



BULLETIN, February, 2023

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

LWV MARCH FIRST FRIDAY FORUM

MARCH 3, 2023:

New Special Residential Development Zoning

The Lexington League of Women Voters will hold its next First Friday Forum on March 3, 2023, 9:30 AM at Cary Library. The topic will be the Special Residential Development proposal, a zoning warrant article coming to the 2023 Annual Town Meeting.

In January 2023, LWV Lexington invited Planning Director Abby McCabe and members of the Planning Board to explain the recent state mandate for creating zoning that will permit multi-family housing by right in Lexington. The Planning Board detailed their plan for potential multi-family housing zones, to be located near public transportation and other services. This final version of this plan will appear in a warrant article at the spring 2023 Annual Town Meeting.

At the March First Friday Forum, Jill Hai, Chair of the Special Permit Residential Development Ad hoc Zoning Committee (SPRD), and other members of the Committee, will set out their recommendations for new SRD zoning, intended to encourage the creation of smaller, more sustainable and affordable homes throughout Lexington. The panel will describe two zoning alternatives to conventional subdivisions: an amended Site Sensitive Development model and a new Compact Neighborhood Development model, which have been designed in collaboration with local builders, real estate professionals, housing advocates and residents. They will explain the differences between these zoning proposals and the MBTA Multi-family Zoning proposal presented in January, and argue the need for both initiatives if we are to meet Lexington's housing goals set out in our recent Comprehensive Plan, LexingtonNext.

This program is the sixth in the 2022-2023 First Friday Forum series hosted by the League of Women Voters to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. Lex Media will record the meeting, and there will be time for questions after the presentation.

For more information about the League go to
<https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts/lexington>

REMINDER:

**FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS ARE NOW PRESENTED IN PERSON. THE
MARCH FORUM WILL BE HELD AT CARY LIBRARY.**

COME EARLY FOR COFFEE.

Public Information Session:
Proposed Zoning Amendment to Diversify Housing in Lexington
Community Center, 39 Marrett Road, or on ZOOM,
February 23, 7:00 pm

In addition to the League's March First Friday Forum, an information session is scheduled for the public on Thursday, February 23, at 7:00 pm, on the proposed zoning bylaw amendment to special permit residential zoning. The amendment is intended to encourage the creation of smaller, more diverse and sustainable home options, as an alternative to large single-family developments.

This proposal is the result of the work of the Select Board's **Special Permit Residential Development (SPRD) Zoning Bylaw Amendment Committee (Ad Hoc)**, which was created in response to the 2018 Town Meeting vote to refer a citizen petition to amend this same zoning bylaw back to the Select Board. The Committee was charged with developing a zoning proposal to revise or replace the SPRD section of the Zoning bylaw to allow and encourage more affordable and diverse home types.

The work of the Committee is separate, but complementary to, the Planning Board's effort to develop new multi-family zoning to be in compliance with the State's MBTA zoning requirements.

The Select Board's SPRD Ad Hoc Committee will present its proposal to a number of Town boards/committees in the coming weeks. That schedule, as well as additional information about the work of the Committee, is available online at LexingtonMA.gov/SPRD

REMINDER: TOWN ELECTIONS: MARCH 6, 2023

LWV Lexington's annual Candidate's Night was held on February 16, 2023 at Clarke Middle School. As there was only one contested race this year, and none among town-wide

candidates, attendance was somewhat lower than in previous years. However, there was lively discussion in the precinct meetings, with attendees enthusiastically greeting friends they hadn't seen in person for some time. The announced topic of discussion in the precincts was whether our form of representative Town Meeting, rare, except in New England, should be preserved. It may come as no surprise to Lexingtonians that the overwhelming consensus was in favor of our institution: "the mostly nearly true representative government" in the country, and "a place where all citizens can be heard." The Founding Fathers (or at least many of them) would be proud!

A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Sponsored by

The Lexington Observer and the Lexington Lyceum Advocates

On **Tuesday, March 7, from 7:00–8:45 pm, at the Community Center**, the second in a series of Community Conversations will be held, sponsored by Lexington's online local newspaper, the **Lexington Observer**, and the **Lexington Lyceum Advocates**.

