

League of Women Voters of Wellesley  
Summer Planning Meeting Minutes  
July 30, 2024 / 11 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills

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

Absent: Rama K. Ramaswamy

The meeting was called to order at 11:23 a.m.

**1. Welcome - Bonny Nothern**

- a. Although in the past we have called our summer meeting a Retreat, Bonny suggested that she would like it to be a combined retreat and a chance to do some "blue sky thinking" in addition to "nitty gritty" planning. She hoped that we would be able to think together about possibilities, to address the issues we had planned throughout the year to discuss at this time.
- b. This year, we will need to prepare press releases for our Communications Committee Jacqui Van Looy and Serena Sheen. As we have decided, we will provide the content for the information they send out, Serena to social media and Jacqui to Swellesley and other media outlets. They will not be creating any text, that will be up to each individual Board member. Please email text to Bonny and she will send it to Jacqui and Serena.
- c. In Rama Ramaswamy's absence due to illness, Marguerite Chatelier read to us a description of what a Land Acknowledgement is: a formal statement that recognizes and respects indigenous people as the traditional stewards of the land, and the relationship between them and their traditional territories, as well as the negative impact of being forcibly dispossessed of their traditional homeland, among other issues. Land acknowledgements are a traditional custom that dates back centuries in many native communities. They may include the indigenous peoples to whom the land belongs and the history of the land and any related treaties. They should not be boiler-plate or self-congratulatory. We will keep these points in mind when we consider writing our own version. Laura Brown-Mackinnon recommended keeping ours specific to the National League's which mentions that Native American women inspired the Women's Suffrage Movement. The Massachusetts, Nipmuc and Wampanoag peoples lived in the Wellesley area for centuries.

**2. National Convention Notes**

- a. Marlene O'Brien's thoughts: She felt National Convention was an extremely important convening of members from all states and the US Virgin Islands. It was very lively and positive. The late President Deb Turner was honored beautifully. The Acting President, Sania Irvin, did a very good job moderating the plenary sessions. The new League of Women Voters of the US (LWVUS) Board president Dianna Winn, and the new CEO Celena Stewart, seem very promising. A Cherokee Delegate to the US House, Kim Teehee, spoke movingly about the history of the League. An exciting new collaboration with the Girl Scouts was announced. There were Special Sessions on a number of issues, one on Abolishing the Electoral College.

The Proposed Rules of Convention provided that Final Directions to the Board in the Rules of Convention were to be offered by attendees in writing (as at Convention 2022) instead of in person, but this was contested, possibly because it is a lively and interactive process. The provision was discussed and subsequently amended to be included back in. Marlene commented on the thoroughness of the National League's coverage of procedure in its pre-Convention prep series on Zoom and wished everyone in attendance had taken advantage of it. About two thirds of the delegates had never attended a convention before and there was some misunderstanding about procedures.

The Making Democracy Work Campaign, a core mission of the League, was renewed. A resolution reaffirmed the need to protect and fight for reproductive rights for women and girls. The National League voted to concur with an excellent Washington State League study of the decline of local news and it is now a National Position. Marlene also pointed out that there will be a new one-year Study on the Federal Judiciary, including and beyond ethical and structural issues surrounding the Supreme Court, and we'll all be asked to participate. There were additional resolutions passed: on the need to support statehood for DC, on the need for ethics in government policy, on the rights of women and girls from the UN Human Rights Conventions (CEDAW), on reaffirming the need for immigration reform, on reaffirming the importance of public libraries and providing access to them without censorship. The Voting Systems Resolution failed because it had left a window open for internet voting without a firm paper trail. Deb Codispoti pointed out that they avoided talking about the new dues structure because it wasn't the appropriate time, but they could have had a breakout session on it and unfortunately didn't. Marlene added that there are many different committees at the National level, which we are free to join, for example, Immigration (which Jane Andrews, a former League of Women Voters of Wellesley (LWVW) member, helps lead.

