**The League of Women Voters/Los Alamos**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday February 22, 2024**

**Via Zoom**

**Call to Order**

Felicia Orth called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

**Board Members Present**

Felicia Orth, President

Ellen Mills, Second Vice President

Barbara Calef, Past President

Rebecca Chaiken, Secretary

Lynn Jones, Voter Services

Karyl Ann Armbruster, Lunch with a Leader

Jody Benson, Publicity

Akkana Peck, Director at Large

Becky Shankland, Director at Large

Bob Williams, Newsletter

Amy Birnbaum, Reservations

**Guests** – Jean Dewart and Wendy Swanson

**Minutes**

Rebecca noted one minor correction to the January minutes. The amended minutes were accepted as presented.

**Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's Report dated February 16, 2024, showed a checking account checkbook balance of $5,487.07, which includes total receipts of $622.39 and disbursements of $269.50. Receipts included transfers from PayPal, a donation, interest, and a refund from Fuller Lodge. Disbursements were to Aspen Copies and Karyl Ann Armbruster. The savings account ending bank balance was $25,620.69, which includes $1.78 interest.

The Treasurer’s Report was accepted as presented.

**Lunch with a Leader**

Karyl Ann said that the speaker for March will be Jessica Strong, the Director of Social Services for the County. After some discussion, it was decided that Rachel Mohr-Richards, the executive director of Los Alamos JJAB, will be invited for April. She was to have been our speaker last month but had to cancel due to illness.

Karyl Ann noted that some potential speakers outside the Los Alamos area (e.g., Kathleen Sabo, Jeremy Ferris, Christa Slaton, and Laura Paskus) are reluctant to travel here, since we can conduct the events via Zoom. They may be reserved for Lunch with a Leader events during months with poor winter weather. Barbara also suggested one of them could be invited in May.

Felicia suggested that Ryn Hermann be added to the list of possible speakers, but it was noted that she will be a candidate for the upcoming County Council race. Jody asked that our outgoing County Clerk, Naomi Maestas, also be added to the list.

**Membership**

Jean’s report indicated that we have 119 individual members. New members since our last meeting include Sara Mason, Susan Mendel, Gwendolyn Gallagher, and Don Krier. Members who have renewed in advance of our April annual meeting include June Fabryka-Martin, Craig Martin, and Jody Benson.

Jean suggested that we set up a Friendly Reminder schedule to ask people to renew their memberships during the April time frame. Furthermore, it was decided that Jean will write an article for the next *Update* detailing membership information.

Jean has asked Bob to take over the membership lead, which he is considering. Jean noted that a new LWVUS membership database, which is in the works, may require someone with good computer science skills. A new system may also provide some new tools that make things easier for our local League. Bob said that he is thinking about what needs to be done, including changes to our database format. He has modified the database for the Los Alamos Concert Association and could do something similar for LWVLA.

Jean added that we are having problems with PayPal. First, people are not using it correctly. When our webpage takes them to PayPal, they either log out or press the wrong button. She follows up with these members. Second, our website allows members to join as one category of member, but when members use PayPal, they sometimes join as another category. Jean and Addie communicate about this issue.

In response to a question posed by Becky, Jean said that any monies sent over and above the $45 membership fee (or above $70 for a household member) are considered a donation.

**Voter Guide**

Lynn is in communication with Carol Clark about printing our Voter Guide. She is awaiting a quote.

Jean and her team are working on questions for County Council, Clerk, House District 43, Senate Districts 5 and 6, and PEC district 4. The team includes Lynn, Akkana, Karyl Ann, Jody, June Fabryka-Martin, Craig Martin, Lisa Hampton, and Wendy Swanson. They have met with Robert Gibson and David Izraelevitz to assist with developing questions for the County Council races and will meet with Sara Scott soon. They also met with Naomi Maestas for the County Clerk race. Jean anticipates bringing at least four questions for each race to the board for approval. Lynn is keeping in touch with the Santa Fe League and LWVNM for the races which cross boundaries. The goal is to send the draft questions to the board by March 14. Lynn is making sure we meet the schedule laid out by LWVNM.

It is likely that the team will consider questions for the fall general election in addition to the primary. They will probably meet again in July or August, but there is no set schedule yet.

Jean asked that the board not always use email to communicate. It sometimes wastes time and can lead to hurt feelings.

