

League of Women Voters of Wellesley
Board Meeting Minutes
October 10, 2023 / 12:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Warren Building, Room 008

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

Absent: Marguerite Chatelier, Tanvi Venkata, Ivy Wang

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

1. Welcome - Bonny Nothern

- a. Bonny reminded us that she recently asked the opinion of a local tribal leader who felt that Land Acknowledgements are often performative. Suggesting therefore that the simplest approach might be the most meaningful, she reminded us that the Massachusetts people lived on our land before we arrived. She asked us to pause a minute to quietly think of the wars going on in the world, the disorder in our Congress and the fact that what is done locally can make a real difference.
- b. She asked us to set our own timers as we each address our sections of the Agenda.
- c. It had been suggested that Raina McManus come to a meeting to speak about the Sisters of Charity issue, Article 15 on the Warrant for Special Town Meeting, but it was pointed out that we would then need to hear from the other side. So, we may have this conversation among ourselves at some point.
- d. Bonny reminded us that it is most important that we not interrupt each other or ramble and monopolize the conversation. She had considered having a microphone for us to pass around, indicating that the holder could not be interrupted, but there are other options we can consider.
- e. In honor of Indigenous Peoples Day, Irene read a poem: "Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question", by Diane Burns.

2. Minutes of September 12, 2023

- a. Margie moved to accept the minutes and Niki seconded the motion.
- b. There was no discussion and the motion passed with one abstention
- c. We decided for the future to send out the minutes twice: once soon after a meeting and then again after revisions, along with the Agenda, just before the next meeting.
- d. Marlene suggested that action items be reviewed at the conclusion of board meetings and listed at the end of the meeting minutes, with names attached. We will consider this suggestion at a later time.

VOTED: To approve the minutes of September 12, 2023.

3. Treasurer's Report - Deb Codispoti

- a. Deb passed out copies of the Treasurer's Report. Total assets are \$34,513.03.
- b. Several CDs will come due at the end of October and the beginning of November for which Deb will need Board approval, before she can roll them over into another CD. The

rates are going up now. As we are a business, we would get around 3 ¼%, not the higher rates our banks would offer to us individually. She is considering three-month CDs, which offer the best rates right now. She hopes to consolidate them at some point in the future.

- c. Ann-Mara moved to authorize Deb to reinvest the funding from our four CDs into CDs at the best available rate, for no longer than one year. Irene seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- d. Deb feels the budget as currently set up is difficult to understand, so she will be reworking the budget, for example, to include items for Voter Service under Voter Service, not grouped with various other items. She hopes next year's budget will be easier for us to understand.
- e. Deb bought "I Voted" stickers for the town to give out at the eight precincts. Initially, they wanted us to buy 40 rolls of a thousand (40,000), but she talked them down to 10,000 so that we can determine first how many we need to use yearly.
- f. The Reimbursement Forms that Jenn created will be on the website and Deb would like us to use them, even if we don't intend to request reimbursement. Include an invoice, if applicable, along with the form.
- g. We may need to buy a new For Deposit Only stamp, now that we have a new account and number.
- h. The Per Member Payments are being changed, but are not yet finalized.
- i. Bonny has opened a LWVW Staples account and she would like us to use it to build up bonus points for any purchases. They will send the receipt directly to Deb. It was pointed out that the LWVW is not a 501c3 organization to which charitable contributions may be deducted. Marlene suggested that we could explore working with the state League's 501c3 education fund, the Lotte E. Scharfman Memorial Citizen Education Fund, if desired.
- j. If you make a donation with your dues through PayPal, you need to make the donation amount clear on Paypal so that they won't charge a fee. Otherwise, send in a check.
- k. LWV of Brookline has received an endowment for \$60,000 with the stipulation that it be used only for educational purposes. A reminder from Bonny: when making our wills, a large donation could allow our League to work by using mainly our accrued interest.

VOTED: To authorize Deb to reinvest the funding from our four CDs, once they come due, into new CDs at the best available rate, for no longer than one year.

