



League of Women Voters[®] of Falmouth Bulletin

Summer 2026

Steering Committee Report

Over the last weekend in June, I had the privilege of attending (virtually) the 2026 LWVUS convention, with the theme of “Women Unite & Rise.” The LWV is the largest non-partisan grassroots political organization in the US. Our mission is promoting democracy and empowering voters.

We are living in perilous times. Democracy is under siege due to a constitutional crisis in all branches of government. This is not a partisan issue; it is a political issue. The current moment is being compared to the women’s suffrage movement over 100 years ago. It calls for us to be bolder, more decisive, and courageous.

At the convention we voted to adopt the motion to protect voting rights, elections, redistricting, individual rights, and the presidency. We also adopted a motion protecting the rights of immigrants currently in the United States.

In 2024, for whatever reason, 90 million registered voters did not cast a ballot. Registering voters is only part of our mission—we must also encourage and inspire people to vote. Voting is the foundation of a healthy democracy. It should be viewed not as an option, but as a civic responsibility and a powerful way for citizens to hold those in power

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accountable.

Democracy requires participation, vigilance and people willing to act. This is a powerful moment to serve our communities. As the poet and activist June Jordan once wrote, “We are the ones we are waiting for.”

—Janet Lauer

First Vice President

[Editor’s Note: To learn more about the LWVUS national convention, see Janet’s article on page 2. The next LWVUS National Convention will be in 2028.]

Member News

LWVUS National Convention

The LWVUS 2026 convention, Women Unite & Rise, was held in Columbus Ohio the week-end of June 25-28. There were 1,983 live and virtual delegates representing 49 states.

A special guest, Lucy Baines Johnson appeared virtually and spoke about the passage



of the Civil Rights Act, on July 2, 1964, her 17th birthday, and the Voting Rights Act on July 2,

1965, her 18th birthday. She accompanied her father, President Lyndon Johnson, to Congress for the signing of these acts. She continues to support and commend the LWV in our mission for voting rights.

It was reported that there are 70,000 members, of which 18,000 are new members to the LWV, despite the increase in dues. Of the 136 suits brought against state and federal governments, the LWV has had 77% wins.

We have increased our revenues due to partnerships, investments, and philanthropy. We have formed partnerships with Girl Scouts of America, the cosmetics firm LUSH, the American Library Association, and the School Superintendents Association. The partnership with the Girl Scouts promotes a customized VOTE411 program.

There were seven proposed resolutions and six that were passed. The proposed budget was passed, as well as the LWVUS slate of nominees. Brynne Gorman of LWVMA was given the Helping Hand award for her work transitioning the membership platform. Vedna Heywood of Massachusetts was voted in as Vice President of the LWVUS. The new president of LWVUS is Sonia Irwin.

As a virtual delegate, I found the platform was easy to navigate and to use to vote. The LWVF reimburses up to three members to attend virtually. I encourage members to consider being a delegate at the next convention in 2028.

—Janet Lauer

First Vice President

Some Local Ways to Take Action

Sat, Jul 18 @ 12pm [Good Trouble Lives On in Falmouth! >](#)

Fri, Jul 17 @ 4pm [New Bedford- Bridge Brigade: Good Trouble Lives On >](#)

Sat, Jul 18 @ 11am [Plymouth MA Good Trouble Lives On >](#)

Sat, Jul 18 @ 11am [Eastham, MA - Good Trouble Lives On >](#)

Sat, Jul 18 @ 9am [Randolph, MA Voter Registration >](#)

Sat, Jul 18 @ 10:30am [Hingham MA Good Trouble Lives On >](#)

Lace Up for Democracy: LWVF Hits the Road at the Falmouth Road Race

This August, members of the League of Women Voters of Falmouth will once again take to the streets for the Falmouth Road Race on **Sunday, August 16**, for our third year, and we're aiming to make this our most successful fundraising and team effort yet.

Our team of eight runners and walkers isn't just covering the miles — they're carrying the League's message with every step. Every mile raised is a mile toward expanding voter education, protecting access to the ballot, and keeping Falmouth residents informed and engaged in our democracy.

A huge thank-you to our team:

Running the 7-mile road race: **Cameron Costa, Alicia Miller, Ciara Chagnon, Jane Walsdorf, Alyana Krempa, Sarah McCormack, and Kristin Nelson.**

Walking the At-Home Race: our team captain, **Misty Niemeyer.**

Thank you all for representing LWVF and putting in the training, time, and heart to make this happen!

