

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

Board Members Attending: Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch, Marguerite Chatelier, Deb Codispoti, Irene Flint, Ann-Mara Lanza, Bonny Nothern, Marlene O'Brien, Ellie Perkins, Rama K. Ramaswamy,
Members attending: Ellen Hackett, Christina Horner, Joelle Reidy, Odessa Sanchez
Absent: Laura Brown-Mackinnon, Jenn Fallon, Margie Palladino, Tanvi Venkata, Ivy Wang

The meeting was called to order at 12.33 p.m.

1. Welcome - Bonny Nothern

Bonny reminded us that our slogan is "Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy" and that we should be proud of the work we do. She then read a Land Acknowledgement that Deb had recommended from Wellesley College. We introduced ourselves to our guests: Nominating Committee members Ellen Hallett and Odessa Sanchez, as well as Christina Horner and Joelle Reidy.

- a. Bonny clarified our previous discussion about supporting Vote16 (for lowering the age to vote in local or municipal elections) or the Vermont initiative concerning privatization of health care. At the moment, we are unable to consider such support because the League process is very systematic and well defined. After a subject is brought before a board, research, presentations and discussion, must precede any decision to study a particular subject. Then, once the Board decides to conduct a study, it must get consensus first at Annual Meeting before launching the study. If approved, the study usually takes about a year to decide on a Position. Even to arrive at a Concurrence Position, where the issue has already been studied by another League as in the Vermont initiative or Maine's Vote 16, we would need a period of study and discussion before taking a vote.
- b. In fact, the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Vermont has asked us to recommend an addition to the program for the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) Convention: consideration of their position that a ban of privatization of health care be added to the LWVUS Position against privatization in other sectors. Instead of launching a new study, they are asking the local leagues to support this. We will discuss this in April. Ann Satter, MD, a League of Women Voters of Wellesley (LWVW) member, is interested in taking part as we determine whether we will support this request.
- c. Bonny asked if anyone objected to our studying Vote 16 or would be interested in participating. In order to emphasize that we haven't yet made a decision, we need to engage all sides. Two Wellesley College student members are interested in being part of or possibly leading this study, in which case, a Board member might need to either lead or be a liaison to the study committee. Marlene moved that the Board recommend to the membership at Annual Meeting a study relating to minimum voting age, Deb seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Moved: To recommend to the membership at Annual Meeting a study relating to minimum voting age.

2. Minutes of February 13, 2024

- a. Ellie reminded us that we had voted on the December 2023 Minutes by mistake at our previous meeting but that a second vote to accept the January 2024 Minutes was taken by email and passed.
- b. Niki moved to accept the Minutes of our Board Meeting on February 13, 2024. Rama seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Moved: to accept the minutes of our Board Meeting on February 13, 2024

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

Today for our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) discussion, we were asked to describe a time we had a sense of belonging or inclusion on a Wellesley board or committee.

- a. Members mentioned various moments: debriefing with fellow LWVW Board members, a ceremony to honor a previous Board Member among LWV members and others, working with one's neighborhood on a street project, being personally invited to participate during one's first meeting in a group, running for Town Meeting, feeling that one's skill was specifically needed on a board, feeling useful on a study led to joining the LWVW, feeling part of the community by working at the polls.
- b. To foster our sense of inclusion, remember that work at the polls is needed on a statewide basis. Additionally, the LWV of Natick recently dissolved and we might think of ways we could be helpful to our neighboring town, for example, could we share our ability to use Vote411 with them?

4. Treasurer's Report - Deb Codispoti

- a. Our total assets are \$35,421.44, a decrease from last month due to expenses coming in but no significant additional dues. Further expenses will need to be paid soon, for example, Per Member Payments and costs for Phonathon, Annual Meeting, and National Convention.
- b. In Deb's reworked Proposed Budget for 2024-25, dues, member donations and income from CDs went down from budgeted amounts. Also, expenses will go up because the budget now includes specific categories (Programs, Voter Service, Advocacy, Conventions, Operating Costs) as opposed to having costs for those categories "hidden" in total expenses. Additionally, three new categories were added which had never been previously delineated in the budget: DEI, Studies and Legislative Envoy. Publicity/Outreach expenses are always going up as are expenses for the postcard. Some of our expenses went down because we didn't have to pay for the rooms we used. Finally, some of the expense items have not yet taken place, nor has Phonathon on the income side. Reserve appropriations we will consider at the end of the year once we know actual costs and income.
- c. In the past, the postcard has been covered by three corporate donations and its purpose is to remind people to vote. Should we have a postcard also in the fall, to point to the national election and also perhaps to a related program? We usually need the publicity most for local elections in the spring.
- d. We are an educational organization, but we are also an advocacy organization and our budget should reflect our priorities. Marguerite read our Mission Statement and asked if our budget is aligned with our education and advocacy goals. Do we have a strategic plan in place to answer these questions? We are still hoping to prepare a strategic plan.
- e. Changes to the membership structure and dues on the State and National level will affect our budget, but perhaps not as early as next year.
- f. We noted the discrepancy between our proposed budget and our previous budget. Should we consider adding a signature annual fundraising event? Do we need to, with around \$35,000 in our account?
- g. Taking a vote on the Budget for 2024-25 was tabled and will be taken up at our April meeting. Any Board Members with specific questions about the Proposed Budget are invited to meet with the Budget Committee in a Zoom, tba.

