

# Newsletter

## An Energy Action Plan for Newton CAN WE REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

By Deb Crossley

**T**he population of the United States is roughly 6% of the global population, yet we consume over 25% of the world's resources; more per capita than any other nation in the world. The resources we consume are precious, limited, significantly imported, and substantially non-renewable. And we are paying increasingly dearly - financially, environmentally and socially for our high level of consumption. Do Americans really need to use more money and more resources than other developed countries to maintain a good quality of life?

In the early 1970's, lower supplies and sudden sharp increases in the price of oil caused our first so called "energy crisis". The Carter administration responded with a national energy plan that focused heavily on conserving and using energy more efficiently. National training programs were conducted through major utility companies who then offered free energy audits, advice and retrofits to the private sector. Building energy codes were strengthened to require more insulation. At the time, Massachusetts was a leader in developing such a code. Federal money helped to spawn and nurture research and development of renewable energy technologies and more efficient delivery systems.

But in the 1980's the U.S. Department of Energy shifted dramatically to concentrate on expanding energy supplies. Although some utility-based energy audit programs survive to this day, and new programs are in place that champion renewable energy technologies, the current administration continues to focus exclusively on expanding supplies of fossil fuels. In the intervening decades, we developed the technology to produce high efficiency autos (even SUV's), but production has been stingy, and our nation's collective gas mileage dropped significantly.

### Can Newton embrace a more hopeful trend toward living within our means?

The City of Newton has been recognized for environmental leadership - most significantly in its recycling and waste management programs, and now in its pursuit of a high performance design standards for new public facilities. Newton Public Buildings Department senior engineer David Tannozi has actively pursued energy saving retrofits in public facilities. Many Newton citizens, through several thriving organizations, are committed to environmentally sound

and fiscally and socially sustainable community development. But how do we assure sound policies that can guide us to use most efficiently only what we need?

The Newton Citizens' Commission on Energy, originally established by local ordinance in the 1970's, was reinvigorated several years ago under the leadership of Mayor Cohen. In partial fulfillment of its mission, it has recently completed an Energy Action Plan (EAP) with a specific list of first steps necessary to its implementation.

The plan is a guide to action we must take if we are to further reduce energy consumption and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It aims to target the large financial, environmental and health benefits inherent in such actions, including large financial savings in city operations, reduced local air pollution, and improved quality of life in Newton. By adopting and implementing the plan, Newton, as a member of the National Cities for Climate Protection Campaign (CCP), will also make a positive contribution to the international battle against global climate change. We could then hope realistically that our combined efforts will also contribute to lessening U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

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### Newsletter

Editor	Ann Grantham	617-964-0333
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The LWVN Newsletter is published nine times per year. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization open to all citizens of voting age. For more information about the League of Women Voters, call 617-964-0014.

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<http://www.lwvn.ma.lwvnet.org>

# Still Work To Be Done

The League of Women Voters U.S.' position on the election process is, "Promote the election of the President and Vice President by direct popular vote and work to abolish the Electoral College. Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates." In addition, the LWVUS has a position "to protect the right to vote of every citizen."

In view of the difficulties and irregularities reported during the 2004 election, I feel strongly that the LWV at all levels should be publicly calling for more reforms to guarantee to citizens that their rights to vote and to have their votes counted are not hampered or denied in the next Federal election.

On November 7, 2004, the New York Times editorial page called upon Congress to act to eliminate long lines at polling stations, to promulgate uniform standards for voting across the USA, and to see that every vote is counted. I think at least some of the twelve actions they recommended ought to be endorsed by the League. See the entire editorial at: <http://www.nytimes.com/ref/opinion/making-votes-count.html?pagewanted=all>. Below is my summary. I hope the LWVN will urge both the state and national LWV to consider the list and advocate strongly for those they feel are covered by League positions.