Why it matters: LWVF's work — from voter registration drives to candidate forums to non-partisan election guides — depends on community support. The Road Race is one of our biggest visibility and fundraising opportunities of the year, putting our name and mission in front of thousands of runners, spectators, and neighbors.

How you can help: The best way to thank our team is to help them reach their goals:

Donate to our runners' individual fundraising pages. Every contribution helps them cross the finish line on their goal, not just the course. Here is the link to the fundraising page:

<https://raceroster.com/events/2026/112177/the-2026-asics-falmouth-road-race/pledge/team/926870>

Spread the word. Share our team page with your family, friends, and networks on social media or by email.

Cheer us on. Come out and support the team on race day — a friendly face on the course means a lot at mile 5!

Let's make this our best fundraising year yet. Thank you for supporting LWVF's runners and our mission!

Member News, cont.

Falmouth Police Department's Civil Rights Officer Explains His Role

The LWVF's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging committee hosted Lieutenant Ryan Hergt on a Zoom call, during which he discussed the difference between a hate crime and a hate Incident, and explained how the department deals with undocumented workers, particularly in the 5,000 vehicle stops each year.

Hergt says hate crimes and civil rights crimes are underreported in part because undocumented people are afraid to come forward. A report can be completed now that does not involve them, but it allows the police to do something later if they decide it is time. If someone calls another person a derogatory term once, that is a hate incident, not a crime; but if they do it three to five times, that might be a hate crime. Only one to five hate crimes a year get reported in Falmouth.

Lieutenant Hergt explained that after George Floyd's murder by a policeman in Minneapolis, "the Massachusetts legislature asked us to go through 40 hours of training by the police academy on hate crimes, implicit bias, freedom of speech, domestic violence, autism, and other topics." His civil rights position was mandated by a Massachusetts law passed a few years ago that said every police department in the state must have a civil rights officer.

The Falmouth Police Department does not report undocumented people to ICE. He said of the 5,000 vehicle stops each year, most result in warnings and not legal filings, which

could impact the undocumented. He also said that most of the undocumented have the driver's licenses the state decided to give them a few years ago, so they would not be charged with driving without a license.

On one item, he hedged a bit. When asked if the other officers liked the civil rights aspect of his role, he said we would have to ask them. He did say some were not thrilled with being asked to go through the ABLE training—Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement. It's a program that teaches police what activities officers might engage in that are inappropriate for the situation, some of which could have been used by the other officers at the Floyd murder. He said some officers in Falmouth didn't like the concept at first, but after the training, they could recall things they had seen that were really inappropriate and they liked the training.

This listener was glad for this training. My husband and I have been harassed by police officers three times for the offense of breathing while gay. (This was not in Falmouth.) I would love this training to be used elsewhere.

—Don Gibbons
DEIB Chair

[Editor's Note: If you missed Lt. Hergt's presentation, you can see an FCTV program about the ABLE training (Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7rPOZocAaE>. For more on being a bystander as an individual, see the American Psychological Association webpage at <https://www.apa.org/pi/health-equity/bystander-intervention>.]

Introducing the Observer Corps

An Observer for LWVF is an individual who attends a public Town Governmental meeting, makes notes on what happens at the meeting, and reports back to the League. Considered the eyes and ears of the League, the Observer Corps is dedicated to ensuring compliance with the Open Meeting Law. The Observer is there only to observe, not speak to issues or answer questions. Our group is the essence of civic engagement and volunteer participation.

Awareness of the concerns coming before boards and committees will help the LWVF choose local program studies which will be appropriate for action and helpful to the community. The Observer Corps written reports are critical for this purpose. Town Government bodies benefit from our Observer's remarks in the form of the written report which is hand-delivered to the Chair of the observed public body, published in the Bulletin, and posted on the LWVF website after the presentation at the public Observer Corps meeting.

Over the years, a substantial number of Observers have run for elected office or have been appointed by the Select Board to the board or committee they had originally observed as a League Corps member. Thus, the Observer Corps has become a path to participation in decision making for the community-at-large.

Observer Corps: Library Board of Trustees

In 2025-2026 the Library Board members were:

Judith Fenwick, Chair

Camille Romano. Recording Secretary

Jennifer Alai, Vice-Chair and Policy Committee

Judith Handley, Treasurer and Resource committee

Kathie Mount, Buildings and Grounds Committee

Mary Fran Buckley, Corresponding Committee

Donna Mattison-Earls

Bob Mascali - Select Board Liaison to BOLT

In the May 2025 Town Elections, Jennifer Alai and Mary Fran Buckley ran unopposed, and in May 2026 Judy Fenwick and Camille Romano also ran unopposed so the 2026-



*LWVF Observer
Marcia Easterling*

2027 Board remains the same. However in June 2026, as in previous years, the Board may undertake some reorganization of responsibilities.

