

League of Women Voters of Wellesley
Board Meeting Minutes
February 13, 2024 / 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.
Zoom

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 p.m.

1. Welcome - Bonny Northern

- a. In Australia, Bonny heard the equivalent of a Land Acknowledgement which recognized the actual physical harm done to the Native people by colonizers. Bonny reminded us of the Praying Indians of Natick who were moved from their homes in the middle of winter and placed on an island in the Boston Harbor with no food or means of survival. Bonny asked us to keep this in mind to be sure we protect against future atrocities.
- b. Bonny mentioned the death of Deborah Turner who was head of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the debt we owe to her for her leadership. She pointed to comments made to a LWVUS meeting by Jane Andrews, a former Board member of the League of Women Voters of Wellesley (LWVW). Bonny included those comments in her email to us this morning.
- c. Jo-ann Berry, who will be our moderator for Meet the Candidates Night (MTCN), asked if we have a Debates and Forums Policy, because this is being updated at the State level. We need to find the procedures followed by Erry which were based on the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) policy. Ellie will look in past files for our procedures.
- d. Bonny asked if any of us would be interested in composing a statement on climate change or in doing a concurrence study of the Maine League's Vote16 position or the Vermont League's position on privatization of health care. At Bonny's request, Marlene offered some background on the League concurrence process. Ann Mara suggested we ask about interest in tackling these issues at Annual Meeting. See also 7(e) and (f) below.

2. Minutes of January 9, 2024

Rama moved to accept the minutes of last month's Board Meeting, as written. Laura seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Moved: To accept the minutes of the LWVW Board Meeting of January 9, 2024, as written

3. Treasurer's Report - Deb Codispoti

- a. Our total assets are \$39,543.57. We received \$167.76 for dues and our \$1500 donation from Jarvis came in. Our expenses were \$4456.17, including Vote 411 software, the MTCN postcard (both covered by the three corporate donations), the Vote16 program, and a Quickbook class. Three CDs were rolled over at Needham Bank this month and the bank kindly matched the 4.75% rate that we would have received at Mutual One.
- b. Please remember to tell Deb about expenses, even if you plan to donate them.
- c. They have completed a new format that will make it easier for us to understand the budget. Irene, Bonny, Jenn, Rama and Marguerite will meet with Deb to work on the 2024-25 budget in preparation for the March Board Meeting.

4. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - Rama K. Ramaswamy

- a. Rama is happy to attend any and all of our meetings, as Marguerite suggested.

- b. A number of Town positions are up for election this month and we should all think of questions that we could propose to the candidates for this year's MTCN and in the future. How would we frame questions that would reflect awareness of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) issues? Suggestions:
 - i. Rama quoted one of our past questions: "How do you anticipate the override will affect your department. What are your current and future priorities for the Town?" To rewrite this, one might say "How do you anticipate the override will affect your department, considering the diversity and experiences of all community members? In addition, how are you prioritizing initiatives that foster equity, inclusion and belonging in our town, both currently and in the future?"
 - ii. How would you use a DEI lens in your budgeting/financial planning for the Town?
 - iii. How can we bring people together around DEI in our schools
 - iv. Marguerite suggested that, moving forward, we need to aim for multigenerational goals and find people who are mentoring others with an eye to the future: How many people have you mentored since your election? How do you mentor, how important is mentorship to you, with specific examples.
 - v. To the Board of Assessors candidates: What if any factors do you see involving DEI in your functioning on the Board of Assessors?
 - vi. Irene pointed out that the Moderator and the Select Board appoint a lot of people to other boards: How do you find the people you recommend for board and committee appointments?
- c. Rama hoped this exercise will help us going forward to think about and reword our questions and issues in order to include DEI objectives.

5. Legislative News and LWVUS/LWVMA Updates - Marlene O'Brien

- a. Margie Palladino is taking a leave of absence following the death of her mother.
- b. Marlene asked us to mark calendars for June 27- 30, 2024, for the LWVUS Convention in DC. She urged us to consider attending as it is a wonderful experience. Attendance online is \$125; in person, \$550, including breakfast and lunch.
- c. The Sharfman Grant issued grants this year to a number of Local Leagues for a range of efforts: an archive project, election signage, a voter registration table at a non-League event, funding a research associate to map out voter engagement efforts, a banner, funding for an event on the Constitution. Marlene encouraged us to think creatively about projects we would like to fund. The Leagues listed all have healthy budgets. Ballpark grants are \$350-400 and one can only apply once a year.
- d. She drew our attention to the Gateway City initiative in Lawrence, Brockton and Springfield (supported by LWVMA in addition to others) to build support for Cindy Creem's Voting ACCESS Act. We should take a moment to read about this effort that facilitates voting and also covers DEI issues.
- e. If you are interested in offshore Wind Energy projects, Marlene suggests watching the three videos on the State's website to understand how important the projects are, even for non-coastal communities such as Wellesley.