1. **A HOLIDAY FOR VOTING** – encourage voting, free up qualified poll workers
2. **EARLY VOTING** – in states that permit it, adds convenience, time to fix problems
3. **IMPROVED ELECTRONIC VOTING** – voter verified paper trail, widely reviewed software
4. **SHORTER LINES AT THE POLLS** – standards on numbers of voters per machine & per poll worker
5. **IMPARTIAL ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS** – non-partisan oversight of standards and procedures, no political activism by voting machine manufacturers or companies that handle the votes
6. **UNIFORM AND INCLUSIVE VOTER REGISTRATION STANDARDS** – simplified forms, rules designed to get as many qualified voters as possible on the rolls
7. **ACCURATE AND TRANSPARENT VOTING ROLL PURGES** – public process with clear standards and wide posting of names to be removed
8. **UNIFORM AND VOTER-FRIENDLY STANDARDS FOR COUNTING PROVISIONAL BALLOTS** – national rules, applied uniformly
9. **UPGRADED VOTING MACHINES AND IMPROVED BALLOT DESIGN** – get rid of punch cards, use optical scanning, get professional help for ballot design
10. **FAIR AND UNIFORM VOTER ID RULES** – uniform rules on when ID is needed, acceptable forms of ID, and better poll worker training
11. **AN END TO MINORITY VOTE SUPPRESSION** – stop dirty tricks, rescind laws that stop former felons from voting
12. **IMPROVED ABSENTEE BALLOT PROCEDURES** – downloading ballots from Internet, timely mailing, secret ballots for military (not fax or e-mail)

I hope our LWVN will find time soon to consider these ideas and communicate with the state and national LWV about them.

Beth Lowd ■

# Update on Redistricting Initiative

Three Newton legislators, Reps. Balser and Khan and Sen. Creem, have signed on as co-sponsors of a constitutional amendment that would create an independent redistricting commission to draw Massachusetts legislative and Congressional district lines. In Newton, 73% of voters favored the Fair Districts for Fair Elections ballot question, while in the 15 districts where it ran statewide it passed by 67%.

The League, Common Cause and other members of the Redistricting Reform Coalition are sponsoring state legislation that would create an independent, nonpartisan Redistricting Commission, bound by very strict rules for fairness that would keep politics out of the process and make districts more representative.

## Background

- On Nov. 2, the non-binding “Fair Districts for Fair Elections” initiative passed in all 15 representative districts where it was on the ballot, with an average of 67% of the vote. The initiative called on state representatives to support an independent redistricting commission, subject to strict guidelines for public participation, nonpartisanship, retaining the integrity of existing communities, and respecting the voting rights of minorities.
- This legislation, filed by the League and other Coalition members, lays out the details of how the ballot initiative would be implemented. The redistricting commission selection process is designed to insulate commission members from the political process and to ensure that they have expertise in redistricting and reflect the diversity of the state. Strict criteria for redistricting would ensure that districts would be of equal population, compact and contiguous, would respect the integrity of cities and towns, and would not dilute minority voting rights. Party affiliation or candidate address may NOT be considered. The legislature will approve the final maps, on an up-or-down vote.
- The legislation is closely modeled on the systems used successfully in Iowa and Arizona, which both have independent redistricting commissions and strict criteria for drawing maps.

**This means we will be collecting signatures next fall to bring it to a Constitutional Convention.**

*For further information regarding the League’s Redistricting initiatives, or to join the redistricting committee, please contact Cathy Dowd, Redistricting Specialist at 781-433-8677, or [cdowd@lwmva.org](mailto:cdowd@lwmva.org). ■*

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEWTON

## Statement on 22 Community Preservation Proposals for FY2005 Funding

December 15, 2004

In continuation of our interest in the implementation of the CPA, the League of Women Voters of Newton has convened a subcommittee to discuss the most recent round of CPA proposals. As part of our review we have taken into consideration both the law and the CPC’s own plan and guidelines. Without seeking to duplicate your work, we offer our review for each proposal often with comments and questions for further clarification or consideration and including our explicit support or opposition if a conclusion was supported by our review. Because of our support for passage of the CPA, and our concern that this valuable program be administered in such a way as to build public trust, we remain very interested in the process of awarding CPA funds.