- b. Deb Codispoti's thoughts - She went to an excellent Breakout Session on immigration and another on Climate Change. If it's your first time, unfortunately you have very little idea what's going on, although it would be helpful if you had completed all the online orientations. She thought the tech was very bad, although she was able to listen on Zoom one day instead of attending in person. The LWVW got together for an evening after one day's sessions and she was able to meet a number of people. While in DC, she toured the White House and was very happy that she had.
- c. Marguerite's thoughts - She listened to all the online orientations, but still felt that it would be helpful to buddy up and prepare ahead of time. Jane Andrews was very helpful in answering her questions. Our Massachusetts delegation wondered why she was the only LWVW member at Day on the Hill. She would have liked to have an extra day with hotel room and therefore recommended our offering more funding to cover the extra time.
- d. Bonny asked what we should do about the Legislative Envoy position which was not on our Slate at Annual Meeting. The Legislative Action Committee will also be targeting us frequently with requests for action because our State Senator, Cindy Creem, is the Majority Leader of the State Senate and our State Representative, Alice Peisch, is the Assistant Majority Leader of the House. Marlene agreed to be Legislative Envoy until October 1st and Ann Mara Lanza moved to appoint Marlene as Legislative Envoy for that period. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

**VOTED:** To appoint Marlene O'Brien as Legislative Envoy until October 1, 2024.

### **3. Candidates Forum on Governor's Council**

- a. We will be able to participate with the Concord League on their Candidate's Forum on the Governor's Council race. A concern has been raised because the closing remarks by the final speaker cannot be contested and, in a past forum, one of the candidates was accused of making untrue statements and personal attacks in her statement that her opponent was unable to refute. We suggest that the organizers emphasize that in the closing statements no such attacks will be permitted with candidates agreeing in writing.
- b. Bonny reminded us that per the by-laws, with an important election coming up, the only Board members who are not allowed to put out a candidate's sign are Bonny, as president, and Marguerite and Diane, as co-vice presidents of Voter Service.

### **4. Membership - Rekha Sampath**

- a. We continue to have 141 members: 101 Primary, 1 Additional, 8 Lifetime and 20 Student Members. We have no new members this month. Rekha noted that the graduated student members might no longer be in town.
- b. She wondered if the Directory should be on-line only, so that we can fix any errors easily and save paper for the environment, as well as funds. Some of us find the printed copy very useful. Irene pointed out that there is a great deal of important information in the Directory and that is part of the reason we print it. We considered how to get people's attention: although the link is always there to the online version, more attention may be attracted from the paper edition. Perhaps we can consider other options for the future, for example the opt-in possibility which we offer for the Voter Information Handbook.
- c. Bonny has the LWV Vote signs if anyone wants one for their yard.
- d. Rekha mentioned that we need to focus on welcoming new members. Rekha recommended that Bonny send a welcoming phone call. Rekha received additional recommendations which she will send to all of us for our thoughts. Marlene suggested each of us could be assigned one of the new members and offer a ride to events, invite them to tea one-on-one, and so on. Ann-Mara recommended that we include last year's members because they were never welcomed this way. Bonny thanked Rekha for developing a list of Talking Points.

#### **5. Vote 16 Study - Irene Flint and Rekha Sampath**

- a. At the moment there are only three members of the Study group, and they would welcome more members, especially from the membership as it would be an excellent means of enticing people to become more active in LWVW. They will send an enthusiastic paragraph to Laura for the Newsletter.
- b. Rekha believes the Maine Study has an excellent literature review to draw from and that very little of the study is Maine-specific. Of course, the committee will need to consider how the Maine study fits into the laws in Massachusetts.
- c. The book Fight: How Gen Z Is Channeling Their Fear and Passion to Save America by John Della Volpe who is at Harvard might be a possible speaker as we consider this study.

#### **6. Newsletter - Laura Brown-Mackinnon**

- a. We will be sending out information soon about Candidate Forums and the Primary Election.
- b. Please include interesting graphics with your information for any programs you need Laura to advertise. We should make our events sound fun as well as interesting.

#### **7. Minutes of June 11, 2024**

Ann-Mara moved and Laura seconded that we approve the minutes of June 11, 2024. The motion was approved unanimously.

**VOTED:** To accept the minutes of June 11, 2024.

#### **8. Fundraising**

- a. Bonny pointed out that the issue of fundraising has come up often in our meetings this year. Will we continue to hold on to our accumulated funds or should we spend them? Would it be advisable for us to subsidize the full ride to attend National Convention, as some other leagues do? Bonny asked if we would be willing to fundraise with the goal of sending three members to Convention, fully subsidized, probably amounting to \$7,000. She believes everyone should be fully subsidized because some cannot afford this and, if funding is not offered, only those who can afford it will attend.
- b. Marlene would like to see us push for a major fundraiser at the National level to create a hardship fund for State and Local League delegates whose Leagues cannot manage to cover their Convention attendance. A number of State and Local Leagues have complained about this, especially with respect to student

members. Even with the new budgeting, it may be necessary to fundraise for various items. We will still be able to include a donation request on our membership form.