4. DEI - Rama K. Ramaswamy

- a. Rama thanked Irene for the poem she read
- b. Newton celebrated Indigenous Peoples Day yesterday at Albemarle Field in Newton for the third year. Throughout the day, a good crowd of people visited to see around 17 Indigenous People who presented a variety of performances, dances, and food. The site was accessible and there were quiet zones available. Just before 11 when the program was about to start, a parade of 5-10 honking cars with a police permit drove through, waving US and Italian flags and shouting about Columbus Day. All remained peaceful.
- c. What did we think about Irene's poem? Related thoughts?

- Jenn heard that some companies took away the day off work with the change from Columbus Day. Of course, some companies never have given the day off anyway.
- Margie recounted that a friend recently made a mistake, thinking she knew an Asian person who said "No, I'm not that person." Her friend was mortified, because of the assumption some make that "all X people look alike." Additionally, Margie was working on a law school reunion where the lawyers were surprised and bothered by the very stylish clothing the Dean of the school wore. This became a big topic of conversation among the lawyers and even the Trustees, perhaps because the Dean is a woman.
- In terms of the poem Irene read, Ann-Mara said we all know these are the wrong things to say, but sometimes people say them because they want to connect and show support. How can we help the people who mean well, understanding also that everyone making such comments may not be people of good will.
- What questions could have been asked instead, as icebreakers? Are you enjoying this event? How are you? I love what you are wearing and I'd love to know more about it.
- d. How can we incorporate some of this thinking into our opening or closing remarks at events? As an action item for a meeting? Bonny said that the LWV data form asks "how did your program relate to the LWV DEI goals?" Maybe we need to add to our event planning: how does this apply to DEI? What are the ways to meet the DEI goals other than having a speaker of color? As this is clearly important to the National and State Leagues, we will need to think about this and to make decisions about how we should be accomplishing these goals.

5. Legislative - Margie Palladino

- a. Tomorrow (10/11/2023) is the LWVMA Day on the Hill. The big push is their priority bills, mainly gun control, as well as banning forever chemicals, and increasing ballot access and maternal health. Bonny is going, as is Tanya. Lucy Costa will be virtual. They've been invited to join a luncheon with Newton for our legislators.
- b. Last month Margie was at the seven-hour hearing for the domestic violence bills and she learned a great deal. The many women who testified felt so strongly that, although they testified off-camera and not on record, they submitted written testimony so that there would be a record. Also, Massachusetts and South Carolina are the only two states that have not passed a sexting bill, but today our bill was taken out of committee. Right now the bills either come out of committee and are "sent to study" which means it's dead, or sent along the way to actually possibly be voted on. One of the bills may be safely out of committee. This would be an opportunity to get the membership more involved.
- c. Margie said the NRA is well organized and keeps bombarding the legislature about the gun bill. So we need to send out our thoughts, and we can still call legislators. It is always helpful to add a personal comment to show how much we care about an issue. If the LWV is supporting a bill, you could ask to be counted twice, one vote for yourself and one for the league.
- d. As soon as we go through all the membership responses, we will be able to set up a rapid response team, reaching the membership through Constant Contact.
- e. When legislative actions were discussed, Margie noted the League's success in reversing the Governor's proposed reduction in funding of the Civics Project. Marlene

pointed out that the League primarily focuses on proposing or supporting legislative acts as opposed to executive orders and amicus briefs, and that it might do well to organize to focus also on these other vehicles for change.

6. Membership - Niki Brinkman-Ofenloch

- a. We have 152 members, with three new members from our Volunteer Fair and two more in the process of joining. In the renewal process, we have sent three emails and a paper letter with one more email going out tomorrow.
- b. As soon as the renewals are finished, Niki will create the Constant Contact rapid response list and then Margie will be able to create the emails. Of 25 responses, 22 included at least one advocacy topic.
- c. We can get free LWV fliers from the State League and have ordered a supply.
- d. We would like to welcome members from surrounding towns which do not have a League, for example, Weston and Natick. We would like to encourage them to join LWVW. Some of the Leagues change their names to include "area" and we could consider this. Acton actually has seven towns in their League. It would be important to know if they want to join and are willing to do some of the work. We could allow the relationship to evolve with time. Marlene suggested that several leaders of the LWVW invite several of the leaders of the Weston League and, separately, Natick League, to meet to discuss their potential interest in an Area League and how we can help support them at this time.
- e. There is a new student membership incentive: student names are put into a raffle to win a prize. We have one new member and will look into this.

