

**MINUTES OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS/LOS ALAMOS BOARD MEETING  
MONDAY OCTOBER 26, 2020  
VIA ZOOM DUE TO THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

**Call to Order**

Barbara Calef called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

**Board Members Present**

Barbara Calef, Co-President  
Becky Shankland, Co-President  
Ellen Mills, Second Vice-President  
Rosmarie Frederickson, Treasurer  
Rebecca Chaiken, Secretary  
Karyl Ann Armbruster, Lunch with a Leader  
Akkana Peck, Director at Large  
Lynn Jones, Voter Services  
Jody Benson, Publicity  
Leslie Wallstrom, Publicity  
Amy Birnbaum, Reservations  
Julie Williams-Hill, Webmaster

**Guests:** Addie Jacobson, Special Projects  
JoAnn Lysne, Newsletter

**Minutes**

The September minutes were accepted as amended.

**Treasurer's Report**

Rosmarie reported a checking account beginning book balance of \$4,907.71 for September 2020 and an ending balance of \$2,934.60, which includes total receipts of \$522.89; disbursements of \$2,496.00; and \$.04 interest. Receipts included dues and donations. The only disbursement was our PMP payment. The savings account ending book balance was \$35,793.19, which includes \$.88 interest.

Rebecca moved that the treasurer's report be accepted as presented. Karyl Ann seconded this motion and all voted in favor.

Rosmarie also noted that we have received several donations from community members who were very happy with our Voter Guide.

**Lunch with a Leader**

The November Lunch with a Leader will feature a representative from the Racial Justice Action Advisory Council but currently Karyl Ann is unsure who that will be. Andrea Determan and Megan Green are both possibilities. The December meeting will include speakers on the Health Security Act. Ellen is organizing this event. For January 2021, Karyl Ann intends to invite Dede Feldman but she will wait until after the election to do so.

Last month we discussed moving our Lunch with a Leader from Tuesday to Thursday, to allow more people to participate. Barbara confirmed that the farmer's market will not be returning to the library parking lot, so that will not be a complication. Barbara suggested that if we decide to move Lunch with a Leader to Thursday we also move our board meetings to Thursdays. Karyl Ann agreed because this might provide the opportunity for others, such as those involved in the Rotary Club or Kiwanis Club, to join our board. Akkana moved that we move Lunch with a Leader to the third Thursday of the month and our board meetings to the fourth Thursday of the month, both at noon, beginning in January 2021. Becky seconded this motion and all voted in favor. Rebecca will prepare and email a 2021 calendar with the schedule.

### **Membership**

Becky advised the group that we now have 103 members. She is trying to get our new members to write their biographies for the newsletter. Becky still has not heard back from Heather Quinn with the name of her spouse but JoAnn knows that his name is Zack Baker. Barbara confirmed that it was acceptable to list his name in our records.

### **Kathy Taylor Memorial Bench**

Becky said that there was \$395 left over after the memorial bench was paid for. She is adding \$5 to bring the total of an even \$400, which we will split with the Garden Club. We previously agreed to donate our share to Self Help. Rosmarie will send a check to Self Help, in Kathy's memory, once she receives the funds from Becky.

### **Voter Services**

Ordinarily on election night candidates and their supporters gather at the municipal building to hear the election outcome from the county clerk. This cannot occur this year because of COVID, so the clerk will send the final numbers to the candidates and other interested parties when they become available.

Barbara asked Leslie if she sent a press release about the candidate forum videos to papers other than the L.A. Daily Post. Leslie said she did send it to the Los Alamos Reporter, but she does not know if it was published. She did not send it to other, outlying newspapers because she was not sure which districts overlapped with Los Alamos. She can still send the release to the Santa Fe Reporter and Rio Grande Sun,

but Barbara thought it might be unnecessary at this point because so many have voted already. Jody said she did not place an advertisement as we agreed last month because the L.A. Daily Post included an announcement for free in the paper that included the Voter Guide. Karyl Ann suggested that, in the future, we pay for a banner advertisement to announce the Voter Guide. Barbara agreed that we could do something more creative to advertise.

It seems that the Voter Guide was not included in every edition of the L.A. Daily Post. It has been made available at the voting locations in both Los Alamos and White Rock and Barbara has seen many voters utilizing them when casting their votes.

Julie could not say how many have clicked on the Voter Guide on our website but she was able to report that our YouTube channel had 158 views of the County Council Candidate Forum and 73 views of the other Candidate Forum, which included the PRC, PEC, and other races. Overall, it was agreed that the feedback we received from these events was positive.

