

League of Women Voters of Wellesley
Board Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2024 / 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.
Warren Building, Room 008

Attending: Laura Brown-Mackinnon, Marguerite Chatelier, Deb Codispoti, Irene Flint, Ann-Mara Lanza, Bonny Nothern, Marlene O'Brien, Ellie Perkins, Rama K. Ramaswamy, Rekha Sampath

Members attending: Michelle Chalmers

Absent: Diane Hemond

The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:31 p.m.

1. Welcome - Bonny Nothern

President Bonny Nothern indicated that several members would be attending the meeting via Zoom and that Michelle Chalmers would join us for the Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) segment.

2. Minutes of September 10, 2024

Marguerite Chatelier moved that we approve the minutes of our Board Meeting on September 10, 2024. Laura Brown-Mackinnon seconded the motion which passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Moved: To approve the minutes of September 10, 2024.

3. Membership - Rekha Sampath

- a. In her role as Membership Director, Rekha Sampath will be supported by more of a team now that Kathy Trumbell has volunteered to assist with Membership and Bonny and other board members will assist with some of the tasks.
- b. Since our previous meeting, we have been very successful with membership renewals. Bonny and Rekha have been getting comfortable with the renewal app, Roster Manager, which allows updates to be entered easily into the database. Laura volunteered to add new members to Constant Contact, once they are entered in Roster Manager. Deb Codispoti will copy Laura when she sends Bonny new member and renewal information that she receives by mail.
- c. Bonny has been calling new members to thank them for joining and to encourage them to be a little more active.

4. Legislative Envoy - Marlene O'Brien

- a. We don't have a new Legislative Envoy yet, but fortunately at this time of year the workload is light. Bonny asked our thoughts on one option: having each Board Member take a month to monitor the notices from the Legislative Action Committee, for example, to communicate League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) requests to our representative or senator.
- b. Marlene reminded us that in the past we have included a notice in the November Newsletter suggesting members consider a holiday or year-end gift of membership to family or friends. This would be preferable, perhaps, to sending a year-end gift ideas blast, as we receive so many fundraising requests connected with the League. In such a notice, Bonny suggested we mention that we only receive \$2 per member from League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS). Some leagues have raised their membership fee for this reason, but we have never done so.

5. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Michelle Chalmers joined our meeting to update us on the LWVMA Reparations Study Committee. Michelle has a membership with LWVW, even though she recently moved to Central Massachusetts. She is currently focusing on the LWVMA's work on reparations and she gave us access to a Google Doc that she prepared to guide us in our process.

- a. Debra Dagwan, LWV Cape Cod Area, and Patty Shepard, LWV Winchester, are on the Committee and can answer questions that we have. The Committee compiled as much information as they could in the Study Guide on the LWVMA web site. We will need to look at the history surrounding reparations, whatever information is available to us, which grassroots groups are examining reparations for Black people. We will need to decide whether the LWVW should advocate for and support reparations. Finally, all the individual Leagues and the LWVMA as a whole have to decide whether the LWVMA should or should not adopt a position to advocate for Reparations. This involves determining who, what and how: would this benefit all Black Americans, all people of African descent in this country, all who identify as African Americans, or a more limited group of direct descendents of enslaved Africans,.
- b. Our task is to have one or two consensus meetings between December 1, 2024, and February 9, 2025, to be sure everyone understands what a consensus meeting is, to form a local study committee to pull all this together and guide the LWVW in making this decision. Our Board must approve the consensus report by February 16, 2025.
- c. Every member of the league will need to read the Study Guide so that we will all be on the same page, all understand the issue thoroughly and see that any questions are answered. There is a 20 minute Youtube video on Consensus Meetings for us all to watch explaining all this which includes a helpful powerpoint. On November 14, 2024, from 7 to 8 p.m., there will be a Zoom Q and A for further information on the video. By Spring 2025 the entire LWVMA will draft a position based on what the Leagues have decided and a final decision will be made at the Convention..
- d. One opportunity to engage in the conversation is to read an article by Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations" and then participate in one of a series of three discussion groups. Ideally each of us will watch the video, read the info and get engaged, perhaps in discussions of the article.
- e. Our consensus meetings will involve our own LWVW, to discuss the issues and the various sides to the discussion in order to develop our position. Marlene explained in the past it has been helpful to team up with other leagues to get various perspectives.. Each person can also summarize their own readings. It could be helpful to see how other Leagues have approached the question. Michelle indicated that the material they have provided brings in a variety of perspectives with some attention to constitutionality issues, in addition to arguments for and against reparations. The questions to be addressed are in the Study Guide. This is a very complex issue and Michelle feels they couldn't really do it justice in the 26 pages of this Guide. Irene pointed out that the timeline is very short, especially given that December isn't usually a productive month. Michelle suggested once a committee is set that they break up the material to be considered in manageable pieces, plan discussion meetings for January, build in snow dates, and send reminders to the committee members to be sure reading is going forward.
- f. Marguerite suggested that we vote at the Board meeting in January after a three hour consensus meeting. Marlene thinks it's so complicated that we should have several consensus meetings, given the enormous and important topic. Laura suggested that we do the reading to the best of our ability before our November meeting and make a decision at that Board meeting about a timeline and whether we can or can't accomplish this and if we want to. A committee of three or four people could do the reading, splitting up the sections, and presenting them to the consensus meetings. If we watch the video and go through the power point we will have enough information to make the initial decision. Then we might set up a coffee conversation on the Study Guide. Michelle volunteered to help us during a few meetings in the next few months. Remember that disagreement is healthy and needs to happen. We need to absorb the information to decide whether to support or not, then find some common ground and be able to feel good about our decision.
- g. Marlene pointed out that the LWVMA has agreed to this study with a view that it would be broadly helpful to the LWVUS. Therefore it will be most useful if we can have broad participation; perhaps collaborating with other Leagues.