After all the very detailed work devoted to the planning for a new East Falmouth Library in 2025, the major task facing the Board this spring has been the required first formal evaluation of Library Director Brian Stokes, who has completed a year and a half in this role but first joined the library staff in September 2023 as assistant to Linda Collins.

Observer Corps: Library Board of Trustees, cont.

The Board will report on the conclusion of the process at its June 2026 meeting.

By May 2025 almost one hundred firms had requested applications for the design phase for the East Falmouth Library, eleven were selected for further review and 4 finalists were chosen and ranked. In December the four firms presented their cases to the E. Falmouth Library Board Advisory Council, the Town, the Library Board, and the firm contracted to serve as OPM (Owner's Project Manager), selected the first ranked firm, Oudens Ello, which submitted their completed design plan by January 1. The Board learned in December that the Falmouth Public Library had been waitlisted for construction funding by the MPLCP, a very important step toward the eventual funding from the state for the new library. At the May Board meeting, Stokes provided an update on the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Phase (MPLCP) concerning a date Falmouth might expect funding for construction. It is possible that the funding grant might be earlier than originally expected, perhaps as early as 2027.

Major challenges over the last twelve months have been the loss of federal funding and inflation. However, in 2025 an anonymous local donor matched what the expected state funding would have covered (\$7500) so the needed archival study conducted by a professional preservation assessor did occur in early 2026. The rising costs due to the continuing crisis in the Middle East are affecting the town budget for the library. One example of the impact on the li-

brary is the rising cost of permits from the town for the 5 tents rented for the summer library sale. And the Massachusetts Board of Libraries Committee discontinued access to 21 research data bases. However, the BOLT budget for 2025, separate of course from the Falmouth town budget for the library was underspent by some \$5000. Stokes requested an increase in the town budget Fiscal Year 2027 for the library and it was granted. However, the town has requested "light recruiting" of new staff for not only the library, given the anticipated rise in costs for all areas of town services. As a result, the special financial support provided by the Board, the Friends of the Library, and the Falmouth Library Support Fund will also be affected by rising inflation.

A major expense (\$9K) for the BOLT budget this year was the purchase and installation of 4 new benches on the Library Lawn. An annual donation from the Wintermeyer Fund helped make this possible. Another earlier purchase, of new Public Access computers, previously leased cost \$11000. The trustees also continue to support staff professional development through several staff appreciation events each year and the funding of various professional conferences and training programs. With more expected from staff because of "light recruiting," such support is critical to staff morale. An especially novel one was the New England Science Boot Camp for Librarians in June 2025 but so appropriate for librarians in a town like Falmouth!

As always the Friends of the Library and the

Observer Corps: Library Board of Trustees, cont.

Library Support Group also provide funds which make it possible for the Library to offer so many services which neither the town nor the Board could fund. The heads of these 2 groups report to the Board. In July 2025 the Library Lawn Sale took in \$80,000 and the Holiday Sale in December \$5600. The 2026 summer book sale will take place July1-6 on the Library Lawn. I recently learned that the first BOLT budget began in the early twentieth century with a donation of \$300.

One responsibility of the Board Policy Committee is to develop or revisit important library policies, all of which must be submitted to the Town Counsel for approval. Over the past year the following have been addressed: Library Access revision, Library Ground Use, Young Adults and Children Areas, Meeting Rooms Use, and Displays and Exhibits. All of these have been impacted by increasing requests from many different organizations to use library space. The Building and Grounds Committee develops requests for funds from the BOLT budget for maintenance and innovation. Finally, the Resource Committee drafts the fiscal year BOLT budget. During Public Comment at the May 2026 Board Meeting, two speakers challenged the terms of the new Library Access Policy which prohibits reservation of the Hermann Room for Falmouth Village Association meetings. The Board agreed to revisit the policy at a future meeting. Representatives of the Falmouth Sesquicentennial Committee planning the celebration of the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 also spoke to request the planting of an elm and the placement of a commemora-

tive plaque on the Library Lawn and the request was unanimously granted.

Staffing of course, continues to be a continuing concern. Gail Rose is retiring after 39 years of service to the library and the Board and library staff are honoring her in June. Peter Cook, who was head of Technical Services, retired in June 2025. Stokes is planning to combine some staff responsibilities in compliance with the need for "light recruiting" in the foreseeable future

Finally, looking ahead:

- Will the State grant funds in 2026-2027 for the Construction Phase for the new East Falmouth Library?
- Will the Hermann Room AV system receive funding for badly needed improvement?
- Will Falmouth Library Archival material make its way to a proper home? (In March 2026 a Conservation Environment Monitoring Pilot system (FREE) arrived to monitor the archival
- area environment.)
- Will Phase 2 of the main library window replacement goal be completed soon?
- What new programs and events will the library begin to offer?

