

# League of Women Voters of Kent (LWVK)

## Annual Meeting Minutes

Via Zoom

06.05.2021

### Welcome and Meeting Instructions

President Debbie Barber welcomed all participants to the second virtual annual meeting of LWVK.

President Barber asked recent new members to use the zoom hand raise.

President Barber introduced guests: April Secura (President, Northern Portage League) and Shelly Lewis (Co-President, Geauga League).

President Barber then read the LWVK Non-Partisanship Policy and Vision Statement for Diversity. President Barber then called for a moment of silence for all those who lost their lives to gun violence and their families and for the many victims of COVID 19.

President Barber highlighted upcoming events:

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|----------------|---|
| June 5, 4 p.m. | As part of the Edith Chase Symposium, there will be poetry readings in the gardens of the Wick Poetry Center at Kent State University |
| June 26        | Kent Heritage Festival  |
| July 4         | Marching with Northern Portage League in the Aurora Parade  |
| July 21        | All Member Meeting  |
| August 10      | All Member Meeting  |
| September      | Fall Kick-off   |

President Barber introduced the speakers for the program: Natalie Pillsbury and Nahla Bendifaa, journalists with WKSU. Natalie shared an overview of WKSU community engagement. Nahla provided a description of the Learning Curve project that partners with Real Talk. Opening to questions, Amie Cajka asked how to diversify voices when studying an issue to be sure all perspectives are included. Natalie affirmed that journalists are schooled to know their own biases. They use effective tools to keep them out of research. One area of bipartisan support is decriminalization of addiction. Jane Preston Rose asked Nahla if she found any changes to curriculum. Nahla said she did not, however, assessment forms are more inclusive of different modalities of learning. Educational technology is also changing for teacher preparation, moving beyond the use of smart boards to expanded classrooms via video platforms. President Barber stressed how much the League values our collaboration with WKSU.

## **Call to Order**

President Barber called the meeting to order at 10:40 a.m. She affirmed a quorum was present and introduced our parliamentarian, Jane Preston Rose.

Minutes of the 2020 annual meeting were approved by a designated committee. President Barber will appoint a committee of three to review the 2021 Annual Meeting minutes. As no objections were voiced, she said Chris Schjeldahl, Kathy Wilen, and Jill Hazelton will conduct the 2021 review.

## **Approval of Bylaws Changes**

Jane Preston Rose presented the bylaws changes, explaining each of them is necessary to align our Bylaws with those of LWVUS. All were adopted with an affirmative voice vote.

## **Adoption and Approval of 2021-2022 Budget**

Nena Hankins presented the budget, highlighting revenue from dues, our finance drive, Voter Girl, and endowments. Estimated expenses for the coming year are \$24,460. Treasurer Gail Pytel reported we have a healthy checking account balance. No dues increase is recommended for the coming year. The budget committee recommended a transfer of \$3,650 from reserves to balance the budget. Nena Hankins moved adoption of the budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. Motion passed with an affirmation voice vote.

## **Action on Positions to Retain, Update, or Delete**

President Barber clarified the consent agenda process that presented all positions to be considered in one vote. Any member present was able to request any or all positions be removed from the consent agenda to be considered and discussed separately. Vice Presidents Penny Graves and Janice Hutchison presented each position.

### Intergovernmental Cooperation and Regional Tax-Base Revenue Sharing

The League of Women Voters of Kent supports voluntary intergovernmental, collaborative agreements which reduce costs, foster transparency and accountability, improve efficiencies and maintain service standards. We also support regional tax base revenue sharing as a constructive form of intergovernmental cooperation for the mutual benefit of participating communities. **The recommendation is Retain.**

### Charter of Kent City

LWVK supports a charter form of government for the city of Kent; local self-government; continuation of the council-manager form of government; the present system of electing council both from wards and at-large; the election of Mayor and council members via non-partisan elections; the power of electors to remove from office by recall election any officer of the city; and the review of the charter occurring on even number years as needed, but not to exceed 10 years between reviews. **The recommendation is Retain.**

## Kent City Finances

LWVK believe that the primary responsibility of city government is to provide basic services including fire protection, police protection, water and sewer, street upkeep and emergency medical service. Municipal facilities supporting basic services shall be supported through property tax, income tax and general fund revenue, government funding, private grants and user fees as appropriate. We also believe that the city should improve its street construction, maintenance and reconstruction and long-range planning; find ways to enhance the city's economic base; and continually promote good working relations among the public, the city administration and Kent State University.

**The recommendation is Retain**

## Portage County Justice System

LWVK supports an integrated approach to solving jail-related problems through cooperation among the county's judicial, executive and law enforcement branches; financing for the jail from government funds and private grants; the use of alternative sentencing for nonviolent offenders, including the expansion of both the mental health and drug courts; transparency in the use of seized funds; the collection of local demographic data with respect to trends in the justice system and provision of such data to national data bases; comprehensive health care for those detained by the justice system; and a well-trained police force reflective of the community served. This position was updated in 2018. **The recommendation is Retain.**

## Parks and Recreation

LWVK supports adequate park facilities in Kent and Portage County; continued cooperation between the Kent Parks and Recreation Department the Kent City School System; the use of federal/state funds and programs to develop and maintain both city and county parks and programs; the establishment of a broad based source of revenue for the Portage Park District; and active planning and collaborative efforts among regional government units to enhance the conservation and protection of the natural heritage of Portage County. **The recommendation is Update.**