6. Treasurer's Report - Deb Codispoti

- a. Our total assets are \$30,340.10 of which approximately \$8,000 is in cash. We have CDs coming due every few months, in order to have access to funding if we need it.
- b. Our September income was \$2156.43 for member dues, donations and interest. Expenses in September were \$1408.00 for State and National per Member Payments. In October, we will need to pay for our MyLO web site, (\$425.00).
- c. Our new Money Market account is now accruing more interest than our savings account.
- d. Everything that comes in on Paypal incurs a fee and we are now charging a 3.74% fee for all Paypal donations and membership payments.
- e. If you need reimbursement, please let Deb know what it is for and submit bills, if applicable.
- f. We will table the liability insurance discussion until next month. However, if we need it for Opening Meeting, we will be able to take out insurance.

7. Program - Irene Flint and Ann-Mara Lanza

- a. Rekha Sampath reported that our potential speaker for Opening Meeting has not responded. However, Anya Khera is attending Tufts University where she is a member of Tufts Circle, a youth leadership program. Anya has suggested we ask one of the directors of the Tufts Circle Institute, the research institute focusing on youth civic engagement and participation. We would be able to offer an honorarium to cover expenses for a car service. Another option would be looking for a speaker at the Wellesley Centers for Women.
- b. We don't have an October coffee scheduled, because it has been difficult to find a date that doesn't conflict with holidays and Town Meeting. We thought we might try to find a date for a coffee on reparations, perhaps on Friday, October 25, 2024.
- c. So far, we only have three people who are interested in the Vote16 Study and we are looking to recruit more members.
- d. We are co-sponsoring the World of Wellesley (WOW) Panel Discussion for the Community Book Read on November 3, 2024, about Unmasking AI : My Mission to Protect What is Human in a World of Machines, by Joy Buolamwini. We need to encourage people to register and attend.
- e. Our Brown Bag Lunch with the School Committee on September 20, 2024, was successful with about 17 attendees. They discussed their deliberations concerning which days to select as school holidays and whether each would entail no school or acknowledgement in another way.
- f. Barbara McMahon is all set for Town Meeting Prep which will be held at the Police Station as usual on October 17, 2024.

6. Voter Service - Marguerite Chatelier

- a. We cosponsored the Ballot Question Forums with several neighboring Leagues. Marguerite and Bonny attended an excellent forum on whether MCAS should be a graduation requirement. One of the arguments against it is that one test shouldn't determine a child's future, however there are actually a number of other chances to pass the test and also there are alternative ways to get the diploma. The two sides ended up agreeing at the end on how important having standards is and how important it is to look at these standards and on values and priorities. It was apparently not difficult to enlist the speakers because the sponsors of the questions always want to come and talk for a panel discussion. In the future, we should focus similarly on people invested in the issues for our speakers when recruiting speakers. They even included the perspective of a migrant Muslim woman, because people who don't pass are sometimes speakers of English as a Second Language.
- b. Diane Hemond and Lucy Costa enjoyed a successful Voter Registration Day at the High School, on September 17, 2024.
- c. On September 19, 2024, Deb, Ellie and Diane ran a well-received voter registration at Waterstone.

- d. Bonny and Diane also gave a presentation on voting to one of the interdisciplinary classes at the High School.
- e. Erry Johnson wants to hear from any of us interested and available to offer voters rides to the polls.

7. Nominating Committee

If we don't get another co-president for next year we may go to a steering committee format as they instituted in several other local Leagues and also in Wellesley a years ago. For example, one person might run the meetings and others would take on other tasks, like being the contact person with the LWVMA. Bonny feels that If she hadn't already been on the Board for a while prior to becoming president, it would have been very difficult to take on the job.

8. Newsletter - Laura Brown-Mackinnon

- a. Laura Brown-Mackinnon will include in this month's Newsletter a notice about membership renewal, another advertisement for the position of Legislative Envoy, the Book Discussion with WOW, recruiting for the Voting Age Study, a save-the-date for Opening Meeting, request for help with rides to the polls.
- b. She plans to write an explanatory introduction to the Reparations Study to encourage the membership to be part of this momentous occasion where LWVMA will take a stand on reparations.

11. Closing Comments - Bonny Nothern

- a. How many people would like to have business cards? So far, only Bonny wants them.
- b. It would be helpful to have more permanent name tags for events we attend. Bonny does have some from last year's Summer Planning Meeting.
- c. The question was raised as to whether we could just not have an opening meeting. It isn't in the by-laws, but we are required to hold a general membership meeting twice a year and we have always considered our Opening Meeting to be one of those.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

Our next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 12, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellie Perkins, Secretary