

League of Women Voters of Wellesley  
Board Meeting Minutes  
May 14, 2024 / 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.  
Warren Building, Room 008

*Board members attending:* Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch, Laura Brown-Mackinnon, Marguerite Chatelier, Deb Codispoti, Irene Flint, Ann-Mara Lanza, Bonny Nothern, Marlene O'Brien, Ellie Perkins, Rama K. Ramaswamy, Rekha Sampath,

*Members attending:* Odessa Sanchez

*Absent:* Jenn Fallon, Margie Palladino, Tanvi Venkata, Ivy Wang

The meeting was called to order at 12:31 p.m.

**1. Welcome - Bonny Nothern**

- a. Bonny Nothern reviewed the Wellesley College Land Acknowledgement and realized they used very strong language about pledging to remedy the theft of land. Bonny wondered if we might follow suit in our Land Acknowledgement?
- b. Bonny stated, for the record, that we held an email vote following our last Board meeting to accept an amended slate including Rekha Sampath as Director of Membership, instead of Program Director which she had initially agreed to take on. We accepted the amended Slate unanimously.
- c. Bonny expressed our gratitude to Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch, who is stepping off the Board, for her excellent service as Director of Membership.
- d. Bonny also acknowledged how grateful we are to Margie Palladino, who is also leaving the Board, for her excellent work as Legislative Envoy.
- e. Bonny reminded us to fill out the Doodle Poll she sent to determine possible times for our Summer Planning Meeting.
- f. She noted that our June meeting is often a sort of hand-off from the current Board to the next with little business taking place. This will not be the case for this year, as we have a lot to accomplish. Please let Bonny know if you cannot attend our next Board Meeting on June 11, 2024.
- g. We were asked if any of us would like to walk in the Town Parade on Sunday on behalf of the League of Women Voters Wellesley (LWVW).
- h. Tanya Roy will run in the Falmouth Road Race this summer to benefit the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts and would love to have support from any of us. Bonny will bring this up at Annual Meeting.

**2. Minutes of April 9, 2024**

Niki moved to accept the minutes of our Board Meeting on April 9, 2024, as written, and Rama K. Ramaswamy seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.

**Voted:** To accept the minutes of our Board Meeting on April 9, 2024, as written.

**3. Annual Meeting - Irene Flint**

- a. Irene reported that about 17-18 people have responded so far that they will attend Annual Meeting. She said we now have a quorum of voting members, but we are close to the needed number of members and will need more attending in order to feel comfortable. Marlene O'Brien volunteered to reach out to people about attending so that we won't be so close to our quorum number.
- b. We will need more food sign ups. Ann-Mara volunteered to send the SignUpGenius out again and to follow up with members planning to attend to confirm what they will be bringing.

- c. We determined that four Board Members will each speak about a highlight in their area this year: Jenn Fallon on Voter Service, Marguerite Chatelier on Program, Rama on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), and Marlene will talk about the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVM) and the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS).
- d. Jaqui Van Looy has agreed to join our league and to serve as an Off-Board Publicity Specialist. As Publicity Specialist, she would be responsible for distributing content --content that others have prepared--to media for publicity, marketing and visibility purposes. It was noted that, because Jacqui currently chairs the Wellesley Republican Town Committee (WRTC), she is not now eligible to serve on the LWVW Board under the LWVMA/LWVW nonpartisan policies. When she no longer chairs the WRTC, she naturally would be eligible to serve on the LWVW Board.

More generally, it was noted that members need to agree with League processes and procedures and to respect the outcome of them, and that, although not all members agree with every League position or decision, it is understood that League members should not speak publicly against a current Local, State, or National position.

#### **4. Membership - Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch**

- a. We have 141 members: 101 Primary, 12 Additional, 8 Lifetime, and 20 Student Members with no new members this month.
- b. Post Town Election Outreach is finally completed.
- c. The internal pages of the Membership Directory are updated and Niki plans to have completed the total booklet by this weekend; it will be fully wrapped up after our June meeting. We discussed which Mission Statement she should include and that she will include our DEI Statement with a link to the State's DEI position which is being updated.
- d. Niki looks forward to working on the transition with Rekha.

