

League of Women Voters of Wellesley
Board Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2023 / 12:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Warren Building, Room 110

Attending: Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch, Laura Brown-Mackinnon, Marguerite Chatelier, Deb Codispoti, Jenn Fallon, Ann-Mara Lanza, Bonny Nothern, Marlene O'Brien, Ellie Perkins, Rama K. Ramaswamy

Absent: Irene Flint, Margie Palladino, Tanvi Venkata, Ivy Wang

The meeting was called to order at 12:34 p.m.

1. Welcome - Bonny Nothern

- a. Bonny summarized the conversation among those who came early to eat together, mainly concerning how we should hold our Board meetings (public space vs. member's home; nighttime vs. daytime). Bonny also tested a new mike that should pick up all our voices better when recording and on Zoom.
- b. We received a brochure from the national League of Women Voters (LWV) to use for public meetings. We can put labels on them to advertise the League of Women Voters Wellesley (LWVW) with contact info for membership: website, email, phone number. The label would cover up the contact info for LWV, but not their QR Code. We ordered 100 at no cost, but could pay for additional copies.
- c. Bonny read a Land Acknowledgement from the Newton Theater Company.

2. Minutes of October 10, 2023

Jenn made a motion to approve the minutes as written and it was seconded by Niki. The motion passed with one abstention.

VOTED: to approve the minutes of October 10, 2023.

3. Treasurer's Report - Deb Codispoti

- a. Deb has taken out a new seven-month CD at Mutual One. This month we had income from dues and donations, reimbursed several small expenses and paid the second quarter Per Member Payment to the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA). We currently have approximately \$35,081 in our checking and savings accounts and CDs.
- b. We also have pledges for donations of \$1500 each for the 411Vote postcard from Roche Brothers, Babson and Jarvis. Babson College would like to give us their donation by credit card, not check, but this is not possible now on our website. Laura will look into changing the donation button to add another option, "Other", for donations above \$100.
- c. Deb will forward to the Board information from the Needham Bank on how to request a donation, as they are open to giving us funding.

4. Building Community - Bonny Nothern

- a. Bonny has been speaking with Jenn and Marguerite about building community. Through her work on the Nominating Committee, Bonny has noticed that people have often been

drawn to join the LWVW Board because of prior relationships. Part of building community is acknowledging someone's worth, showing appreciation, and one way to do this might be by sending cards for condolence, congratulations, or gratitude for going above and beyond. The more we do big events, the more we might need these gifts. Laura endorsed the idea of formalized gratitude.

- Ann-Mara cautioned that we need to consider culture, for example, one shouldn't send flowers to a Jewish family in mourning, but send food instead.
- On the other hand, a beautiful card might be enough. Another option would be to create a certificate of appreciation to give certain people.
- We currently send email thank-you notes for donations to LWVW.
- Rama suggested that we consider this on a case by case basis in deciding how to handle each situation.
- Ellie, following Bonny's suggestions, will take responsibility for writing any notes we need to send, unless another Board member would prefer to do so. We will keep count of the instances/cost and add a line-item amount to our budget for next year.

4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We decided to postpone until our next meeting today's planned review of our progress in integrating the principles of DEI, Belonging into our work for the League. This will give us more time to consider our own experience, as well as ways to incorporate this into future activities.

5. Legislation/News from LWVMA - Marlene O'Brien

- a. LWVMA is encouraging local leagues to support the new state legislative mandate to teach civic education in eighth grade. Six Leagues discussed their successes and challenges in doing so. They have found that a key to success is knowing the right person in the school system to approach. One interesting and strategic approach is that of the Worcester League Worcester, where Harriet Chandler, former President of the State Senate who pushed through the initial legislation, is located. This league pairs local college students with eighth graders to offer research support and advice on their civics projects, an idea we may or may not want to pursue. Marlene will share links to materials.
- b. Niki pointed out that in our high school eighth-grade projects start every year in the spring and we could easily support this as there is a curriculum already in place. Adam Blumer and Jonathan Rabinowitz have already set up this program in Wellesley. Perhaps we could be a resource to the local schools in some way they would welcome.
- c. Although this might qualify as Voter Service (it could be a good way to bring students into the League), we decided it would fall best under Program. Similarly, we have a young Dana Hall student member, a sophomore, who is very interested in Vote16 and continues to be in contact with Bonny and Marguerite.

6. Membership - Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch

- a. Our total membership is 154, 110 primary, 14 additional, 8 lifetime, 22 students. We had two new members last month and also have two potential new members from the Volunteer Fair.
- b. We still have 44 members who have not renewed and are now at the next stage of membership renewals. Niki will send us the spreadsheet and we should note people we will contact.
- c. There is a link in today's Agenda to a list of members who indicated an interest on this year's membership forms in volunteering with specific activities.
- d. Niki also has linked to a list of those who indicated an advocacy interest on the forms.
- e. People who joined less recently didn't get a chance to fill these out, but a large number of people did indicate an interest in various issues. There was interest in all topics; the most popular were affordable housing, environment, gun violence protection and women's issues. Both lists are ready to be used.