Our current review generated a significant concern about the quality and number of proposals that were “lightly documented”, sometimes showed no support for historic importance, and demonstrated little or no community support. We are very concerned that approving such proposals will create a barrier to the renewal of the CPA.

Secondly, the Newton Parks and Recreation Department is sorely in need of a Master Plan for the parks and playgrounds under its jurisdiction. Ten proposals for various parks are coming in from community groups, independent organizations, and from the Parks and Recreation Department itself each year, but there is no existing list of priorities, no assessment of citywide recreational needs, and no way to judge what might be the best use of limited CPA funds devoted to recreation. An overall Master Plan for public spaces would provide the needed structure in which to consider such proposals. ■



*Continued from page one*

# An Energy Action Plan for Newton

## An Energy Action Plan would have two specific goals for reducing unwanted Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by the year 2010

1. To reduce energy use and associated GHG emissions in Newton to 7% below the base year 1998 (the first year for which we have comprehensive data on energy consumption). This translates to a reduction of about 140,000 tons GHG, or about 11% below current emissions.
2. To reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions within the municipal sector alone to 20% below the base year-1998. This goal results in an annual reduction of approximately 4000 tons (or about 15%) below current annual emissions from public facilities.

The EAP acknowledges that the plan is ambitious, but insists it can be achieved with strong leadership, a well-coordinated and persistent centralized effort, and by forging partnerships among the municipal, commercial, institutional and residential sectors. The plan stresses that key to its success is for the city to take a strong lead and aggressively pursue its goal, and then use its success to mobilize all sectors toward active pursuit of the goals and objectives set out in the Energy Action Plan.

### To do this, they identify three essential initial steps:

1. Redefine the current position of Senior Electrical Engineer to Energy Officer. The primary function of the Energy Officer will be to implement the Energy Action Plan. The Energy Officer will: Evaluate technologies and assess trends in renewable energy; Identify project opportunities, set priorities, develop and oversee implementation strategies; identify and realize funding opportunities; help to establish partnerships with the commercial and institutional sectors, and educate and mobilize Newton residents.

The responsibilities of the City Senior Electrical Engineer have changed in recent years from planning and implementing electrical systems and repair in public buildings to implementing energy efficiency and conservation projects. Electrical engineering services can more easily and cost effectively be provided by outside vendors as is now done for mechanical and structural engineering services. Formalizing this position will also be consistent with the intention of the city ordinance which established the Citizens' Commission on Energy and its mission to develop a viable energy plan for the city.

2. Establish an Energy Investment Fund to provide capital for energy efficiency projects in public facilities. A fund would allow for swift implementation of specific retrofits and enable the city, rather than private contractors, to be the sole beneficiary of future savings from such projects. Careful analysis indicates that an investment of about three million dollars will yield continuous operating savings of approximately \$600,000 per year. An additional investment of \$900,000 into street lamp replacement will yield savings of about \$400,000 per year.
3. Expand the Role of the Energy Commission. Participation in an advisory capacity in the site plan approval process will enable the Commission to take a pro-active role in guiding new development in Newton toward high performance building standards. To this end,

the commission asks to revise the present ordinance to expanding its relationship with the Executive Department, the Board of Aldermen and the Planning and Development Board.

**Based on an analysis of existing opportunities for emission reductions, the plan concludes that Newton can reach its goal by pursuing several strategies at once:**

1. Increasing energy efficiency and conservation in Newton buildings and infrastructure. Almost half (48%) of the proposed total GHG reductions can be achieved here. In the short term, this would involve retrofitting existing buildings to upgrade energy using elements and systems. This is what an Energy Investment Fund will allow us to do for public facilities. In the long run, using high performance building standards for renovations and new construction is necessary. In the public sector high performance standards can become public policy, while in the private sector higher standards can be encouraged by means of various incentives and as a condition of obtaining special permits and variances.
2. By changing how we supply energy to meet demand, we can achieve another 26% of our emissions reduction goal for Newton. Using energy sources and delivery mechanisms that create fewer or no emissions helps to meet demand with cleaner energy sources. There are two primary ways to do this:
  - Purchasing electricity generated from renewable sources in place of fossil fuels, where the EAP suggests we can find 11% of the desired reductions. New regulations will help, such as the MA state requirement that 4% of electricity produced originate from renewable sources by 2009 and 1% per year thereafter.