In closing, I would like to thank the League of Women Voters of Falmouth and the Library Board of Trustees for permitting me to observe over many years. What a privilege. I hope to witness the opening of the new East Falmouth Library, having been a witness to the process so far.

[Report Submitted by Marcia Easterling]

Observer Reports: Zoning Board of Appeals

Zoning Board of Appeals Observer Report June 8, 2026



*LWVF Observer
Richard Johnson*

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is appointed by the Select Board to consider special permits, variances and appeals of the Building Commissioner's decisions. ZBA is also the permitting authority for develop-

ments under the 40B law for affordable housing; input from other town boards is considered but ZBA has final permitting authority. Five members and two associate members are appointed for five-year terms. There is a Zoning Administrator and an Assistant Administrator who handle much of the paperwork. ZBA operates under the Open Meeting Law with all deliberations made in public open meetings, typically recorded and broadcast by FCTV, with files for each application available for review on-line or in the office.

ZBA is currently composed of Susanne Murphy chair, James Morse vice chair, Frank Duffy clerk, Scott Peterson and Marc Finneran voting members, and Anthony Petrucci and Nicholas Hanney alternates. Approval requires a supermajority (4 of 5) except for 40B and mixed-use developments which require a simple majority (Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020).

The majority of cases heard are special per-

mits related to pre-existing non-conforming lots; lots and buildings existing prior to the adoption (1926) or modification of the Zoning Bylaws (periodic). These are 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 sf in most zoning districts, and modifications to any of those homes require a special permit. Certain other structures or changes always require a special permit; more than two garage bays, swimming pools, accessory structures in the front yard are examples. 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.

Affordable Housing developments are permitted under the 40B law which allows ZBA to negotiate waivers from any of the Zoning Code restrictions, typically density, building height, setbacks for property lines and oth-

Continued on next page

Observer Reports: Zoning Board of Appeals, cont.

ers. 40B developments may be proposed in any zoning district although the law gives preference to locations close to public transit and recreational facilities. These developments are often complex and controversial, requiring many meetings to reach agreements and hear abutters concerns. ZBA's strategy in the past has been to negotiate the best possible project with the developer and condition approval on any essential changes. The developer may appeal denial or conditions that are onerous to the State Housing Court who tend to favor affordable housing needs over issues of local concern. In some cases the applicant requests mediation to resolve what they believe to be onerous conditions rather than contest the decision through the State Housing Court.

Since June 2025 ZBA has heard fifty nine new applications including five 40B developments and several appeals of the Building Commissioner's decisions. Falmouth had reached "safe harbor" in 2025 which allowed the ZBA greater control over 40B Comprehensive Permits, but several of these applicants contended that safe harbor expired when the largest project previously approved did not pull a building permit in the required time

span. The State Housing Appeals Court agreed with the applicants, Falmouth appealed that decision, and the appeal was denied. Two 40B Comprehensive permits were approved (both Habitat for Humanity projects); three larger projects were delayed by the appeal but will move forward now.

The mediation process allows one or two members to negotiate with the applicant without violation of the Open Meeting Law. ZBA considered appointing a Mediation Subcommittee but Town Counsel advised that would trigger the Open Meeting Law. In one case (Falmouth Southerly) several conditions were revised in mediation and voted upon by the full board; the revisions were not read into the public record at that vote in what this observer considered to be a lack of transparency. At a later ZBA workshop this was brought up for discussion and the Board agreed it would be better to read revisions into the public record before the vote.

ZBA meetings are recorded by FCTV and may be viewed on demand on their website. The minutes of meetings and decisions may be accessed on the ZBA website.

[Report submitted by Richard Johnson]

Observer Corps: Board of Health Report

Board of Health Observer Report, 2026



LWVF Observer
Stephanie Miehle

The Board of Health (BOH) meets twice a month on Mondays at 5:30. The new chair, recently voted, is Jed Goldstone. The meetings recently moved from the Civil Defense Room to the Select Board Room in Town Hall where it is possible for

FCTV to record the meetings which allows the public watch at home.