## Land Use and Zoning

This position was updated in 2021, and based on consensus of the membership, was approved by the Kent Board on April 26. The new position currently states, in part, that the League supports decisions on land use by local government entities that promote sustainability and a wide range of housing by local government entities; it supports consultation of stakeholders by local governmental entities when making decisions about zoning and land use; the League supports development of a county-wide comprehensive land use plan; it supports governmental agencies prioritizing and promoting certain uses of land which already have existing infrastructure, use of land to provide affordable housing for diverse demographic needs, use of land to preserve the local foodshed, watershed, and ecosystems, and preservation of land of historical or archaeological significance; e.g., via zoning, land banking and tax incentives; the League supports governmental agencies' support of public or community services such as intermodal transportation systems, rail-to-trail and other walking and biking corridors,

mass transit options and affordable and/or subsidized housing. This position is a joint position between the Kent and Northern Portage Leagues. **The recommendation is Retain.**

### Kent City Schools

LWVK supports ongoing citizen participation in the planning, development and review of all areas of Kent education programs; a recommendation that bond issues be considered for capital projects and major improvement projects; public input on policy and planning issues; the continued focus on increased instructional time for all students; opportunities for individual creativity in writing and a continuing emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making skills; a well-integrated reading and language arts program that incorporates strategies designed to meet individual learning styles and abilities; and the continuing availability and expansion of technology for students and staff. **The recommendation is Retain.**

President Barber asked for requests to remove any position from the consent agenda. Hearing none, she called for a motion to adopt. Penny Graves moved adoption and Janice Hutchison seconded. Motion passed with a voice vote.

Debbie Barber invited members to use the Zoom chat function to give any direction to the Board for consideration at their next meeting.

### **Election of Officers and Directors**

President Barber expressed thanks to the 2020-2021 Board whose photos appeared on the zoom screen: Debbie Barber, President; Penny Graves, Vice President; Janice Hutchison, Vice President; Gail Pytel, Treasurer; Jackie Peck, Secretary; Board members Deborah Austin-Sanders, Amie Cajka, Michelle Chapman, Jill Hazelton, Jen Kinney, Jane Preston Rose, Sherry Rose, Renee Ruchotzke, and Sally Saltzman.

Iris Meltzer, Chair of the Nominating Committee (Janice Hutchison, Mary Myers, Renee Ruchotzke, Chris Schjeldahl) presented the slate of nominations:

#### 2-yr term ending 06.30.23

Deborah Barber, President

Penny Graves, Vice-President

Jackie Peck, Secretary

Deborah Austin Sanders, Jill Hazelton, and Sherry Rose, Directors

#### Continuing term ending 6.30.2022

Janice Hutchison, Vice-President

Gail Pytel, Treasurer

Amie Cajka, Jennifer Kinney, Renee Ruchotzke, and Sally Saltzman, Directors

## 2021-2022 Nominating Committee

Roberta O'Keefe, Chair; Mary Myers, Chris Schjeldahl

The Nominating Committee moved acceptance of the slate. A call for nominations from the floor yielded none. Iris Meltzer moved nominations be closed; Sarah Ashley Cook seconded. Motion passed. Jane Rose moved the secretary cast one ballot for the slate; Janice Hutchison seconded. Motion passed. President Barber thanked those who agreed to accept offices and Board positions.

President Barber expressed huge thanks to today's tech team—Jen Kinney, Sherry Rose, Renee Ruchotzke!

### **President Barber: League Accomplishments**

President Barber first highlighted the work of Voter Services. Thousands of voters were reached with absentee ballot applications and voter information; the candidate forum was a great success even on Zoom; the Observer Corps has been robustly reinstated. President Barber acknowledged the leadership of Jen Kinney and Jill Hazelton and the work of dedicated committee members.

Under the leadership of Deborah Austin Sanders, the Education Committee has studied and reported on many aspects of Kent City Schools.

Growing with 48 new members since the last annual meeting, LWVK membership now totals 187!

We completed two consensus studies, Health Equity (thank you Michelle Chapman, Stacy Yaniglos, Ann Ward, Patty McCarter, Mary Lynn Sartain, and Iris Meltzer) and Arming School Personnel (thank you Michelle Chapman, Damien Chapman, George Rose, Bev Timmons, Rhonda Richardson, and Jill Hazelton).

The Land Use study was finally completed (thank you Renee Ruchotzke, Stacy Yaniglos, and colleagues in the Northern Portage League).

Thanks to Sally Saltzman for representing us with the successful Real Talk Series.

We supported the Portage County Children Services Levy on the spring ballot.

Several members participated in the League of Women Voters of Ohio Statehouse Day and 5 delegates attended the convention.

We launched efforts to motivate local residents to demand fair districts in Ohio.

President Barber thanked Amie Cajka, assisted by Audrey Kessler, for keeping us connected. She also recognized the contributions of all members who contribute to the League's reputation and success.

President Barber called for any further business or comments giving direction to the Board in planning for the next year. Hearing none, President Barber shared closing remarks. She expressed concern about our democracy as the right to vote is being

challenged through state legislation that restricts access to ballots. Reminding us of the importance of the For the People Act and local redistricting efforts. President Barber encouraged member participation at the national, state, and local levels.

### **Adjournment**

President Barber moved for adjournment at 11:23 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Peck