**Minutes of the League of Women Voters/Los Alamos**

**Annual Meeting**

**Thursday, April 20, 2023**

**Fellowship Hall of the Unitarian Church**

**1738 North Sage Loop**

**Los Alamos, New Mexico**

**Call to Order**

Barbara Calef called the meeting to order at 1:16 p.m. There was a quorum with 28 members attending. Barbara thanked the attendees and introduced the LWVLA board members.

**Agenda**

Becky Shankland made two motions to amend the agenda. First, she asked that the Treasurer’s Report be stricken because Rosmarie Frederickson cannot be present today. This motion was seconded by Kyle Wheeler, and all voted in favor. Second, Becky asked that the Adoption of the Budget be moved to precede the President’s Report because the presenter, Julie Williams-Hill, had another meeting to attend. This motion was seconded by Kyle, and all voted in favor.

Jody Benson then moved to amend the agenda to have the Adoption of Local Programs proceed immediately following the Adoption of the Budget. This was seconded by Amy Birnbaum, and all voted in favor.

**Minutes**

The 2022 Annual Meeting was held virtually on April 21. Kyle Wheeler and Lynn Jones were appointed to read the Annual Meeting minutes. The minutes were also reviewed by the Board and sent to League members via email on April 13, 2023.

Kyle Wheeler and Wendy Swanson have volunteered to be the readers for the minutes of this year’s Annual Meeting. Rebecca Chaiken is our secretary.

**Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget**

*Julie Williams-Hill*

The committee which prepared the proposed 2024-2025 budget included Julie Williams-Hill, Rosmarie Frederickson, and Jeffrey Howell. This budget was published in the April 2023 *Update*. Our fiscal year runs from May 1 to April 30. The Fiscal Year 2024 budget was adopted at last year’s annual meeting on April 21, 2022.

Julie explained that the budget spreadsheet is organized first by Expenses, followed by Income, and finally by Net Operating Income. Existing funds in our savings and checking accounts is then applied to arrive at the anticipated Total Cash Position at the end of the Fiscal Year.

This year, the Budget Committee proposed some adjustments to the previously adopted Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 budget based on actual income and expenses. Specifically, the proposed FY2024 budget includes an increase in expenses. This is based on the reintroduction of President’s Funds ($200); an increase in newsletter expenses, including postage ($400); an anticipated increase in arrangements ($500) and the filming of forums ($500) because more in-person events are expected; and an increase in our PMP to LWVNM and LWVUS based on actual membership. Income for FY2024 was also adjusted based on actual dues received and the reduction in donations received from local businesses. Furthermore, The LWVNM Convention will be held in Los Alamos this year and we expect to be reimbursed $1,500 for our expenses.

Julie explained that the FY2025 budget largely mirrors the proposed FY2024 budget with the two notable exceptions: an additional $5,000 expense is anticipated for the expenses associated with the LWVUS Convention (e.g., airfare and lodging); and, because it will be a Presidential election year, it is expected that Program expenses (e.g., Voter Guide, advertising) will increase substantially. Our income is expected to remain the same.

In sum, our Net Operating Income for FY2024 is estimated to be ($2,485.36) and our Net Operating Income for FY2025 is estimated to be ($12,421.86). However, because we have substantial funds in our savings and checking accounts, our Total Cash Position is expected to be $26,613.55 in FY2024 and $14,191.69 in FY2025.

Rebecca Chaiken moved that we approve the FY2024 and FY2025 budgets as presented, and Jody Benson seconded this motion.

Galen Gisler noted that running a deficit such as this cannot go on forever. Julie replied that we have had a negative net operating income for the last ten years, but our strong cash position has allowed us to stay in the black. Barbara Calef noted that we need to increase our fundraising activities by appealing to local businesses and by applying to the Delle Foundation for funds, which have been promised once an application is received. Julie also suggested that we could increase our dues. Currently, we break even on single memberships and earn only $1 per household membership. Furthermore, a budget is just a prediction.

All voted in favor to approve the FY2024 and FY2025 budgets.

**Adoption of Local Programs**

*Barbara Calef*

League bylaws require that, in addition to sharing Bylaws amendments, the Budget, and the Nominees with the membership one month before the annual meeting, the recommended local Program also be shared one month before the meeting. This should have occurred on March 20 but was not actually shared until April 1. Our Parliamentarian, Felicia Orth, recommended a threshold vote to proceed with consideration of the local Program notwithstanding the delay. A vote to proceed is not a vote to approve any part of the Program, only to consider it as recommended by the board.