One issue that came before the Board this year was a bylaw to create a formal system to register and regulate short-term rentals. A committee was appointed by the Select Board with representation from the Falmouth Police Department, the Planning Board, Select Board, Affordable Housing Committee, a real estate professional, and a representative from the Community Preservation Committee. The Board had been invited to appoint a representative but chose not to. The bylaw, effective Jan. 1, 2027, creates a formal system to register and regulate short-term rentals, with the goal of protecting neighborhoods while still allowing homeowners to rent their properties. Under the new rules, anyone operating a short-term rental must obtain a town-issued license, valid for two years, and submit detailed information — from proof of ownership to parking, trash, and noise-control plans. Each property must also have a designated local

operator, available 24/7 and living within 20 miles, to respond to complaints or emergencies. Short-term rentals will also be subject to inspection and enforcement, with violations carrying fines starting at \$300 per day and reaching up to \$5,000 per day under state law. Enforcement will be shared among the building commissioner, police department, town manager's office, town counsel, health department, and Board of Health. Tensions emerged between the Committee and the BOH over enforcement of the bylaw, much of which would fall to the BOH, perhaps overburdening them and diverting health department staff from existing responsibilities. They maintain that any complaints that come to them should be strictly health related and that they should not have to deal with licensing fees and nuisance complaints. Members of the Committee who attended a BOH meeting chastised the Board for not coming to any of their meetings and getting involved in the process of drafting the by-law. They also stated that they felt that most complaints would first go the local operator or the police before coming to the Board.

The Board has also been dealing with variance requests tied to the single use plastic regulation that went into effect last year. The purpose of the regulation is to curb the use of plastic products such as take-out containers, straws, cups, lids, and utensils used in restaurants and other food establishments. Under the by-law, if the establishment can-

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Observer Corps: Board of Health Report, cont.

not find an alternative, or the cost to do so is too prohibitive, they can come to the Board to ask for a variance. They cannot get a variance for black plastic. There are certain items that are difficult to replace such as hot food or liquid containers lined with plastic and bakery boxes with plastic windows. Each applicant must demonstrate that it has done its due diligence to find an alternative. Variances have been granted to McDonald's for franchise specific items. Jack in the Beanstalk and Stop and Shop which cannot find suitable replacements for the sliced deli bags, rotisserie chicken bags, and bakery boxes with plastic windows have also been granted variances. Falmouth Hospital also appeared before the Board seeking numerous variances. The BOH decided to send someone from the Health Department to work with the hospital to see what they have that can be reused and what must be disposable.

The Board passed the home rule septic regulation last year which is aimed at reducing the excess nutrient loading; particularly nitrogen, into groundwater from septic systems. Because many of the waterbodies in Falmouth are impaired by nitrogen pollution, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has directed the town to submit watershed management plans outlining how it will protect drinking water supplies, estuaries, freshwater ponds, and coastal waters. The Board requires developers to choose a septic system from a list of currently approved systems listed on the Best Available Nitrogen Reducing Technology (BANRT). If the developer chooses a system not on the list, a variance must be requested.

It can be approved under the conditions of increased monitoring and assurances that the manufacturer will be available to support operators and ensure compliance with the regulations.

A continuing issue is the performance, monitoring, and education relating to the I/A systems (Innovative Alternative Septic Systems). The older systems required a 19 mg. per liter reading. This has been improved to 10 mg. in newer systems. A certain amount of testing for each household is required depending on the results of each test. There is a great deal of non-compliance, and the Board is trying to discover why this is happening and how to make improvements. In an effort to do this, they invited operators of these systems to a meeting to discuss their concerns. Reasons that the operators gave were non-compliance by the client of suggestions by the operator and non-payment by the client resulting in tests and maintenance not being conducted. BOH is going to be contacting owners of these systems to educate and, in many cases, reeducate the owner of the need to comply with the rules and the consequences for not doing so.

Another area where homeowners must be educated is in the use of irrigation wells. One homeowner appeared before the Board to request a variance for placement of an irrigation well on his property. The variance was granted with a reminder that any drought restrictions for watering apply to all homes, in-

Continued on next page

Observer Corps: Board of Health Report, cont.

cluding those with irrigation wells. Many homeowners do not realize that an irrigation well does not give them unrestricted water use.

In other septic news, the Board was asked by the Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center (MASSTC) to approve its application to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) for its urine diversion pilot project as well as approval to haul urine collected from the planned 25 participating homes back to MASSTC. The goal of the pilot project is to collect data from 25 homes in the nutrient-impaired watershed to evaluate the effectiveness of removing nitrogen and phosphorus from those watersheds, hoping that this will be a workable alternative to sewerage and I/A systems. The Board agreed to send the letter.