Panelists Ofrit Liviatan of Citizen Assemblies Divided Societies, State Senator Michael Barrett, Jerren Chang of GenUnity, and Anil Anuja of the Lexington Indian American League Getting Involved Group will discuss: **How Do We Encourage Civic Engagement to Foster a Greater Sense of Community in Lexington?** Breakout sessions will allow participants to discuss the question further.

As civic engagement is one of the primary missions of the League of Women Voters (see story below), we include this notice for our readers. We do point out that unlike League events, which are fully inclusionary, this program includes a charge for attendance.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

LWVMA EVENTS

**LWVMA Quarterly DEI Peer Discussion Group
March 15, 7:00-8:00 pm on Zoom**

The LWVMA Quarterly DEI Peer Discussion, meeting on ZOOM on March 15, will hear a presentation from Jeffrey Gold and Devorah Jacobson, co-chairs of the Reparations Committee of the Jewish Community of Amherst, JCA. Jeffrey Gold is a member of the Amherst League's Racial Justice Committee. They will introduce the **Stolen Beam Series**, a program of lectures based on their group's research into the possibility of reparations to

the Black community. The League had not taken a position on reparations, but encourages League members to attend, listen, and discuss with an open mind.

Local Leagues Activities Report: A Look at What Leagues Statewide Are Doing

Last month we reported on the Massachusetts League Program and Activities Goals for the coming two years. This year, for the first time, the LWVMA has gathered data to assess its overall impact, with a view to hone and increase that impact in the coming biennial. Below is a look at that data for the 2022 calendar year, gathered from 43 local Leagues serving 149 cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

League activities cluster around three general categories in support of its mission of Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy:

- 1) Encouraging informed and active participation in government,**
- 2) Working to increase understanding of public policy issues, and**
- 3) Influencing public policy through education and advocacy.**

412 Activities Reported	
Voter Engagement 170	41%
Public Policy / Civic Education 106	26%
Community Service and Engagement 43	10%
Advocacy / Cause 37	9%
LWV Members / Visibility 40	9%
Fundraiser 10	2%
Award / Scholarship 7	2%

Seventy-seven percent of local League activities were considered events, of which 43% were conducted remotely, 47% in person, and 10% hybrid. Attendance at these 315 events ranged from four to 3,000, and totaled 28,422 attendees over 2022.

Voter Engagement.

There were 73 voter registration events reported, registering 758 voters. Where voter registration was already widely established, Leagues helped with online registration and providing information about upcoming elections. Providing nonpartisan and unbiased information to assist citizens in making voting decisions continues to be a primary function of local Leagues.

There were 50 local League Candidate Forums in 2022, covering both local and state primary and general elections. Local Leagues worked together to present ballot question forums as well. In addition to the national League’s online voter guide VOTE411, local Leagues published their own voter guides in local newspapers and on their websites.

Civic Education and Advocacy on Public Policy Issues

Twenty-six percent of local League activities involved civic education through educational forums, civic education programs in middle and high schools, community newsletters, and the like. Leagues were also involved in sending letters or appearing before local Select Boards, City Councils and Town Meetings in support of or opposition to policies covered by state and national League positions.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In 2020 the LWVMA adopted a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy which each local League was required to incorporate in its bylaws.¹ Local Leagues were encouraged to view all of their activities through this lens and they reported that they were working to do so.

133 activities (32%) identified as working toward our DEI goals	
Youth Civic Education 27	20%
Youth Voter Registration 21	16%
Seniors Voter Registration 10	8%
Voter Registration with DEI partner(s) 10	8%
New Citizens Voter Registration 4	3%
Candidate Forum with DEI Partner(s) 8	6%
LWV Table at DEI Event 6	5%
Jail-based Voting 1	1%
Forum, Discussion, Advocacy DEI (generally) 14	11%
Race 16	12%
Women 6	5%
Indigenous People 1	1%
Affordable Housing 6	5%
BIPOC Speaker/Panelist 3	2%

¹ “The League of Women Voters is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in principle and practice. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.”

Voter Engagement

The LWVMA Voter Engagement Committee is seeking Portuguese and Spanish-speaking members who might be interested in converting written messaging to multiple languages for a Lawrence, MA “Get Out the Vote” initiative for 2024. Email igoldman@lwwma.org.