Akkana Peck moved to proceed, and this was seconded by Jody Benson. All voted in favor.

Program consist of 1) action to promote League's positions; 2) local government issues that are chosen for study and action; and 3) education of the public.

Our positions were published in the April *Update*, and they are as follows:

*Sustainability*

*Public Transportation*

*Environment*

*Sustainable Water*

*Affordable Housing*

*Fuller Lodge*

*Medically Indigent Fund*

*Land Use and Transportation: Residential Neighborhoods*

*Education*

*Digital Privacy*

During Program planning every year, we review our positions to see if any of them need to be updated or if we wish to undertake a new study. Our annual Program planning event took place at the home of Ellen Mills on January 30.

At this meeting, it was suggested that the *Environment* position should be updated to specify the policies we support rather than referring to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan and the Open Space Management Plan. The board subsequently approved this recommendation. Jody Benson, Akkana Peck, and Ann LePage agreed to help Barbara Calef with this task. At today’s meeting, Wendy Swanson also volunteered.

At the Annual Meeting, we always readopt our positions. It has already been determined that the *Environment* positions needs to be updated. Barbara read through our other League positions and asked for any comments. George Chandler moved to readopt these positions and the motion was seconded by Maire O’Neill. All voted in favor.

Wendy Swanson then asked how we use our positions to educate the public, including organizations such as the DPU, and asked if they are amended based on current events such as the chromium plume. There was a subsequent discussion on this issue. Barbara noted that our positions allow us to advocate, regardless of new events, but asked the membership to contact the board if they believe a position should be amended.

Also at the Program planning meeting, it was proposed that the League focus on the following issues during the next year:

*Composting*

*The County’s use of consultants*

*Open space (finish rezoning, consideration of additional protections)*

*Support for the recommendations of the Los Alamos Resiliency, Energy, and Sustainability Task Force (LARES)*

These Actions were approved by the board. Maire O’Neill asked that the League also focus on Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI). She noted that despite racist issues which have recently occurred in our schools, the County Council voted not to continue the REI task force (only Councilor Ryti voted to continue).

Rebecca Chaiken moved that we adopt the Actions approved at the Program planning meeting, in addition to the Action proposed by Maire O’Neill, and George Chandler seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Also during the Program planning meeting this year, Jody Benson proposed that we undertake a study on pit production, and this was approved by the board. The study summary is as follows:

*Should large scale pit production for nuclear weapons occur in Los Alamos?*

*Scope*

1. *Background information*
   1. *Explain/define pits and how they are used for nuclear weapons.*
   2. *Where were the former pit factories and why was the production discontinued there?*
   3. *What is the current plan for pit production?*
2. *Does the county need to build new pits?*
   1. *Evidence pro and con that the existing weapons are not viable.*
   2. *Are they needed for new weapons?*
   3. *Effect of production on national security – pro (deterrence) and con (increased tension).*
3. *If new pits are needed, why build them in Los Alamos?*
   1. *Why not build them at Pantex?*
   2. *Advantages (jobs, federal dollars) and disadvantages (safety and environmental issues) of building them in Los Alamos.*

Jody provided a brief overview of her proposed study and a lively discussion followed. Carroll Thomas said that the Lab already has an issue with lack of space and facilities for such an undertaking, in addition to staffing and housing for workers. Eduardo Santiago asked Jody what the expected outcome of her study would be. Jody responded that the outcome of the study could provide us with a position which we could use to advocate. In response to a question by Karyl Ann Armbruster, Barbara Calef provided an overview of how a study is conducted. This includes consensus meetings. If there is no consensus, the study goes no further.

George Chandler said that he opposes such a study because, “the train has already left the station” and security clearance is required to answer the questions posed by the study. Jean Dewart advised the membership that the Department of Energy is already undertaking a sitewide Environmental Impact Statement which would include pit production. Cynthia Biddlecomb questioned the purpose of such a study because Los Alamos has already seen increases in federal dollars, housing, and transportation. Jody responded that because the Lab currently does not have the facility for pit production, it may not be a done deal for Los Alamos.

Galen Gisler noted that there have been numerous “train derailments” recently and there is much skepticism about the necessity of pit production in the physics world. He will vote “yes” on undertaking the study because we need to educate ourselves. Akkana Peck added that the County Council has been in favor of helping the Lab with housing, as an example, and the outcome of this study could affect how the County deals with these issues.

Ballots were passed out to those members present, and the ballots were counted by Felicia Orth and Eduardo Santiago. Those voting for the study to proceed totaled 18 and those voting for no such study totaled 6. The study will proceed.