The Board raised concerns to the Select Board over the implementation of the Commonwealth's Watershed Management plans which could financially affect residents differently depending on whether they are required to connect to the town sewer system, install an I/A septic system, or take no action. Historically subsidies have been available for sewerage but not I/A systems. A new Watershed Management Financial Task Force will be established and will include a representa-

tive from the BOH to come up with a fair and quality cost distribution among property owners.

There has been discussion about the water quality in Falmouth and the difficulty in determining exactly the role of the BOH in keeping our water clean. Town Council says that the BOH has no role in maintaining drinking water standards. The BOH vehemently disagrees with this. The Board feels that the water quality commissioner should have an open dialogue with the Board. He has been invited to meetings to discuss the Water Resource Protection Plan but has declined to attend. A guide established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts states that the BOH does have a role in water protection.

Residents recently received letters regarding lead in their pipes and E. Coli in the water. Residents and members of the Board found the wording confusing and alarmist. Unfortunately, the town is not allowed to alter the language.

The members of the Board work well together and are courteous to each other and the members of the public who come before them.

[Report Submitted by Stephanie Miele]

Observer Corps: Energy Committee



LWVF Observer
Marinna Martini

What is the charter/mission of the committee?

The Falmouth Energy Committee is advisory to the select board. The committee “supports the Town’s efforts to lower energy consumption, increase the use of renewable

energy, reduce the use of fossil fuels and ensure energy resiliency.” It is guided by state laws and town plans that have been formalized consistent with the town declaration of a climate emergency. For the full statement see the committee website link under references.

What is the make-up of the committee?

There are seven committee members. Scott Mueller is currently the Chair, David Leslie the Clerk. The site lists two vacant positions and meetings revealed that two members’ terms expire and they will step down this summer. Members observed or mentioned at meetings and minutes include Jim Dore, Eleanor Ling, Paul Skudder, Miles O’Brien, and Olwen Huxley. The committee is actively seeking new members.

The Town Sustainability Specialist, Stephanie Madsen, is a non-voting member of the committee and gives a report at each meeting. This job entails applying for grant opportunities in alignment with town objectives, outreach, planning and tracking of sus-

tainability infrastructure (chargers, EVs and more).

Is the Energy Committee following open-meeting law?

It is my observation that the committee is quite conscientious about following the open meeting law. The pros and cons of the law were on display over the past two months as the committee worked to ensure the law was followed as they scheduled an extra meeting to draft a letter of recommendation for the Select Board in support of the MASS Save program. Minutes and agendas are posted on line at the town web site. Audiences have been small, and so introductions all around are standard procedure in the beginning of each meeting with guests’ names noted by the Clerk. Information is distributed by email while being careful not to engage in discussion until in session.

What has been noted in the committee meetings this year?

The town has been very busy pursuing sustainability goals such as:

The solar panel capacity at Gus Canty Recreational Center has been doubled.

Solar panels are in work for the Senior Center.

Has been awarded \$5M under MassCEC “Green School Works” for ground source heat pump installation at Teaticket or East Falmouth Elementary school.

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Observer Corps: Energy Committee, cont.

Electrifying HVAC at Morse Pond School

Installing a solar canopy at the high school

The committee itself has, for example:

- Stayed aware of energy issues at the state and federal levels. Drafted a letter for the Select Board to send to the town's state representatives about MASS Save (H.5151).
- Planned a "solar tour" of a member's house with a full solar installation
- Community engagement at gatherings such as the recent Customer Assistance Event, the upcoming EV Fair
- Published articles in the *Falmouth Enterprise* on a regular and recurring basis as the "Energizing Falmouth" column.
- GRID unlocked event (<https://gridunlocked.org/>)

- Generating fliers and explainers, signs etc., for public outreach

References and links:

Committee Site: <https://www.falmouthma.gov/453/Energy-Committee> contains guiding documents such as the Fleet Vehicle policy for Green Communities, Climate Protection and Energy Reduction Action Plans, and other reports and presentations.

Town sustainability site: <https://www.falmouthma.gov/1450/Sustainability>

Updates by the Sustainability Specialist are part of the monthly "What's Happening Around Town" departmental updates, found at the Select Board's web site here: <https://www.falmouthma.gov/393/Select-Board>

[Submitted by Marinna Martini]

Observer Corps: Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC)



*LWVF Observer
Carol Chittenden*

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. Its stated mission is "to attract, advocate and support economic vitality and seek to constantly improve the business climate in Falmouth".