LWVMA ADVOCACY

Corrections Reforms

The League of Women Voters has long advocated for a sound corrections system that provides opportunities for the rehabilitation of adults and juveniles, protects the civil and individual rights of the individual, and provides facilities with sufficient prison space to ensure humane living conditions for people who are incarcerated.

In January, LWVMA President Elizabeth Foster-Nolan wrote to encourage our new Governor Healey to: • Undertake a comprehensive review of management practices and living conditions at DOC’s correctional facilities; • Eliminate the systemic defects that have led to reliance on excessive punishment; and • Refocus operations on education and rehabilitation.

Her letter said, in part:

As you develop your leadership team and policy priorities, we ask you to turn your attention to the Department of Correction (DOC) and the management of the Commonwealth’s correctional facilities. By all accounts, treatment of those in custody is often excessively punitive, physical and mental health care is generally inadequate, and family connections are often limited and/or restricted unnecessarily. The League is particularly concerned about the persistent overuse of solitary confinement. Conditions in solitary confinement are harsh and inhumane, and time spent in those units disrupts educational programming and can derail a person’s preparation for reintegration into society.

In June of 2021, DOC announced their intention to end restrictive housing, defined as being held in a cell for more than 22 hours a day. However, there was no commitment to a firm time line for reforms and no promise to eliminate other categories of segregated housing.

We ask you to ensure that the managers you put in place at the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) and DOC are committed to achieving these goals.

Climate Change

In her first full day in office, Governor Healey issued **Executive Order No. 604: Establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience Within the Office of the Governor**, which spells out a whole-of-government approach to reducing carbon emissions to achieve mandated net zero emissions by 2050. This Office is to be managed by the first-in-the-nation state cabinet-level Climate Chief, Melissa Hoffer, and will be supported by the largest input of federal funds ever in our nation’s history: rebates, tax credits, and low interest loans intended to supplement state funding and jump start the transition to clean, renewable energy.

In January, the LWVMA President wrote to Climate Chief Hoffer, advocating for:

“the development and promulgation of a broader based, state-wide public outreach and awareness campaign that will help all Commonwealth stakeholders better understand the content and opportunities provided by recent federal and state legislation promoting the conversion to—and adoption of—electrification across all sectors – buildings, transportation, residential heating/cooling, home, lawn and other appliances.”

The letter said, in part:

“Implementation of An Act driving clean energy and offshore wind and Governor Healey’s stated climate plan is key to transforming our energy system, and multi-stakeholder adoption is an essential ingredient for getting to scale and accelerating adoption. As details about state and national climate plans continue to roll out, information is being disseminated in an uncoordinated manner, and in bits and pieces by a range of media and organizational sources. Our work at the local League level reveals both a general lack of awareness of stated goals and electrification options available, as well as widespread confusion on the part of installers, agencies, town administrators, and the general public about what resources are available for what, when and for whom.

“We concur with the recommendation for a professionally developed, statewide public awareness and outreach campaign A centerpiece website should be user-friendly, factually correct and current, and propelled forward into public awareness through a robust, and ongoing statewide outreach campaign. We also recommend that this information portal be separate from the mass.gov³ and MassSave websites and dedicated solely to informing and linking all stakeholders with the full range of tax credits, rebates and other available incentives. We now have a viable and strategic path forward to a cleaner, healthier, economically vibrant and sustainable future. Providing solid, reliable, easily accessible and current information for all stakeholders and the general public will start us and keep us on that path.”

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization dedicated to the principles of self-government established in the Constitution of the United States. The League works to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government.

For more information contact Lexington League Convenor Margaret Coppe at mecoppe@gmail.com.

SAVE THE DATE

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|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| February 23, 2023 | Warrant Article 33 Information Session
Community Center, 7:00 pm |
| March 3, 2023 | First Friday Forum, Cary Library, 9:30 am |
| March 6, 2023 | Town Election Day |
| March 7, 2023 | DEI Peer Discussion Group, Zoom,
7:00-8:45 pm
Community Conversation,
Community Center, 7:00-8:45 pm |
| March 20, 2023 | Town Meeting Begins |

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We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you'd like to submit an article for the March 2023 LWV LEXINGTON Bulletin, please send it to Wendy Manz at wendy_manz@yahoo.com prior to March 12, 2023.