**Co-President's Report**

*Barbara Calef*

We continued to hold our meetings on Zoom through 2022. The advantage of the virtual meetings is that they can be recorded and posted on our website. Also, we can invite speakers from outside of the region. The benefit of meeting in person is that there is more opportunity to chat informally with our neighbors and the speakers. We plan to alternate virtual and in person events in the coming months.

The League did not hold a candidate forum for the primary election in 2022 because none of the local candidates faced opposition at that time. We did produce a Voter Guide, which was distributed in the *LA Daily Post*.

In June, Becky set up a display with part of the League’s centennial exhibit at the Southside Branch of the Santa Fe Library.

Felicia, Rosmarie, and I attended the LWVUS Convention in Denver. While we were there, the Supreme Court reversed *Roe v. Wade*. In response, the delegates marched on the capitol, joining hundreds of local residents, to express our disappointment and disapproval of the decision. During the convention, Felicia and I also toured the office of the Denver County Clerk. Denver County has more than 500,000 registered voters. We learned that in Colorado ballots are automatically mailed to all registered voters. Since the transition to all mailed ballots and vote centers, we were told that the state-wide cost of elections has dropped by 40 percent.

Work on the Voter Guide for the 2022 General Election began in July, when the board chose the questions for each office. Even though LWVUS has initiated a national voter guide called Vote411, which enables all local voter guides to be accessed online by everyone with internet access, the printed Voter Guides remain very popular.

In August League members marched in the rodeo parade, wearing our suffragist garb. In September and October, we alternated with the County Clerk’s Office to register voters at the farmers’ market. On September 17 Voter Services Director Lynn Jones joined members of the County Clerk’s office in Bandelier for the naturalization ceremony, helping to register the 14 new citizens to vote.

Also, in September we wrote to the County Council asking for their support for Constitutional Amendment 2 on the November ballot. The purpose of the amendment was to allow the expenditure of state funds to assist in the construction of utility lines or other infrastructure for energy, internet, water, wastewater, and similar services for primarily residential purposes. The amendment passed.

We held two candidate forums prior to the November election. For the first time the board decided to allow unopposed candidates to answer questions. Previously, they could only make a statement. As in the past, a student from the high school debate team served as timekeeper.

In January we conducted the traditional joint LWV/AAUW Legislative Preview with our three legislators and Kristina Fisher of Think New Mexico at Fuller Lodge. It was our first in person public event in three years and was very well-attended.

Los Alamos League members attended the state League’s Legislative reception on February 15 where Senator Bingaman discussed his new book, “Breakdown: Lessons for a Congress in Crisis.” The following day we set up the League’s history exhibit on a table in the Roundhouse. There were also tables for the state League and Fair Districts New Mexico. At the State Land Office Stephanie Garcia Richard spoke about the legislation she was supporting. Jeremy Farris, Executive Director of the New Mexico Ethics Commission, explained the importance of an independent redistricting commission and Amber Wallin, Executive Director of New Mexico Voices for Children, discussed the budget. Fewer people than normal attended these events, partly because of poor weather.

Participation in the legislative process has become much easier now that the committee meetings are hybrid. Many League members were able to make public comment in the name of the League and the LWVNM Action Committee was larger and more active than ever before. Akkana is now the chair of the Action Committee.

During the legislative session we published an op-ed in the *Los Alamos Daily Post* and the *Los Alamos Reporter* advocating for passage of three joint resolutions, HJR1, HJR2, and HJR8. If they had passed, the state’s voters would have been able to vote in 2024 for or against constitutional amendments to create an independent redistricting commission, to lengthen the legislative sessions, and to create a commission to establish salaries for New Mexico’s legislators. Sadly, none of the resolutions passed.

On March 30 Becky and Jody presented "From Women's Suffrage to Local Governance: A Historical Perspective from the League of Women Voters" at SALA during a celebration of Women’s Month.

Our other activities during the past year included:

* monthly Lunch with a Leader programs
* monitoring the meetings of the County Council and Planning and Zoning Commission
* speaking in support for the Zero Waste Team, improving access to high quality broadband, and open space protection in the new Development Code.

I would like to thank the whole board and the off-board directors for helping in all these efforts, especially: Becky for being an excellent co-president; Karyl Ann for the success of Lunch with a Leader; Jean Dewart for improving our membership records; Akkana Peck and Bob Williams for providing technical support for all of our meetings and Bob for producing our newsletters; Jody for publicizing our forums; Helena Whyte and Madhavi Garimella, who have been in charge of the website and social media; Lynn Jones for producing the Voter Guides and Lynn and Akkana for posting the candidate responses on Vote411; and June Fabryka Martin and Craig Martin, who have done an amazing job of reporting on the County Council and the P&Z meetings.