7. Program - Ann-Mara Lanza

- a. Our Opening Meeting was very successful, the speakers were excellent and the questions were also good.
- b. Our next event is a Brown Bag Lunch on October 27th at Margie's house, 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. It will be a Round Table Discussion with Ellen Korpi who would like to explain a Welcome Ambassador pilot program she is launching with the Department of Public Works and the Municipal Light Plant. They are interested in building community in general. How can we welcome and include new residents at housing developments? How can we bring neighbors together to strengthen our sense of community?
- c. Another Brown Bag Lunch will be held on November 17th from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. at Barbara McMahon's. Greg Reibman of the Charles River Regional Chamber will discuss their role in helping Wellesley thrive. Why is affordable housing so important to our business community? How can the League partner with the Chamber to make Wellesley more inclusive and welcoming?
- d. On November 30 at 7 pm, we will present our housing program for the year: MBTA Communities Legislation Public Forum. How can we comply with the MBTA Communities Legislation? The town will co-sponsor and has booked the Wakelin Room.
- e. In December, instead of a holiday party, the committee would like to have a more enjoyable event and asked for us to brainstorm. For example, we once held a dinner with Sustainable Wellesley. Jenn suggested a "cookie walk". Marlene suggested a

multicultural event, perhaps cooking or baking demonstrations, given the time of year. Others suggested: a gift collection for children; caroling; a potluck. We could base ourselves in the Community Room at Washington Street or Barton Road; partner with another organization; focus on those who are often forgotten, the elderly, the sick.

- f. The Unitarian Universalist Church on Thursday, October 26th, at 7 p.m., will offer a program on Housing called Just Desserts. Ann Mara will be one of the speakers.
- g. Bonny mentioned that she saw a newsletter that was eye-popping because each section had photos that grabbed her attention. Needing photos might pull in people who don't otherwise get involved: someone who likes to take photos? We will ask for a volunteer photographer in the newsletter. Can we use photos of people who are not members of the League? We will need to research this.

8. Voter Service - Jenn Fallon

- a. Voter Registration Day at the High School was a success. Ivy was exceptionally helpful.
- b. Jenn will continue to explore holding a voter registration session at the Nines.
- c. Special Town Meeting Prep is November, 1st, 7-9 p.m., at Tolles Parson. We may cover Sisters of Charity and planning issues. It will cost \$270. We need to plan the postcard that goes out to all the voting households. We need to start early to ask for donations. Erry Johnson thought we should try Wellesley College, Roche Brothers, Jarvis and Needham Bank and ask for \$1500 from each, hoping to get three donations. Any other suggestions?

9. Newsletter and website - Laura Brown-Mackinnon

- a. Laura will put the Reimbursement Request Forms on the website. She will need both approved Meeting Minutes and the Agenda in pdf form for the website. She plans to create a page for Opening Meeting and will add the video and perhaps slides.
- b. For the newsletter, Rama will prepare a DEI spot. Jenn will cover the high school Voter Registration. Bonny will write up the Day on the Hill. Margie will write up a summary of legislative updates. Laura will include a notice about Special Town Meeting Prep. She will also welcome the new members. Irene will explain what a Brown Bag Lunch is and Ann-Mara will publicize upcoming program events.
- c. Laura will need this information by Sunday night, October 15.
- d. Will we ask for registration for events to know how many are coming? In the past, we sent out an invitation about a week ahead and asked for an RSVP. Or perhaps a click on the newsletter to let us know who will come?
- e. We are thinking of starting a Google Photos to store all our photos for the newsletter. We should be archiving all our photos.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

Reminder: Next Board Meeting will be held on November 14, 2023, Warren Building, Room 008.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellie Perkins, Secretary