be sufficient to overcome any such unwillingness. We in Massachusetts would be wise to begin this changeover process as soon as possible so that by 2030 we will make a hybrid meeting system a reality across the Commonwealth.

The membership of the League of Women Voters of Falmouth consists primarily of Falmouth residents but also includes some members from the adjoining towns of Bourne and Mashpee. Acting through our leadership, we endorse H.3040/S.2024, and we urge the legislature to act quickly to make hybrid public meetings the norm.

Janet Lauer  
First Vice President  
League of Women Voters of Falmouth





**Stephanie Miele**  
Certified Piano Technician

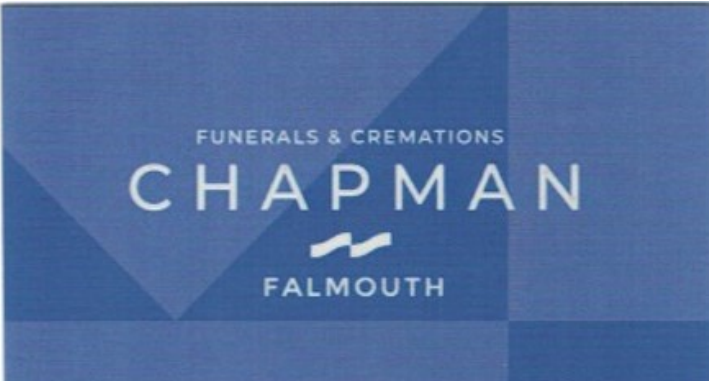
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## **Letters to the Editor**

### ***The Falmouth Enterprise***

Letters can be mailed to 50 Depot Avenue,  
Falmouth, MA 02540 or e-mailed directly  
to the editor at [saito@capenews.net](mailto:saito@capenews.net).

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Observer Corps	Meghan Palanza
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At-Large	Karen Epstein
Annual Meeting	Position Open

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Social Media	Penny Duby
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Off Board:	Kathy Mortenson, Olivia White
Board members:	Karen Epstein, Misty Niemeyer

\*Member of Steering Committee

## Meeting and Event Calendar

### NO MEETINGS IN JULY

<b>August 22, 7 p.m.</b>	<b>Board meeting</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>Meet and Greet. Place, date, and time to be determined</b>
<b>September 26, 7 p.m.</b>	<b>Board meeting</b>

### Contact us:

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Website: [www.lwvf.org](http://www.lwvf.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LWVofFalmouthMA/>

## Join the League of Women Voters: Democracy in Action!

You do not have to be a resident of Falmouth to join. Membership dues are \$55 for an individual membership and \$25 for an additional household member. A discounted rate is available for students. If you wish to join the League, send your check made out to the address below. Include your name, mailing address, and phone number.



prefer, go to our website at [www.lwvf.org](http://www.lwvf.org). Click on "Join" to join or renew and pay online.

Submissions for the September issue of the LWVF Bulletin are due on September 1, 2023. Please send copy, photos, and other material to both of these addresses:

maryfran55@earthlink.net  
eileenmattingly@yahoo.com