

League of Women Voters of Wellesley
Board Meeting Minutes
April 9, 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

Members attending: Ellen Hallett, Christina Horner, Rehka Sampath, Odessa Sanchez

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

The meeting was called to order at 12:39 p.m.

1. Welcome - Bonny Northern

- a. Bonny is in the process of "beefing up" our Land Acknowledgement for inclusion in our Annual Meeting Workbook. She will note that this is land that belonged to the Massachusetts people and other tribes and acknowledge our responsibility of stewardship of the land. She is working with Laura, Irene and Rama and would welcome any suggestions on this wording.
- b. At Annual Meeting our responsibility will be to share with the membership through the workbook what we have been doing this year, so we have some important decisions to make and vote on today..
- c. Bonny will send us a Doodle in order to determine the ideal timing of our Summer Planning Meeting.
- d. Bonny plans for us to work on a Strategic Plan this year. Ann-Mara remembers that we last wrote a Strategic Plan about ten years ago, so the timing makes sense. Marlene suggested that it might be wise to align ours with the Strategic Plan of League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA), both in terms of timing and of focus. Bonny agrees and has a copy of LWVMA's plan to use as our starting point.
- e. Bonny also noted that our local positions are, in some cases, fairly old. In 2017, we formed a committee to review our positions and their decisions are noted under Local Program in our League of Women Voters Wellesley (LWVW) Membership Guide.. Seven years have passed and this a good time to look at these positions again, particularly those commented on in italics, indicating that further study would be necessary before action could be taken. We would not consider this a study, rather it would be a working group item for the coming year and it shouldn't be too much to do this in tandem with the other study we are considering. We can discuss this at the Summer Planning Meeting.

2. Minutes of March 13, 2024

- a. Marguerite moved to approve the minutes of our Board Meeting on March 13 and Rama seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- b. Ellie will continue to send the minutes to all those who attend the meeting, for example the Nominating Committee.

Moved: to approve the minutes of our LWVW Board Meeting on March 13, 2024.

2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) - Rama K Ramaswamy

- a. Rama read our Mission Statement and then passed out paper so that we could rank a series of questions she read to us. The questions were designed to focus on what DEI means to us and to probe our core values in order to deepen our understanding of our internal self-identities. The questions touched on increasing the diversity of our Board and potentially accommodating the schedules of a more diverse group, as well as making the personal effort to achieve this diversity.
- b. We also need to determine if we are still in agreement with our Mission Statement. We will need to review it thoroughly as we consider the issue of diversity and write a Strategic Plan.

3. Treasurer's Report - Deb Codispoti

- a. Our current assets are \$34,032.02. We don't expect more income this fiscal year, but we will be making two more monthly Per Member Payments to the LWVMA and to the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS).
- b. The proposed budget for 2024-25 that Deb presented is based on our past expenses and on generously considering possible expenses. The expected changes LWVUS will make in January, 2025, will affect us, but if we collect our dues prior to that date, our budget should still balance. The budgeted amount is slightly less than last year because we always seem to come in a bit under. We are assuming the same corporate donations as last year and we may be able to apply for an additional donation from Needham Bank, if we need it. Starting in January, donations will go through LWVUS and they will take a cut.
- c. In this proposed budget, the budgeted amount to be drawn from reserves in order to balance the budget is increased from \$1893 to \$3005. We need to discuss the issue of reserves because some people feel that we shouldn't fundraise because we have a healthy amount in our reserves. Our reserves are not touched normally except for emergencies or to balance the budget. Although in the past we have consistently drawn on reserves to balance the budget, it has not changed our bottom line over time.
- d. We could also apply for grants to fund some of our projects. And at our Planning Meeting, we could consider instituting a fundraiser to raise certain expenses
- e. Marlene moved to accept the 2024-25 Budget as proposed and Laura seconded the motion which passed unanimously..

Moved: to accept the 2024-25 LWVW Budget, as proposed.