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

- a. Article 40, MBTA Communities Act Compliance, is coming before Town Meeting and the Program Committee has asked the LWVW to support this article. We reviewed a drafted letter to Town Meeting Members to acknowledge our Affordable Housing Position and support for Article 40, as well as a drafted speech for Bonny to give at Town Meeting on behalf of LWVW to support Article 40 and urge others to do so as well. Several suggestions on both were made. Marlene moved that we support Article 40 at Town Meeting and Irene seconded the motion which was approved unanimously. Marlene then moved that we support a letter with revisions generally as discussed, delegating to Bonny approval of the revised version. Irene seconded the motion and it was also approved in a unanimous vote.

- b. On Friday, we will have a Brown Bag Lunch at Barbara McMahon's house, 7 Amherst Road at noon. We will discuss MBTA Communities and any other issues we want to discuss which will come up at Town Meeting. Please bring your lunch and bring guests.
- c. Our Book Talk will take place on April 25, from 7 to 9 p.m., at Marguerite's house, 11 Colburn Road. We will discuss Chapter 2 of Just Action: How to Challenge Segregation Enacted Under the Color of Law by Richard and Leah Rothstein.
- d. The Valentine's Party was a great success and will become an annual event, celebrating both the LWV's birthday and our teenage members.
- e. Will we really want to charge our high school members for membership, as National is proposing? Perhaps we could allow them to join us without going through the LWVUS. We do have a box on our Membership Form to check for financial need, no questions asked. Although in saying "If this causes a financial hardship", perhaps "Hardship" is too strong a word. This discussion should be a Summer Retreat topic.
- f. Margie Palladino is planning a lunch with our state representatives for later this spring.

Moved: that LWVW support Article 40 at Annual Town Meeting in April.

Moved: that we support the draft letter for Bonny to read at Town Meeting, with revisions generally as discussed.

6. Legislative - Marlene O'Brien

- a. Marlene reminded us that the first call for National Convention has come out with costs of \$125 to attend on Zoom and \$550 in person. She emphasized that it is truly edifying and truly enjoyable to meet members from all over the country who are working on goals similar to our own.
- b. It is already possible to join the local league from the LWVUS website.
- c. On April 11th there will be a LWVMA Zoom on an important topic: Talking about Death will Not Kill You. This is about options for terminally ill patients.

7. Membership - Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch

- a. Our total membership is 137 with 99 Primary Members, 12 Additional, 8 Lifetime and 18 Student Members.
- b. We have three new members: Rekha Sampath, Anya Khera's Mother, Julia Cao and Sofia Dobado, both students.
- c. Niki is cleaning up email lists, adding those who didn't renew membership to an Inactive Member list, and updating the Membership Directory.

8. Nominating Committee - Ellen Hallet, Odessa Sanchez, Marguerite Chatelier

- a. The Nominating Committee had 16 positions to fill of which they have filled 11. They still need to fill five positions, of which one may be almost settled, and they have prospects for the other two. The two positions with no prospects are Nominating Committee Chair and Director of Publicity/Marketing.
- b. Serena Sheen has agreed to be the new Social Media Specialist. Because she has only recently joined, it makes sense that she be connected with the Director of Newsletter/Website. Therefore, Serena and Laura have met in order to begin to establish this connection. Laura will be in charge of content and messaging that would go on Social Media. Would this allow us to get along without a person in Publicity/Marketing? Odessa has been talking with a new person who would consider this position, but she would like to see a Job Description, which we apparently do not have.
- c. The Committee would like to have more candidates for sharing positions, for example Co-President, Co-Vice President - Voter Services which are both such big jobs. Could the latter be split with teams under a coordinator?
- d. The Committee also suggested that in our Directory we list Officers, instead of Executive Board, and Directors, instead of Elected/Appointed Directors, and then Specialists.

- e. The Committee suggested that our policy should be that high school students, who usually can't come to our meetings, as Specialists should no longer be designated as Directors of the Board, because this needlessly makes our voting difficult, throwing off the quorum count when they actually are almost never able to be present. To facilitate this, Serena's responsibility should be to connect with Laura each month to coordinate social media content. We can also continue this year's procedure: a standing Sunday evening Zoom meeting following the Board Meeting to let the student Specialists know what happened at the meeting and to make sure they understand their related responsibilities. Additional social media needs will have to be conveyed throughout the month.

9. Voter Services

We tabled this discussion because Jenn Fallon was unable to join the meeting today.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellie Perkins, Secretary