**Legislative Report**

Barbara’s report included the following:

***What passed***

***Legislation signed by the Governor***

*House Bill 141: A salary increase for New Mexico Supreme Court justices.*

*House Bill 171: New high school graduation requirements, removing Algebra 2 and allowing more community preference on two class units.*

***Legislation that passed both chambers***

***Elections***

*HB 182 Campaign Reporting Act amendment adds disclosure requirements and makes it a crime to distribute deceptive media*

*SB 108 provides state funds to counties to pay for state-wide elections*

***Money matters***

*House Bill 195: An expansion of the Opportunity Enterprise Revolving Fund to make loans to finance workforce and* ***affordable housing projects****.*

*House Bill 252: An omnibus tax package expected to cost the state an estimated $217 million in fiscal year 2025: incl 7 climate credits*

***Environment***

*House Bill 41: Clean Transportation Fuels - A measure establishing clean transportation fuel standards and reducing “carbon intensity” levels of transportation fuels.*

***Public safety***

*House Bill 129: A seven-day waiting period to allow for a background check to purchase a firearm.*

*Senate Bill 5: A ban on carrying a firearm within 100 feet of a polling place.*

***Education***

*Senate Bill 137: A mandate on training hours for school board members that also requires campaign finance reporting for any candidate spending more than $1,000.*

***What Failed***

***Independent Redistricting Commission got*** *new sponsors, including the Navajo Nation*

***Health Care*** *- The Family and Medical Leave Act*

***Money matters***

*House Bill 179: An increase in alcohol excise taxes by an average of about 25 cents per serving.*

***Environment***

*House Bill 133: Changes to the Oil and Gas Act regulating well placements, increasing fines and royalty rates, and increasing the maximum bonding amounts that drillers pay upfront. A House Judiciary Committee substitute was sent to the House floor, where it stalled.*

*HB 48, Senate Bill 24: An increase in the top royalty rate charged for oil and gas development on state lands from 20% to the market rate of 25%. It stalled in the Senate Finance Committee.*

***Ballot measures***

*None of the modernization resolutions passed incl: eliminate pocket vetoes, create a salary commission, changing session length*

**Program Planning Meeting**

The annual Program Planning meeting was held at Ellen’s home on January 29. Barbara presented a proposed revision to the Environment position. Leslie Wallstrom asked about the Medically Indigent Fund which Lisa Hampton verified is still in existence in Los Alamos. There was a lot of interest in holding a Health Care Forum. Planning needs to be undertaken including the format and what speakers should be included.

**Preparations for the Annual Meeting**

***Nominating Committee Report***

Becky thanked Ed Santiago, Leslie Wallstrom, Jean Dewart, and Barbara Calef for their help. Ed suggested a few individuals to serve on the board who have since joined the League.

Becky asked if Committee members should be listed in our call to Annual Meeting. It was agreed that she should, but only with approval of each Committee member. Committees in existence now are Fundraising, Voter Guide, Observer Corps, and Advocacy.

Changes to the 2024-2025 board thus far include the following:

* Amy has decided not to continue with the position of Reservations. Becky suggests that Reservations and Refreshments be combined into one position. Wendy Swanson thinks this would work, but before she agrees she wants to discuss it with Amy.
* Bob is likely to take over Membership, along with his position of *Update* Editor. Bob and Jean are discussing this.
* New member Cynthia Biddlecomb, a competent writer and editor, will join Lynn’s Voter Guide team.
* New member Lisa Hampton will take a Health Care portfolio, either on or off board.
* New members Gwendolyn Gallagher and Sara Mason will join the Advocacy team.

***Budget Committee Report***

This Committee includes Jean, Julie Williams-Hill, Addie, and Jeffrey Howell. Jean said that they plan to meet on Sunday afternoon.

***Speaker***

Christine Chandler will be invited only if she is unopposed in the upcoming election. This will be known on March 12, filing day.

**Chamber of Commerce Membership**

Felicia reported that we joined the local Chamber of Commerce following last month’s meeting. She since had an excellent conversation with the outgoing director, Ryn Hermann, whom she has encouraged to join the League. The weekly emails are lengthy, but well-organized. Now that we are members, we can have our events included (e.g., Lunch with a Leader, Voter Guide information, Candidate Forums). Please let Felicia know what you would like to be included. Barbara suggested we include “how to vote in the primary election” for independent voters. Felicia added that we can have a booth at Chamber events, which are usually held in the summer and fall.