Becky said that the senior center event she and Addie participated in while donned with suffrage costumes was wonderful. The woman who was in charge of the lunches in White Rock was very excited to have them there and she included a sample ballot with the lunches that were passed out. Jody said that she and Leslie participated in the same event in Los Alamos and she counted 36 people who came to either collect a lunch or just to chat. Most of the seniors who came through said they had either already voted or were voting absentee. Leslie will send a thank you to Bernadette Lauritzen for inviting us to participate and Becky asked that the woman in charge of lunches in White Rock be included.

### **Proposed Change to LWVNM Position on Primary Elections**

On October 21, Barbara sent the board a link to the following *La Palabra* article about proposed changes to our position on primary elections.

The issue of who participates in primary elections will undoubtedly be debated during the next legislative session, so this is a good time for the League to consider whether our position will allow us to weigh in. Most of the Temporary Election Changes Act (SB4), passed during the Special Session in June, will expire at the end of 2020. However, the first part, Section 1-4-5.7 NMSA 1978, will remain law unless it is amended by the legislature. That section concerns voter registration during early voting and on Election Day. It says that, during early voting and possibly on Election Day, unaffiliated voters may vote if they first register with a major party. Voters already registered with a major party may update their registration but may not change their party.

In New Mexico 23% of the voters are independent or decline to state. Another 1% belong to a minor party. Those voters have not been allowed to participate in primary elections.

Following a study of open and closed primaries in 1993-95, LWVNM adopted a provision to support an “all-inclusive system of voting that allows all registered voters to participate in the primary election.”

So, the League wants all voters to be able to participate, but how? Meredith Machen has asked the state board to concur with part of the Maine League’s position on election procedure. The amended position statement is as follows, with the concurrence language underlined.

“The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports:  
an all-inclusive system of voting that allows all registered voters to participate in the primary election, so that  
(a) Voters who are not enrolled in a major political party may vote on one ballot per primary without having to enroll in that particular political party; and  
(b) Voters enrolled in a major political party can vote only on the ballot of their party.”

League members are asked to consider the pros and cons of each of the two concurrence statements.

**(a) Voters who are not enrolled in a major political party may vote on one ballot per primary without having to enroll in that particular political party.**

#### PRO

- This will allow those who do not want to declare a party affiliation to participate in the selection of candidates they will be asked to choose among in the general election.
- Opening up primaries to unaffiliated voters will encourage broader participation by younger voters who are reported to be more likely not to want to be associated with a party.
- The number of voters who consider themselves independent is growing, a trend that will reduce participation in primaries if they are open only to voters who have declared a party. These independent voters are likely to decline to participate if they are required to affiliate with a party.
- Independent voters are taxpayers; they help pay for elections and should be able to vote without being forced to subscribe to a party.
- Closed primaries give the major parties a monopoly on power.
- Parties are more likely to consider electability as a factor in choosing a nominee when independents can cast their votes in a primary.

#### CON

- Parties should be able to choose their own candidates. Organizations typically allow only members to vote on organization business.
- If a voter wishes to participate in a party primary, s/he should be willing to affiliate with that party.
- An open primary dilutes the preferences of party members who are most dedicated to the principles of their party.

**(b) Voters enrolled in a major political party can vote only on the ballot of their party.**

PRO

- This restriction will prevent interference by opposing party voters who seek to select a weaker candidate for another party so as to benefit his/her party candidate.
- This provision preserves the party's freedom of association.

CON

- If unaffiliated voters are allowed to choose a party for each primary election, previously affiliated voters should also be able to choose which primary to participate in.
- Moderate members of one party should be allowed to vote for one of the candidates from the opposing party.