The EDIC has evolved considerably in the ten years I've been monitoring it, and the evolution is positive. Managing the Technology Park, its initial function, in 1981, was a self-terminating function. Subsequently, it has undertaken a number of major projects that have resulted in significant advantages to the town. Those have included the landfill solar array, development of 704 Main Street and the Raymond Park area in North Falmouth, and underwriting high speed fiberoptic connections for Main Street businesses, among others.

The seven volunteer members, five of whom have designated areas of expertise, work conscientiously to make policy decisions and assist the Executive Director in carrying out those decisions.

The current Executive Director, Wayne Lingafelter, does, as far as I can tell, a superb job

of overseeing projects, keeping track of grant opportunities, budgeting, informing the members, and connecting with other town and state officials. His salary is paid, essentially, by the proceeds of the landfill solar array, though the town takes a large percentage of those proceeds. In order to support increasing his services, and/or undertake further projects, additional projects, further sources of revenue will be necessary.

Three major efforts have occupied EDIC for the past year. One is the sale of a small bit of land in the Technology Park, identified variously as Lot 21 and Parcel 93. It is in an awkward location, partially surrounding the water tower, and the terrain requires extensive modification for use. Multiple interested buyers have backed out when grading costs exceeded the value of the space. Lingafelter has spent many, many hours working on the legal and financial aspects of the sale, taken it off the market, and now re-listing it at a lower price.

The second major current project, now in its tenth year, is operating the Falmouth bus depot, for which EDIC has a 99-year lease from the state Dept. of Transportation. Even after renovating the historic building, it requires ongoing maintenance and improvements, such as janitorial services and replacing the aging heating system with a more efficient heat pump. CCTV monitoring has allowed much better control, and various amenities

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Observer Corps: EDIC, cont.

have been added such as art exhibits and historical displays. Those expand in the summer to include an ambassador program and food service. Periodically, the Friends of Falmouth Station holds programs there too, to encourage community engagement. Station operation is at last coming close to a break even budget, and a high degree of management by contractors.

The third major project, building work force housing on the parcel of land just below the station proper, is probably about halfway through the lengthy process. Very careful efforts have been made to involve nearby abutters, including architect Jill Neubauer, who has made major contributions to designing structures that will fit smoothly into the built environment. Initial land use and building layout studies are complete, and the next step will be a Request for Proposals from potential developers. The hope is to create rental housing that will serve the “missing middle” of the market. Financial calculations are dizzyingly complex: how to balance market rate, workforce, and subsidized units. One EDIC member, whose expertise is in commercial real estate, worked out multiple scenarios – the best of which still falls about

\$6,000,000 short of projected costs. The shortfall remains to be addressed.

In the meantime, the EDIC has been looking at its overall strategy. It has been discussing, from time to time, evolving from a project-focused body toward a broader role as an economic development thought leader. That has produced a consensus for the need to develop a comprehensive economic development plan aligned with updated town comprehensive plans – of which there are many on file. Nonetheless, Falmouth has a bit of a reputation as a town that’s not particularly business friendly.

The EDIC members and executive director waded through mountains of paperwork – more than I feel obligated to read, though Lingafelter is always very forthcoming about sharing it on request. I have no reason to think that open meeting rules aren’t scrupulously observed. As currently constituted, the membership includes female and minority members, all of whom give generously of their time. All in all, the EDIC continues to serve the town very well.

[Report submitted by Carol Chittenden]

Observer Corps: Falmouth Conservation Commission

Overview

The Falmouth Conservation Commission (ConCom) is a local government body responsible for protecting wetlands, water resources, wildlife habitat, and conservation land within the Town of Falmouth, Massachusetts. The Commission operates under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and local environmental regulations. Its purpose is to balance environmental protection with the needs of property owners and the community while preserving Falmouth's natural resources for future generations.



*LWVF Observer
Lee Davis*

ConCom is supported by professional conservation staff who assist with permit review, site inspections, regulatory interpretation, and enforcement. Together, ConCom and staff play an important role in protecting the town's environmental resources and ensuring compliance with state and local regulations.

Membership and Responsibilities

ConCom is composed of seven appointed volunteer members. As of 2026, the members are William Duffy (Chairman), Stephen Patton (Vice Chairman), Ronald Bowman, Ronald Driscoll, David Kent, James McGrath, and Daniel Walsh. These members are responsible for reviewing applications, conducting

public hearings, evaluating environmental impacts, and voting on matters that come before ConCom.

ConCom's responsibilities include reviewing projects proposed near wetlands, streams, ponds, coastal areas, and other environmentally sensitive resources. It may approve projects, approve them with conditions, request additional information, or deny applications if they do not meet environmental standards. ConCom also oversees conservation lands and helps ensure compliance with environmental regulations.