6. Membership - Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch

- a. Our membership is up to 133 Members: 98 Primary, 11 Additional, 8 Lifetime, 6 Student Memberships. Five new members had joined by State deadline January 31, 2024, (2 primary, 2 students from the High School and one from Wellesley College.)
- b. Niki is now looking to clean up the Constant Contact email lists. She adds people as they join, but doesn't delete non-renewals. Do we want to keep people in our database or delete non-current members periodically? We decided to delete them but keep the names in a "Friends List", unless they ask to be taken off the list. Non-members won't get our newsletters.
- c. Marguerite wondered how we could more frequently use Niki's lists of advocacy interests and volunteer interests. Niki suggested placing the link to those lists at the end of every month's Agenda. Also, it is

easy for Bonny to take an email we compose and send it out through Constant Contact. Marlene urged that we try to send no more than one or two such emails a month to avoid email fatigue, especially given members likely also receive LWVMA and LWVUS emails.

- d. The next step in the membership renewal process is to prepare the Membership Directory which will incorporate new officers elected at Annual Meeting. A paper copy will be sent to everyone who doesn't opt out, a majority of our members. Please look through the prior Directory to see if there are errors or ways to streamline. Irene said we used to send this out at the end of the summer, which might make more sense when the year is beginning, not ending. Another issue may be our long window for renewals, from October to the end of January, although the new membership process will be on a rolling, not annual, basis. Marguerite indicated that the Nominating Committee is thinking of a number of changes which may affect the directory.

7. Program - Marguerite Chatelier, Irene Flint, Ann-Mara Lanza

- a. Marguerite recommended that we make the Valentine's Day Party celebrating our High School members an annual event.
- b. Marlene and Marguerite are working on our Book Event: a Wine and Cheese, on April 25, 2024, 7-9 p.m., at Marguerite's house, 11 Colburne Road. We will discuss Chapter 2 of Just Action: How to Challenge Segregation Enacted Under the Color of Law by Richard and Leah Rothstein. Marlene recommends including related video links in the event notice..
- c. Annual Meeting will be May 15, 2024. Laura is in charge of the workbook and will have a production schedule for us by the next meeting.
- d. Our March 15 Coffee will be at Barbara McMahon's house, 7 Amherst Road, and will involve issues that will come before Town Meeting. It is still too early to firm that up.
- e. The Vermont League has asked us to consider supporting their Concurrence to the LWVUS Position on the Privatization of Health Care. Bonny suggested that interested Board Members meet at her house during the last week of February to see if we would like LWVW to concur with that policy, i.e., vote to adopt that policy at Annual Meeting.
- f. Similarly, if a League has a great policy on climate change or Vote 16, we could adopt their policy, as long as there is no conflict with our Local or State position. Again, we would need to have a small group review the proposal and report back to the board quickly. This would be added to the program for Annual Meeting. We should find out the planning at the State level and ask their recommendation for proceeding as a Local League.

8. Voter Service

Jenn was unable to attend today's meeting, but we have MTCN on Thursday and she and Diane Hemond are doing a terrific job planning this event.

9. Newsletter and Website - Laura Brown-Mackinnon

- a. In our upcoming Newsletter, Laura plans to include information on the National Convention, a link to the What's up with Offshore Wind videos, a welcome to new members, perhaps an invitation to join the Board. She will include the March 15 Coffee and the Book Event. She will also mention LWVUS President Dr. Deborah Turner's death, and perhaps quote from the comments to LWVUS written by Jane Andrews.
- b. As to including a notice about National Convention, Bonny is concerned that only those with more resources may feel able to attend. We don't want to exclude anyone who might be interested but would find it too costly. Irene asked if there was money in the budget, because in the past we've paid a person's registration fee and sometimes their hotel, depending on how many people wanted to attend, not 100%, but a significant portion. Also child care was taken into consideration. Deb said our budget

has only allocated \$1500 for National and State Conventions, perhaps because of Covid restricting past delegates. We will need to expand the budget for the future.

- i. Marlene suggested that the selection of need-based grant recipients should remain confidential. She also suggested members with financial need should be eligible to receive such grants regardless of whether they have been selected to serve as delegates.
- ii. Irene said if we don't have our allotted number of delegates, we can offer to share with other Local Leagues.

10. Nominating Committee - Marguerite Chatelier

At the nominating Committee meeting tomorrow, they will compose a notice for the Newsletter.

11. Social Media, Marketing, Communications

The Valentine's Day event went very well with a number of high school students, approximately 8-9 students of the total attendance of around 22. Some younger students attended who, we hope, will continue in the League. Ivy sent a sophomore who may replace her, Serena Sheen. Serena and Anya Khera from Dana Hall (also a sophomore) are talking of officially forming a LWV club at their respective schools. Ellen Hallett is mentoring one of the students who is interested in Not-for-Profit work. Ann-Mara also mentored Anya at the event. Laura will need photos.

12. Closing comments - Bonny Nothern

- a. Bonny will work on appointments to three possible committees: Budget and Finance Committee, Governance Committee, Committee to Consider Concurrence.
- b. From now on, every time Bonny sends out an Agenda, she will attach a link to our list of advocacy interests.
- c. Marguerite, Ellie and Ellen Hallett will attend a presentation on reparations, Thursday, at Framingham State University, gathering information on a possible future LWV position.

Irene moved and Marguerite seconded her motion to adjourn the meeting which was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Our next Board Meeting will be held on March 12, 2024, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. in Room 008, Warren Building.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellie Perkins, Secretary