*Local Action*



January 1, 2005

To: R. Lisle Baker, President, Newton Board of Aldermen  
 Brian Yates, Chair, Zoning and Planning Committee  
 Paul Coletti, Chair, Finance Committee

We support the proposed amendment to Section 20-21 of the Revised Ordinances of 2001 of the City of Newton that allows civil penalties of up to \$300 each for violations of various environmental provisions enforced by the Conservation Commission.

Protection of Newton's wetlands and riverbanks is extremely important for many reasons. Wetland areas are really emergency storage areas for our rivers, brooks, streams and ponds. During snow melt, heavy rains, alternate freezing and or thawing, the wetlands are there to take up excess water that otherwise could end up on roadways, in yards or even worse, in basements of homes and buildings. They also insure that water perks through the ground into "recharge areas" for ponds and for the Charles River.

The Newton Conservation Commission is charged with enforcing both Newton ordinances and State statutes that protect the rivers, ponds and waterways within our city limits. We have one of the longest stretches of riverfront along the Charles River. Riverfront property now sells at premium prices. Homes built along its course are assessed at millions of dollars. We should be protecting not only property owners who live on the river, but those who are downstream from both surface and underground water coursing toward the river. It is their basements and yards that suffer if our officials are not given adequate tools to enforce the laws meant to protect all residents from environmental damage.

Members of the Newton League of Women Voters worked long and hard in the 1960's and 1970's to build a strong foundation of environmental laws that would permanently protect residents here and in other communities from floods or excess development of wetlands. They obtained laws for long range protection of ground water supplies. We ask that the Board of Aldermen continue to support strong environmental protection in Newton by approving this ordinance.

Amelia Koch, on behalf of the Steering Committee of the League of Women Voters of Newton

**Committees - in - Action**

*Local Action*

Contact Deb Crossley, Chair 617-244-7597

*Election Commission*

Nancy Criscitiello Bonnie Carter

*Finance Committee, Board of Alderman*

Ruby Ajanee Amelia Koch

*Newton Citizen Commission on Energy*

Deb Crossley, LWVN Representative

*Newton Free Library Board*

Mary Adelstein

*Parks and Recreation Commission*

Priscilla Leith

*Community Preservation Committee*

**Focus** To follow the process of the granting of Community Preservations funds adopted by Newton voters in the Community Preservation Act.

**CPC Observers**

Andreae Downs Amelia Koch  
 Andrea Kelley Priscilla Leith

**CPC Review Committee**

Anna Maria Abernathy Jody Klein  
 Barbara Bix Myra Tattenbaum  
 Deb Crossley

*Environmental Issues Committee*

**Focus** Promoting source reduction, and recycling programs in municipal offices and public schools

**Members** Deb Crossley Barbara Herson  
 Katherine Gekas Sharyn Roberts  
 Beth Lowd

**Contact** Martha Richmond,  
 Co-Chair 617-244-2076

Linda Walden,  
 Co-Chair 617-630-9538

*Nominating Committee*

**Members** Ruby Ajanee Sharyn Roberts  
 Barbara Lietzke Carol Ann Shea

**Contact** Janet Stearns, Chair 617-559-9987

You may call committee contacts or a Board officer or director to learn more about current committee work. All are welcome to participate.

**Membership Application**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

My Email address may be shared with State and National LWV

- I would like to join the League of Women voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for \$50 payable to LWVN.
- Lifetime membership \$1000**
- I would like to receive materials about the League.
- I would like to be contacted by a League member to talk about LWVN.