#### **5. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - Rama K. Ramaswamy**

- a. The 15 question Survey we took in April gave us a lot of data. Rama noted that our Board is very analytical and relies on data: we don't sit with the big questions, we like to get in and fix things. Our answers were mainly in agreement, but Rama highlighted several questions where our answers varied, asking how we had interpreted them as they could be understood in different ways. Our discussion revealed how much diversion in interpretation there was among us.
- b. Odessa pointed out that in her experience, the LWVW has not been working to attract more people of color. In fact, we are using this Survey to prompt discussion and to look at how well we are carrying out our goals. We need to learn how to invite, perhaps repeatedly invite, in a way that people will feel welcome and develop the confidence to join.
- c. Ann-Mara noted that we had never in the past concentrated on building our membership until instituting a Membership Director with Niki. Membership needs to be a part of every event and we need to have membership events. During our last three years, with Niki's help and with Board members actively trying to recruit, we have been much more successful.
- d. For our next meeting, Rama asked us to think about how well we feel we adhere to our Mission Statement.

#### **6. Treasurer's Report - Deb Codispoti**

- a. Currently, our resources total \$33,350.59. In the past month, we had interest income of \$78.47 and our normal operating expenses totaled \$1621.60.
- b. In June, we will have to make our final payment to the LWVUS of \$860. We will also have to pay several budgeted expenses: Phonathon, National Convention, Annual Meeting and the Book Award.

- c. We had considered drawing on our reserves to help our delegates with expenses for attending National Convention in June, 2024, but Marlene told us that the Board doesn't have discretion to draw on the reserves except for balancing the budget, which we vote to do at Annual Meeting. Although we have drawn on reserves for other items in the past, we should not continue this practice. Ann-Mara asked if we have used all the money in our budget and we have not: of our \$16,000 budget, we have spent around \$12,000. If we have around \$3,000, that would be funding that we could allocate to another purpose. For our conference funding needs, we are missing at least \$500 and we decided to "roll over" that amount from the budget items that have not been spent.
- d. Rama reminded everyone to note their expenses so that we can be more clear about real conference costs in our future budgets. Ann-Mara asked that we not mention whether funding is requested, but just commit to sending two or three people each year. Irene remembered that in the past we put money in every year for convention funding, even though it occurs every other year. We saved any extra funding "in escrow" from year to year. We stopped doing this, but perhaps should reinstitute this practice.

#### **6. Voter Service - Marguerite Chatelier**

For our Book Award this year, Diane Hemond has recommended: Fight to Vote, by Michael Waldman. We will ask Diane and Bonny to present the award at the High School.

#### **7. Program - Marguerite Chatelier**

Marguerite is stepping down as Vice President of Program and would like to have an exit interview of sorts with us. She gave us a written series of recommendations from the nominating Committee which we will discuss at the Summer Planning Meeting.

#### **8. Legislation/News from LWVMA and LWVUS - Marlene O'Brien**

- a. We received a LWVMA League Leaders email asking Local Leagues and individual members to submit a letter thanking Senators Markey and Warren for sponsoring the John Lewis Voting Rights Act before the National Convention. We will discuss this at our next meeting.
- b. On May 4 there was a State League meeting that followed a wonderful format, with Legislative Specialists (LS) sitting at separate tables to discuss their particular area. When the bell rang, attendees went to the next table to hear from another LS. It worked and would be a great format for us to replicate along with a couple of nearby leagues, open to all Leaguemembers.
- c. On Saturday, June 22, 2024, the State League Council will be held on Zoom. This is a great opportunity for all of us and all should try to attend.
- d. Again, National Convention is fun and edifying. Think about it for this year or in the future.

#### **9. Newsletter/Website - Laura Brown-Mackinnon**

- a. For the upcoming Newsletter, Laura plans to include a report on Annual Meeting and information about the State Council Meeting and National Convention.
- b. Ann-Mara asked Laura to include information about the start of the Town's Strategic Housing Plan, with the first Public Forum taking place on Tuesday, June 18, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. in the High School Auditorium. It is important that lots of people attend this event.

#### **10. Closing Comments - Bonny Nothern**

- a. The Conservation Land Trust meeting on Housing was an excellent meeting. A recording will be posted on their web site and it is recommended to all.

- b. Marguerite announced that she has volunteered to serve on the School Committee which has an opening that will be filled by appointment. We determined that she would need Board approval to do this and continue to serve on our Board. Marlene moved that we approve that Marguerite serve on the School Committee, if appointed, as an interim member for the coming year and continue to serve on the LWVW Board as Co-Vice President of Voter Service. Marguerite committed not to work on Candidate's Night, if she is appointed. The motion was seconded by Ann-Mara??? and approved unanimously.
- Voted:** To approve that Marguerite serve on the School Committee, if appointed, as an interim member for the coming year and continue to serve on the LWVW Board as Co-Vice President of Voter Service.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ellie Perkins, Secretary