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

- a. The Brown Bag Lunch at Barbara McMahon's on what would happen at Town Meeting was a success. Many people commented on how much they had enjoyed it. Around 30 people attended and some were not yet members, calling themselves "future members". We should definitely do this program again.
- b. The Wine and Cheese at Marguerite's house on April 25, from 7-9 p.m. will be a book talk on Chapter 2 of Just Action: How to Challenge Segregation Enacted Under the Color of Law by Richard and Leah Rothstein. This is about how the Supreme Court has affected Black Americans through systemic racism. Marguerite and Marlene will each present their thoughts in order to promote conversation. Marguerite urges us to invite as many people as possible. We will send out a reminder to RSVP for this event along with video links about the book two weeks in advance.
- c. Margie is working on a meeting with Alice Peisch. The Wonderful World of Wellesley (WOW) and the Universalist Unitarian Church are also in the process of organizing an event with Alice. It would be possible to either partner with them or have Alice meet with us alone.
- d. Annual Meeting will be Wednesday, May 15, 2024, from 6 to 9 p.m., and invitations will soon go out. We will need at least 14 non-Board members who are over 16 years old in attendance, in order to have a legal quorum and be able to take votes. In the Evite, we will also ask for food donations. The organizing members for the meeting are Marlene, Irene, Ann-Mara, Bonny and Marguerite and Rehka.
- e. Ann-Mara is working on a Study Proposal for a potential Consensus Study of the Minimum Voting Age to be included in the Annual Meeting Workbook and she gave us a draft to consider.

5. Newsletter - Laura Brown-Mackinnon

- a. Laura is still waiting for some of our contributions for the Annual Meeting Workbook. The Workbook has to be ready to go out the last week of April.
- b. The actions that need to take place at Annual Meeting and be part of the Workbook are: to elect the Committee of Three, approve the new LWVW Board, approve the LWVW Budget for 2024-25, and adopt the Consensus Study and then our LWVW Local Program. We will need to decide before the meeting which three Board Members will present their reports to Annual Meeting.
- c. Bonny asked if any of us have pictures of events and members that might be used for newsletters, etc.

- d. The April Newsletter will be devoted to upcoming events, including Annual Meeting, and will be published next Tuesday, April 16th.

6. Legislation/News from LWVMA and LWVUS - Marlene O'Brien

For her report to us today, Marlene will send us a summary of the past year that she has prepared for the Workbook.

7. Voter Services

- a. Bonny mentioned again how impressive Barbara McMahon was at Town Meeting Prep. Ann-Mara reported that Barbara should have someone to help her in the future with reminding people that they should only ask questions for clarification, not state their opinions. People need to be reminded to bring their comments/opinions up at Town Meeting not Town Meeting Prep, which is designed to be for preparation. Perhaps someone should introduce Barbara next year and be responsible for keeping questions on target.
- b. Bonny, as a new Town Meeting Member, has determined that in the future she will only stand up to speak as President of our League. She will not be speaking personally or for her precinct. As President, she is unable to ever take off the league hat.
- c. Ann-Mara mentioned her concern about an issue that failed at Town Meeting because of a question raised at Town Meeting Prep which caused the Advisory Board to reconsider a prior vote. Even though in the end Advisory did not take another vote, and even though the issue might have failed anyway, it seemed unfortunate that discussion at our event resulted in this confusion.

8. Membership - Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch

- a. We currently have 141 members: 101 Primary, 12 Additional, 8 Lifetime and 20 Student Members. In the past month, three people joined, including two students.
- b. Niki has cleaned up the Constant Contact list.
- c. She will be working on the Directory following Annual Meeting, once all issues have been decided.
- d. Niki plans to reach out to members who participated in the Town Election to encourage them to join the League.

9. Nominating Committee - Ellen Hallet

- a. Ellen thanked her committee members, Marguerite and Odessa. She also thanked the members who will be stepping down for their service on the Board, Niki and Jenn.
- b. Ellen also thanked those members continuing on the Board and welcomed the new members who will be joining the Board.
- c. We reviewed the Nomination Slate for 2024/25. There are several positions that are still open, and candidates are considering those positions. We will handle these positions with an email vote once they are filled. Irene moved that we accept the Nomination Slate and Laura seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Moved: to accept the Nomination Slate for Board of Directors and Nominating Committee for 2024/25.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellie Perkins