**Mail this form (and your check, if joining) to:**  
 Andrea Kozinetz Holtz at 8 Stoney Brae Road,  
 Newton Highlands, MA 02461



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but our work... NEVER!*

Continued from page four

## Energy Action Plan

- Placing power generating facilities and devices close to their points of use, known as distributed generation. Generation at the point of use reduces losses in transmission and, depending on the technology chosen, increases efficiency in power generation and encourages the use of renewable sources. Newton is currently investigating installation of a cogeneration facility in Newton South High School.
- 3. Reducing transportation emissions: shifting to more fuel efficient cars; switching to fuels that emit fewer pollutants; and reducing the total number of miles traveled by cars. The city of Newton has purchased hybrids to replace spent city vehicles, but private individuals and entities must also do this, and industry must offer consumers sufficient choice. The EAP contends that a sustained fleet turnover towards gasoline-electric hybrid technology in personal and commercial vehicles can yield up to 15% reductions in energy consumption and GHG emissions.

Reducing miles traveled, however, requires long term planning and entails actions on many fronts, such as changes in the development of village centers, renewed attention to public transportation, and establishing innovative mobility services. While essential to long term success of the Energy Plan as well as to maintain a high quality of life in the city, these changes can only be accomplished in concert with principles and objectives embraced in Newton's emerging comprehensive plan.

- 4. Finally, increasing recycling participation would further reduce the total volume of waste transported to an incinerator, therefore reducing emissions and generating additional savings. Although we may realize less than 1% of our emissions reduction goal by increasing recycling participation and pursuing source reduction, doing so would significantly reduce the cost of city operations.

Members of the Citizens' Commission on Energy Kevin Dutt, appointed by the Newton Needham chamber of Commerce, and Deb Crossley will be presenting details of the Energy Action Plan to the League at the February 9 Unit Meeting at the home of Fiora Houghteling. The coordinator for the meeting is Sue Rosenbaum.

*Please join us!*

## LWVN CALENDAR

### *January*

- 6 Thursday, 7:00 p.m., **Working Board/Potluck Meeting** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Parkway, 617-964-0333
- 12 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. Brown Bagging encouraged, **Unit Meeting**, LWVM Voting Systems Consensus, at the home of Fiora Houghteling, 15 Bulloughs Park, Newtonville, 617-969-7764, Co-ordinator Susan Rosenbaum
- 20 Thursday, 7:15 p.m., **Board Meeting**, at the home of Barbara Lietzke, 68 Highland Ave., Newtonville, 617-332-8630, Chair Ann Grantham

### *February*

- 3 Thursday, 7:00 p.m., **Working Board/Potluck Meeting** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Parkway, 617-964-0333
- 9 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., Brown Bagging encouraged, **Unit Meeting**, The Energy Plan for Newton, Presenters Deb Crossley and Kevin Dutt, at the home of Fran Seasholes, 163 Cypress St., Newton Centre, 617-969-5927
- 14 Monday, **March Newsletter Deadline**
- 17 Thursday, 7:15 **Board Meeting** at the home of Andreae Downs, 854 Chestnut, Waban, 617-969-7123  
Chair Sue Rosenbaum

### *March*

- 3 Thursday, 7:00 p.m., **Working Board/Potluck Meeting** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Parkway, 617-964-0333
- 9 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Brown Bagging encouraged, **Unit Meeting**, The Community Preservation Act, Coordinator and Presenter Priscilla Leith, at the home of Andreae Downs, 854 Chestnut St., Waban, 617-969-7123
- 10 Thursday, 7:30 p.m., **Unit Meeting**, The Community Preservation Act, Coordinator and Presenter Amelia Koch, at the home of Jane Leighton, 31 Colgate Rd., Newton Lower Falls, 617-527-4018
- 14 Monday, **April Newsletter Deadline**
- 17 Thursday, 7:15 p.m., **Board Meeting**, at the home of Bonnie Carter, 177 Homer St., Newton Centre, 617-969-0686 Chair Sue Rosenbaum
- 23 Wednesday, **LWVM Day on the Hill**, State House Boston

### Legislative Roundtable



For current schedule log on to  
[www.newtv.org](http://www.newtv.org)

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