7. Program - Marguerite Chatelier and Ann-Mara Lanza

- a. Ann-Mara suggests that we find time at a future meeting to continue the discussion we had at the last Brown Bag Lunch on ways to be welcoming. She will share her notes with the Board.
- b. Our Brown Bag Lunch this Friday, November 17, with Greg Reibman of the Charles River Regional Chamber will be in room 216 of the Warren Building.
- c. On November 30 at 7 p.m. in the Wakelin Room of the Wellesley Free Library we will have our community-wide event: Public Forum: MBTA Communities Requirements. Our speakers will be Meghan Jop, Executive Director of General Government Services and Eric Arbeene, Planning Director. Our lead co-sponsors are: Building a Better Wellesley, Sustainable Wellesley, the Charles River Regional Chamber, and World of Wellesley. Additional sponsors are: the Racial Justice Initiative of Temple Beth Elohim, and UU Wellesley Hills and the Village Church. St. John-St. Paul will be publicizing this for us, and possibly also the Congregational Church in the Hills.
 - We will need a registration table and we will need to welcome people with greeters at the door.
 - In introducing the program we will explain why it is necessary to discuss this topic: this is a major initiative in Wellesley as we have to comply with state law and in this way we can have input into how we do it. Our lead co-sponsors will be asked to provide bullet points stating why it is important to them.
 - How do we want to take questions? Should we give out index cards for written questions as we did at Opening Meeting? We decided that we are sufficiently concerned about the emotions that might arise from people who feel threatened by the housing issues that we do need to structure the questioning this way. We selected a completely neutral person, Bonny, to read the questions.
 - Rama suggested that we weave DEI principles into the introduction and other comments.
 - Because we are co-hosting with the Town, they will do publicity for the Town officials and Town Meeting Members. This issue will probably be on the agenda for April Town Meeting.

- d. We were invited to join the bell-ringers at Roche Brothers. Because this is the Salvation Army, a Christian evangelist group, we can't really be involved, even though they give a lot of money to the town.
- e. For any event that we have, we should have a poster that says welcome, thank you for coming, this is our mission and here is a QR Code for donations. We will invite our co-sponsors to display their material at the Forum. We should also have a table at the Wonderful Wellesley Weekend and at July Jubilation with similar info.
- f. Should we plan programming on our top four most popular issues: guns, housing, sustainability, women's rights? We could get a legislative specialist to speak, partner with other leagues?

8. Voter Service - Jenn Fallon

- a. The Special Town Meeting Prep went very well. There were 54 attendees which is an excellent number, historically, and good questions were asked. The Tolles-Parson Center space was lovely and the panel was strong: Mark Kaplan, Tom Ulfelder, Tom Taylor, Eric Arbeene, Ann Rappaport, Megan Jop.
- b. Our next event is December 6 at 7 p.m., How to Run for Local Public Office, Room 8, and Lucy Costa is helping Jenn. Our goal is to encourage people to run for Town Meeting, giving a realistic idea of the time commitment which is not as big as some think. The speakers will be Michael D'Ortenzio, Natural Resources Commission, and Christina Horner, School Committee, and possibly Jeff Wechsler, Board of Public Works. KC Kato has updated the presentation powerpoint. Lucy is working on a flyer: It's not hard to run, come and find out how; 240 people make all the decisions and wouldn't you like to be one of them? Publicity will include social media, the newsletter, and flyers posted around town.
- c. Diane Robitaille is doing a great job preparing Meet the Candidate Night.
- d. We never heard back from the Nines about holding voter registration there, but we will let it go for now, given all we are doing.

9. Social Media/Marketing - Bonny Nothern

- a. Ivy and Tanvi have been very helpful with the tech issues for marketing. In order for Wellesley Media to use our flyers they need to be in a powerpoint slide which is landscape format, and requires tweaking to look right. It goes into a rotation for very quick viewing, so it needs to be succinct, just essential information, little text.
- b. Marlene pointed out that renters and those who are not US citizens tend to be unaware that they can run for Town Meeting. We will include this information in our material.
- c. Bonny will meet with Ivy and Tanvi this Sunday at 8 p.m. on Zoom. She keeps us informed of their activities because she wants us to think about anything we do for the League that might need to be marketed or that we might need the students' help with. She sends out the minutes so we are all aware of what is happening. Laura reminded us that everything that goes out on social media is linked to the website and will bring people to the site.
- d. Tanvi created a FaceBook event page for the 11/30 forum.
- e. Some of the Leagues have a LinkedIn profile, but we don't see the need.

10. Newsletter/Website - Laura Brown-Mackinnon

- a. Laura will advertise How to Run for Local Public Office and she will post a Save the Date for Meet the Candidates Night. Please send Laura any flyers we create to help in writing the newsletter; she will link to them in the text.
- b. There will be a Book Read in January and we should give people a heads-up: Just Action: How to Challenge Segregation Enacted under the Color of Law, by Leah and Richard Rothstein.
- c. Laura started a Google Photos and wants us to keep sending pictures to her.
- d. We can see in Constant Comment who is looking at our information and we have a very good click rate. Also importantly, no one has unsubscribed.

10. Closing Comments - Bonny Nothern

- a. Bonny would like us all to consider ourselves to be on the nominating committee in order to spread the word about how much we enjoy working on the Board. Additionally, it will help us to keep an open mind about changing our own roles and remind us to look in our other groups for anyone who might be interested in joining the League and maybe the Board. Ellen Hallett and Odessa Sanchez are committee members along with Marguerite who represents our Board. We will invite Ellen and Odessa to come to our January Board Meeting.
- b. Bonny noted that the Waltham Town Counsel recently, and controversially, told incumbents running for reelection that they could not indicate their stance on current issues because it would be a violation of the open meeting law. This is a concern for the League, because the League was co-hosting this event. We will ask Tanya Roy to find out the LWVMA position on this issue.
- c. Another pressing local concern was discussed in the Globe Spotlight article on affordable housing in Brookline, where the debate is not unlike that here in Wellesley.

Laura moved to adjourn, Deb seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Reminder: Our next Board Meeting will be December 14, 2023, from 12:30 to 2:30, Warren Building, Room 110.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellie Perkins, Secretary