**Environment Position**

Barbara provided the proposed revisions to our Environment position which was undertaken by a team including Barbara, Akkana, Dave North, Ann LePage, and Jody. Barbara reviewed all the documents used in formulating this position. A new section concerns recycling, including our support for the County to expand recycling within its operations, and avoiding unnecessary packaging, especially plastic water bottles.

Becky moved to accept the new Environment position, and this was seconded by Akkana. All voted in favor. This will be presented to members at the Annual Meeting.

**Sustainable Water Position**

Barbara also presented a proposed change to our Sustainable Water position. Specifically, she asks that the following bullet point be included at the end: “The LWVLA recommends that the County…engages LANL and neighbors to maintain groundwater supply and quantity.” Felicia moved to approve this addition, and this was seconded by Lynn. All voted in favor. This will be presented to members at the Annual Meeting.

**Letter to County Council**

While working on the revision of our Environment position, Barbara realized that we need to speak out more often in support of our positions. Hence, she wrote a letter to the County Council about the need to address rezoning of seven parcels of land. This letter was presented to the board and reads as follows:

*Dear County Council,*

*The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos believes that our natural environment is integral to our community's unique sense of place and to our well-being and prosperity. We support protection of this environment, including the canyons and other open space, vistas, wildlife habitat, and dark skies.*

*During the recent revision of the County’s Development Code, our members submitted comments regarding the role of open space in the County. We asked that some parcels be re-zoned to reflect their existing uses. When the Council adopted the revised Development Code on December 13, 2022, we heard Mr. Andrus say that his department and the contractor, Dekker, Perich, Sabatini (DPS), planned to address these items. Jessica Lawlis of DPS then listed seven parcels for which re-zoning was requested:*

1. *The parcel between the Canyon Rim Trail and #502, currently zoned IND. We believe it should be POS-AO.*
2. *Three parcels adjacent to the Golf Course, which Ms. Lawlis suggested be POS-PP. We believe they should be POS-PO.*
3. *Bayo Canyon, currently POS-AO. We believe it should be zoned POS-PO.*
4. *The softball field on North Mesa is currently POS-AO. We believe it should be POS-PP.*
5. *Piñon Park in White Rock is WRTC. We believe it should be POS-PP.*

*Mr. Andrus said that this matter would be addressed during the period of the DPS contract extension. He suggested that it be discussed by the Parks and Recreation Board with public outreach before the Planning and Zoning Commission hearing required for re-zoning. More than a year has passed without any action that we are aware of. We request that you direct staff to address the zoning problems now.*

*P. S. For clarity, we are listing the abbreviations for the parcels discussed above:*

*IND = industrial*

*POS-AO = Active Open Space*

*POS-PP = Public Park*

*POS-PO = Passive Open Space*

*WRTC = White Rock Town Center*

Akkana moved that we approve this letter for Felicia to sign, and Becky seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Jean suggested that, periodically, a member of the board speak to the County Council during the public comment section on issues important to the League.

**Vermont Privatization of Health Care Position**

Vermont wrote to every League asking for concurrence with their Privatization of Health Care Position. This was discussed during the Program Planning meeting, with little support. Barbara also noted that the Vermont position is too wordy and does not contain anything that is not in the LWVUS position. A lengthy discussion ensued. Rebecca moved that we not support this position, but she later withdrew this motion. Akkana, Becky, and Jody spoke in support of this position. Ellen asked for more time to consider this, but our deadline is March 10. Barbara suggested that we all read the LWVUS position prior to a vote. It was decided that this information will be sent to the board via email and Felicia will hold an electronic vote in early March.

**Washington Position on Local News and Democracy**

Washington wrote to every League asking for concurrence with their position on local news and democracy. Barbara spoke in support of this position, noting that it is well worded and there is nothing like it in the LWVUS Impact on Issues. Barbara moved that we concur with this position, and Rebecca seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

**Fund Drive**

The Fund Drive meeting will be held on February 26 at Ellen’s home. A potluck dinner will begin at 5:30 and the meeting will conclude no later than 8:30.

During the Fundraising Committee’s meeting with Beverly Post, they learned that successful fundraising begins with a donation from each board member to show our commitment.

The Fundraising Committee has set a goal of $15,000. They will be cognizant of issues that may arise for small businesses if they are seen supporting an organization not all their customers support. Felicia noted that donors can remain anonymous.

**Important Dates**

The deadline for the next newsletter is March 1, 2024.

The next board meeting will be March 18, 2024, from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., at the Unitarian Church.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:24 p.m.

*Minutes submitted by Rebecca Chaiken*