Meetings and Public Access

During the period I observed (July 2025-June 10, 2026), the Falmouth Conservation Commission met most Wednesday evenings in a virtual format. Meetings are open to the public and included public hearings, permit reviews, enforcement matters, and discussions related to conservation land management. The virtual format allows applicants, engineers, attorneys, residents, and other interested parties to participate remotely. Meeting agendas and supporting materials are made available through the Town's website, providing transparency and public access to ConCom's work.

The weekly meeting schedule reflects the volume and complexity of matters before ConCom. A significant portion of each meeting involved reviewing applications affecting wetlands and other protected resource areas,

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Observer Corps: Falmouth Conservation Commission, cont.

hearing presentations from project representatives and considering comments from members of the public. Applicants are usually represented by engineers or environmental professionals who explain project plans and responded to questions from Commissioners and staff. The applicant representatives have submitted materials and met with ConCom staff prior to presenting their project to the Commissioners.

Another aspect of the meetings I observed was ConCom's use of executive sessions, during which the public is excluded from portions of the discussion. These sessions were held periodically. Because executive sessions are not open to the public, I was unable to observe the discussions that took place or evaluate their content. While Massachusetts law permits executive sessions for specific purposes such as legal matters, litigation, real estate negotiations, or other limited circumstances, the frequency of these sessions reduces the amount of Commission discussion that was visible to the public.

Assessment of Commission Performance

Based on my attendance at most of the meetings, ConCom conducts its work in a fair and professional manner. Applicants (or their representatives) are given opportunities to present their projects and answer questions, while members of the public are also able to offer comments and express concerns (via the chat box). Discussions focus primarily on environmental impacts, regulatory requirements, and protection of natural resources.

One observation is the significant role played

by the professional conservation staff. Staff members regularly present technical information, explain regulations, and provide recommendations regarding applications and environmental issues. Commissioners frequently refer to this expertise during discussions. While the staff's guidance appears to have considerable influence on the review process, final decisions are made by the Commission members through public discussion and recorded votes.

The meetings I attended were orderly and respectful. Commissioners are prepared, listen to presentations and public comments, and ask questions before making decisions. Although not everyone may agree with every outcome, the process itself appeared consistent and transparent.

Conclusion

Overall, my observation is that the Falmouth Conservation Commission is fulfilling its responsibility to protect the town's environmental resources while providing a fair process for applicants and residents. The Commission meets regularly, conducts its business in public, with the exception of the Executive Sessions, considers technical information and public input, and works closely with professional staff to make informed decisions. The weekly meetings, structured review process, and emphasis on environmental protection suggest that ConCom is actively carrying out its mission and serving an important role in local government.

[Report Submitted by Lee Davis]

Make your voice heard today!

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Letters to the Editor

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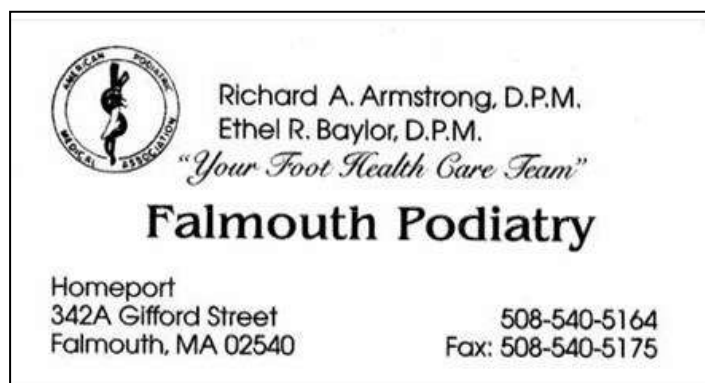
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Meeting and Event Calendar

Wednesday, July 1, in the Civil Defense room in Town Hall **Board meeting**

Sunday, August 16, 8 a.m. **Falmouth Road Race**

Tuesday, August 25, at 6 p.m., location TBD **Board meeting**

Tuesday, September 22, 6 p.m., location TBD **Board meeting**

Contact us:

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Website: <https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts/falmouth>

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Please note: Submissions for the September issue of the LWVF Bulletin are due by September 5, 2026. Please send copy, photos, and other material to both of these addresses:

maryfran55@earthlink.net
eileenmattingly@yahoo.com



“Those who won our independence believed liberty to be the secret of happiness and courage to be the secret of liberty.”

— *Louis D. Brandeis*



League of Women Voters

P.O. Box 450

Falmouth, MA 02541

Summer 2026

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