**Membership Report**

*Jean Dewart*

Jean reported that we currently have 116 individual members. This consists of 43 single and 17 household memberships. We also have 15 sustaining single and 16 sustaining household memberships. Jean noted that the dues for single and household memberships go to LWVNM and LWVUS. The extra funds provided by sustaining memberships stay in Los Alamos to pay for our expenses. Jean provided membership forms for those who wished to renew their memberships.

Addie Jacobson asked the difference between members and donors. Jean explained that some individuals wish to donate but do not wish to be League members. Eduardo asked why the membership form does not make this distinction. Jean responded that the form has been revised and is now improved.

**Proposed Amendments to Bylaws**

*Barbara Calef*

Two amendments to the bylaws have been approved by the board and are submitted to the membership for adoption. The first amendment concerns Article V, Section 3, regarding vacancies on the board of directors. The current language reads, in part, “Any officer who misses three consecutive board meetings may be removed by a majority vote of the Board.” The new language which is proposed reads, “Three consecutive absences from a board meeting without notification to the president or secretary and without a valid reason shall be deemed a resignation.” Eduardo asked that the word “and” be replaced with the word “or.”

Kyle Wheeler moved to accept the amendment and revised language, and this was seconded by Karyl Ann Armbruster. All voted in favor.

The second proposed amendment concerns Article VI, Section 1, regarding board Officers. It is proposed that the position of Past President be a new board officer to provide guidance and continuity to the board. Kyle Wheeler moved to accept this new board position and the motion was seconded by Akkana Peck.

Before a vote on this motion was taken, David North said that the proposed language suggests that the Past President *must* provide guidance and continuity to the board, and he asked if that was the intent. Leslie Wallstrom questioned the precedent for such a position and asked if LWVUS considers Past President to be a voting member of the board. Barbara and Felicia responded that LWVNM and many other nonprofit organizations have past President as a board position. Maire O’Neill then moved that the proposed language be accepted as presented and Kyle seconded this motion.

Akkana Peck then questioned the language, “…shall be elected for terms of one year at the annual meeting.” Kyle Wheeler called the question.

All members, except Leslie Wallstrom, voted in favor of calling the question. All members, except Leslie Wallstrom, subsequently voted to accept the proposed change to the bylaws.

**Election of Officers and Directors**

The Nominations Committee, composed of Ellen Mills and Leslie Wallstrom, presented the following slate of nominees for the 2023-2024 LWVLA Board of Directors:

*Officers*

President - Felicia Orth

1st Vice President - open

2nd Vice President - Ellen Mills

Past President - Barbara Calef

Secretary - Rebecca Chaiken

Treasurer - Addie Jacobson

*Directors*

Reservations - Amy Birnbaum

Lunch with a Leader - Karyl Ann Armbruster

Newsletter - Robert Williams

Publicity - Jody Benson

Director at Large - Akkana Peck

Director at Large - Becky Shankland

Voter Guide - *open*

Leslie asked for volunteers or nominations from the floor and there were none. Kyle Wheeler moved to adopt the nominations and the motion was seconded by Karyl Ann Armbruster. All voted in favor.

No vote is needed for Off-Board Directors, but they include Arrangements – Wendy Swanson; Nominating Committee – *open*; Fundraising – Ellen Mills, Leslie Wallstrom, and Tracy McFarland; Observer Corps – June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin; Membership – Jean Dewart; Website/Social Media - Helena Whyte and Madhavi Garimella; and Video Editing – Eduardo Santiago.

**Announcements**

The LWVNM Convention will be held in Los Alamos on April 29 and 30 at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Los Alamos. Los Alamos delegates will include Felicia Orth, Becky Shankland, Rosmarie Frederickson, Jean Dewart, Ellen Mills, and Karyl Ann Armbruster. State board delegates will include Barbara Calef, Rebecca Chaiken, Akkana Peck and Ann LePage. Felicia Orth will also serve as Parliamentarian. All members are invited to participate and need to register online.

On the evening of April 29, a banquet will be held at Pig and Fig in White Rock. The cost is $50, and the details are provided in the recent edition of *La Palabra*.

Our new president, Felicia Orth, thanked Barbara Calef for her many years of service. Becky Shankland also honored Barbara, who was presented with a gift of flowers.

Barbara adjourned the meeting at 2:50 p.m.

*Rebecca Chaiken, Secretary*

Reviewed by Kyle Wheeler and Wendy Swanson