

League of Women Voters of Wellesley
Informal Board Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2024, 1 - 2:30 p.m.
Zoom

Board members attending: Bonny Nothern, Jessica Graham, Ann-Mara Lanza, Rama K. Ramaswamy, Marlene O'Brien, Ellie Perkins

Member attending: Tanya Roy

Absent: Deb Codispoti, Laura Brown-Mackinnon, Marguerite Chatelier, Irene Flint, Rekha Sampath, Diane Hemond

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m.

1. Membership

- a. Bonny Nothern expressed our gratitude to Jessica Graham for joining the Membership team to support Rekha Sampath.
- b. Rekha and Jessica are training to use ChapterSpot, the new League of Women Voters (LWV) membership software. Jessica thinks they will be rolling it out initially to certain Leagues and Bonny indicated that we might have a chance to be in one of the early groups.
- c. Jenny Zannetos will be helping us update the printed Membership Booklet. This task has always been done by the Membership Director and Jenny has held this position in the past.

2. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We have been asked if we would like to cosponsor World of Wellesley's (WOW) Martin Luther King (MLK) Day celebration on January 20, 2025. Wow has supported this event financially for a number of years. In the past, we have felt that this event encompasses our values and goals as a League and that it might be appropriate to support it. We have also noted that the LWV of Needham is a significant supporter of their MLK celebration. The speaker's fee is WOW's biggest cost, possibly in addition to venue rental. They bring in some funds from seats and tables (\$300/table), with revenue generated usually around \$3,000. This year's speaker is Kelly Carter Jackson, Professor of Africana Studies at Wellesley College, who usually asks \$5,000-8,000, although they are negotiating to see if she will agree to a lower fee.

- a. Marlene asked what contribution might be expected of us, indicating that we would need to know this prior to deciding whether we can support the event and to what extent.. Marlene would support buying a table at \$300, but until we know the cost of our co-sponsorship, it would be difficult to make that decision.
- b. Bonny asked what our money is for if we can't participate in appropriate activities. We do such a lot for the Town on a shoestring and we help the Town out on some expenses. Could we fundraise to facilitate such contributions?
- c. Rama said there seems to have been a cultural shift in terms of professors and speaking engagements. Because the demand can be high, some have started charging fees, or higher fees and each college or university has a mix of different approaches among the faculty. Right now Carter-Jackson is in a teaching field that is hot and consequently is sought after as a speaker, especially as she has a new book out. The reason they asked her is that she is so relevant to our issues today. MLK Day is also Inauguration Day, January 20, 2025. The WOW Board wanted to merge what MLK stood for with the current times. As far as their Board is concerned, they aren't a stickler about our contribution, because they want to work with the League. Perhaps several other town organizations could join and partner together.
- d. Ann-Mara noted that some Wellesley College professors have been more generous in the past. Looking in our 2024-25 budget, she found that there are two line items that might be used: \$300 set aside for Opening Meeting, which did not occur, and also \$600 for events. She suggested that we consider using some of that funding to support MLK Day. Marlene suggested that Program propose an amount to the Board that we could contribute to the MLK.

- e. Bonny had intended for us to begin this conversation today, but she planned to follow up via email to make a decision because of the early January timing.
- f. Ann-Mara recommended that, during the budgeting process this spring, we address this situation with WOW. Two years ago we had a similar discussion about a book talk. We could perhaps decide in March that we want to do one event each year with WOW and then put money into the budget to support it. Otherwise, we program events and support activities that no one else supports and those are our priority.

3. Massachusetts Convention Planning Meeting

Bonny asked if any of us could attend a Zoom meeting on Thursday, January 9, 2025, at 7 p.m. to plan this year's League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) Convention. It is a Virtual Town Hall and it would be good to have one of us attend, ask questions and report back. Both Ann-Mara and Ellie may be able to attend and will see that the meeting is covered. The link is in the December Newsletter of the LWVMA.

4. Tour of the Museum of Fine Arts Art and Democracy Exhibit

The Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) has an exhibit on Art and Democracy and we are planning a LWVW visit. Sadly, the MFA won't do a tour for anyone over the age of 18, but Bonny has seen the exhibit several times and she should be able to be our guide. Rama volunteered to write a blurb to advertise the visit. Some of us have memberships and can take others; others can ask for the Wellesley Free Library pass. We decided to aim for Thursday, January 16th or 30th, and we will check with the Board to determine the best date.

5. League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

- a. The deadline for completing and submitting data collection forms to the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) is January 10, 2025. The State League needs these numbers for applying for grants, for their activity working with legislators, and to strengthen the league brand, among other reasons. Ann-Mara sent in the data for the How to Run event last week, but we need to check whether anyone sent in numbers for our Brown Bag Lunch with the School Committee.
- b. Tanya Roy, our guest today, has been on the LWVMA Board for four years, during three of which she has also been Treasurer, and she is a member of the new Development Committee. In the past, she was a Legislative Specialist and also a Legislative Envoy for LWVW. Now she is the Liaison between the State Board and the Legislative Action Committee (LAC) which is a group of about 15 to 20 volunteer Legislative Specialists, headed by Jennifer Muroff of the Needham League. The LAC will research and advocate for bills filed on Beacon Hill once the new two-year session starts in January when most of the year's total of 7,000 to 8,000 bills will be filed. Each member of the LAC has an area of expertise and they review all the bills filed, looking for those they feel the LWVMA needs to support. The bills are presented to the Committee which then votes whether to support them, usually 20-40 bills each year. The LAC members attend hearings and sometimes testify. They track each bill and give updates on progress throughout the year.
- c. The LWVMA succeeded in getting good bills passed this year. Many of the bills involve Home Rule, meaning they are filed by a town that needs something, like naming a bridge, and needs State approval. Other bills, maybe 3000-4000, are more "meaty" bills, more broadly relevant and need to be considered by the LAC.
- d. The LAC is always looking for more help and more specialists and now, they are looking for someone to work on natural resources and affordable housing. We will include this need in our newsletter.
- e. Patty Comfort, the ED for the past five years, will leave at the end of the year and a new person will come on board.

6. Closing Comments

- a. Ann-Mara suggested we remind Diane and Marguerite that we will need to revise the Voter Guide for our Candidates Night event. Fortunately, Ann-Mara realized that we needed to revise the Candidate Handbook for the How to Run meeting.
- b. Bonny thanked Ann-Mara for a fantastic job on How to Run. She saw the need to take on the event and she did it.
- c. The reason Bonny goes into detail about things that are taken care of off-line is because it is so important that we all know what others are doing. Bonny mentioned that she and many other presidents had not been involved in the budget process in the past, but she decided that it was appropriate for the President to be involved. She hopes to encourage more of us to get involved this year.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m.

Our next LWVW Board meeting will be held on January 14, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellie Perkins, Secretary