Our group discussed this proposal extensively. Lynn said she is not in favor of the proposed change because each party puts a lot of time, effort, and money into choosing their candidates and she does not think it is fair that someone who is not registered with that party could play a role in selecting that party's candidate. With minimal effort a voter could declare a major political party in order to participate. Ellen initially expressed some concern with the proposal because elections are paid for through everyone's taxes and not everyone can participate in a closed primary although they still have to contribute via their taxes. She was also concerned, however, that an individual in one party could participate in such an open primary in order to manipulate the ticket. Because the definition of a primary election is to choose a candidate for a particular party, she is not in favor of the proposed change. Jody is concerned that so many young people, who are often Decline to State (DTS) voters, cannot participate in a closed primary but she does not think either taxes or infiltrators is an issue. Akkana is in favor of open primaries and does believe that the funding of the election is an issue. She herself has been forced to register for a party in order to participate and she is offended when she hears that a DTS should not be allowed to participate because the successful candidate impacts everyone. Barbara is in favor of the proposed change because one-quarter of voters in our state are excluded from choosing their representatives during primary elections. Furthermore, county clerks in Northern New Mexico have a difficult time obtaining equal numbers of Republican and Democratic poll workers because there are fewer Republican voters, so they rely on DTS voters as poll workers. In addition, their workload is increased when voters change their voter registration in order to vote in a primary only to change it back again after the primary. She clarified that with this proposal, a DTS voter could choose a Republican or Democratic ballot but a Republican could not choose a Democratic ballot and a Democrat could not choose a Republican ballot. Julie reminded the group about the issue in California during which there were so many Democratic candidates that they nearly eliminated themselves since that election sends the top two voter getters to the general election. Becky said that the League's primary purpose is voter education and she is

in favor of the proposed change. She understands Lynn's position but believes all voters take advantage of the work put in by the major parties. Karyl Ann said she is a bit on the fence but if a voter really cared about a particular candidate, they can register for that candidate's party.

Barbara thanked everyone for their input but noted that we are not voting on the proposal. She will bring our feedback to the LWVNM board, which will then discuss the issue and vote. She noted that the Santa Fe League is satisfied with the current position.

### **BPU Observer Corps**

Due to some technical difficulties, the group could not always hear Julie's report. She provided the following written report for inclusion in the minutes:

BPU held two meetings in October. October 9 and 21.

The October 9 BPU meeting was an annual strategic planning meeting to review the DPU mission, vision, values, strategic goals and objectives, as well as prioritize the strategic goals and objectives. These then went to the Oct. 21 meeting to be approved.

The regularly scheduled BPU meeting was held October 21.

The BPU approved the DPU mission, vision, values, strategic goals and objectives and how they were prioritized. The goals included three conservation goals for electricity, water and natural gas: 1) Increase local solar peak production to 6 MW by 2040; 2) Reduce potable water use by 12% per capita per day by 2030 using a 2020 calendar year-end baseline; and 3) Reduce natural gas usage by 5% per capita per heating degree day by 2030 using a 2020 calendar year-end baseline and support elimination of natural gas usage by 2070. BPU requested that DPU survey the community regarding support for these goals.

Richard Nebel, a citizen, submitted a request that BPU approve his use of two county-owned Nissan Leaf batteries that were included as part of the U.S.-Japan smart-grid demonstration project and a letter of support. He is applying for a grant to test how electric cars may assist in shaving peak electric loads. BPU approved his request.

### **LWVNM Education Committee**

The LWVNM Education Committee meeting was postponed until October 28. Ellen did report that she has been in contact with Jennifer Guy, the assistant superintendent for Los Alamos Public Schools; Dawn Jalbert, a school board member; and Whitney Holland, a teacher and president of the teacher's union, about participating in a discussion with the board about online instruction. All three were willing to participate. Ellen will coordinate a Zoom meeting after the election and before Thanksgiving. JoAnn strongly urged that Shannon C'de Baca be included in this discussion because she has a strong background in science education and previously developed and taught online classes in Iowa. JoAnn has served on several boards with Shannon and is certain she would be a wonderful addition to the discussion. Ellen was concerned that having another participant would put off

the three individuals she has already contacted but she will speak with Shannon about her background and position on online learning.

### **Council Reports**

Leslie covered the September 29 meeting, but there was nothing discussed which was relevant to our League positions.

Jody covered the October 6 meeting. The primary focus of this meeting was the development of roads and trails and the adequate funding in place to build and connect trails over the next five years.

Barbara will cover the October 20 meeting but thus far the video has not been posted for review. Lynn is covering the October 27 meeting.

Addie agreed to cover the November 10 meeting and Lynn will cover the meeting on November 17.

### **Downtown Planning in Los Alamos and White Rock**

Both Barbara and Jody were able to watch at least part of the downtown planning meetings but could not participate due to technical problems. Jody is hopeful because the plan builds off the values of the county comprehensive plan. She wants us to demand a strict building code be included and Akkana agreed that we should weigh in on any building codes the county is looking at updating. Barbara does not think we need to react to their planning until something is put in writing.

### **Important Dates**

The deadline for the next newsletter is November 4.

The next board meeting will be December 1, 2020, from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 p.m.

*Minutes submitted by Rebecca Chaiken*