- c. Bonny recommended the League videos on a number of subjects, like our non-partisan policy, but in particular, she wanted us to listen to their fundraising video, and we did so together:

*Fundraising Training Video*

- People don't give to you, they give through you. Key concepts: everyone can give a meaningful gift; every gift truly matters; people give to the work not to the organization.
  - Culture of Philanthropy: fundraising is intrinsic, essential to the LWVUS mission and donors are partners, not resources. **Money moves the mission to make democracy work.** Everyone is important in this welcoming, friendly environment.
  - In recruiting Board members, it is necessary to discuss fundraising and its four stages: identification, cultivation (relationship building), solicitation, and stewardship (Thank you notes, phone calls, appreciation events).
  - We are all donors and ambassadors.
- d. Some of us had a visceral reaction to the emphasis on putting donations ahead of working for the League goals, feeling that ours is a working board and many of us join to work. Additionally, as Ann-Mara pointed out, fundraising as a priority is diametrically opposed to inclusion. Donors introduce a hierarchy of members, according to the emphasis in the League video.
  - e. There is a communication issue here because this information is not passed on to members. It's even confusing to see, on joining, that in addition to the Local League, donations are requested from the State and Local Leagues. On the National Board, service on the Development Committee is clearly part of the responsibility.
  - f. In our fundraising, we will need to be very specific about what the funds will be used for. And some events must remain free to our members.
  - g. Marlene volunteered to join with a few others to figure out and organize a calm, considered, targeted plan for fundraising, understanding that the first year or two will not be successful. And perhaps National really will be giving us more funds in the future. Bonny suggested the theme of legacy, emphasizing the values of the organization, with a goal of forming an endowment in order to, among other things, send people to the National Convention. Maybe we should convert to 501c3 status, which would make it easier to solicit donations. The Fundraising Committee will consider the initial steps to start this while keeping our fundraising consistent with the LWVW mentality, perhaps Angels for particular programs, a gala event, raising for one year or building an endowment. Possibly we could discuss this as a Board every other month.

## 9. Treasurer's Report - Deb Codispoti

- a. Our total assets as of July 30, 2024, are \$29,765.30. Looking at the fiscal year 2023-24, we went over budget by about \$3300 for a couple of reasons, including the fact that we did not participate in Phonathon and some of our expenses ran over a bit, including the expenses for National Convention.
- b. Deb finds it difficult to get input from the board when one of our four CDs comes due and requires attention. We decided that Deb will email us to get Board approval in these situations. If she doesn't hear from everyone, silence will imply consent.
- c. Deb asked if she could pull money out of one CD this month and put it into a CD that has 2% higher return and all agreed.
- d. We invest in CDs in order to cover basic operating expenses in case we go over budget. The proposed fundraising would be to cover new ventures.

## 10. Program - Irene Flint, Ann-Mara Lanza

- a. The Program Committee passed out a Draft Calendar of the coming year's events with suggestions for programs we will need to plan.
- b. Ann-Mara asked for feedback on the Program Committee's ideas and suggestions for a possible Opening Committee speaker.
- c. Ann-Mara also plans to do a small anonymous email survey of the membership to see why they have joined LWVW, whether they have joined for social reasons or for civic interests, or for other reasons.
- d. We will continue to have Board Meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 12:30 to 2:30 in the Warren Building.
- e. Thinking of new members, will we want to have a Fall Social? A potential date might be September 22.

**11. Voter Service - Marguerite Chatelier and Diane Hemond**

- a. On September 19 we will have Voter Registration at Waterstone and Diane will need volunteers. She agreed to write a brief piece for the newsletter.
- b. We will need to make sure people are aware of the State Ballot questions before the vote in November. Information sessions will be held at the State League level and we may want to either have a discussion just for the LWVW or include the public as well. Normally, we provide information about Wellesley issues and rely on the State League to do so for state issues. Program and Voter Service will find out when the Secretary of State will publish the Voter Booklet and when Early Voting begins, and then will meet to discuss this.
- c. We will plan to have our How to Run for Public Office event in November rather than December this year.
- d. There was an objection to the questions for Candidates Night this year because there was no consideration of DEI. This year we will use a more inclusive lens in designing these questions. We have 11 years of questions to draw from and Marlene will also provide the list of questions used for Vote411.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

Our next Board Meeting will be on September 10, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ellie Perkins, Secretary