

Newsletter

School Budget Passes

By Jody Klein

After much debate and deliberation, the School Committee unanimously passed the FY 06 budget on March 28th. The \$137.7 million budget represents a \$5.5 million or a 4.2% increase over FY05.

The superintendent's proposed budget accounted for \$4.8 million cuts from existing programs. The cuts included reductions of regular and special education aides at the elementary, middle and high schools; reduction of classroom teachers, administrators, and specialists at the elementary, middle and high schools; reduction of librarians at the elementary schools; elimination of heads of smaller departments at the high schools, a reduction of equipment including technology district wide, and a reduction in athletic programs at the middle and high school levels.

Many parents and school personnel spoke on behalf of a variety of programs and issues. Parents were very vocal about preserving small class sizes, keeping one school librarian per elementary school,

maintaining special education programs, and more. The School Committee made changes to the proposed budget and passed a final budget that restores some of the teaching positions to elementary and high school levels, and restoration of some library positions to the elementary level.

The School Committee also passed an increase in athletic fees at the middle and high school levels to prevent reductions in athletic programs. The additional cuts needed to offset the restoration of teaching positions came from utilities, unemployment compensation, special education tuition and transportation, substitute teachers, benefits, and professional development.

The Mayor stated that a number of line items will be revisited depending on additional funding from the state. The FY06 budget already includes an anticipated \$900,000 increase in state aid that has not been confirmed by the State.

Many citizens might ask why we are facing a budget shortfall when Newton passed a Proposition 2½ override in 2002. During the override campaign Superintendent Jeff Young explained that the school system would need annual increases of six percent in state aid to sustain programs funded through the override: smaller class sizes, a district-wide literacy initiative, instructional materials and textbooks, technology, and building maintenance. Since the override passed, Newton received annual budget increases of 2.1% and 3.8%.

Further school budgets will continue to be driven by collective bargaining agreements, employee benefits, continued growth in costs for special education, and fixed/mandated costs including utilities and transportation. Newton Public Schools will be challenged to maintain excellent programs, adapt to changing state and federal standards and find creative ways to maximize limited resources as they look to the future. ■

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION, CONTINUED...

By Linda Morrison

During March, Newton Leaguers met to discuss proposals for this year's Community Preservation Act grants. We also spent time considering the processes used by the CPA Committee [CPC]. Committee members have drawn up a list of a dozen specific goals to guide their decision-making in each of the focus areas. These are: housing, open space, recreation and historic preservation. The complete lists can be found at the city's website, at www.ci.newton.ma.us/planning/CPAC.

These guidelines give preference to projects that serve more than one CPA goal and that demonstrate high cost/benefit value. Those with a potential to leverage other public and private funds, or provide incentives for further private projects, are moved towards the top of priority lists. Strong neighborhood support is another criterion. For a complete list of this year's proposals and LWV Newton evaluations and recommendations, see the March, 2005 LWVN Newsletter.

Continued on page 7

LWVN Officers and Directors 2004-2005

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Ann Grantham	617-964-0333
Amelia Koch	617-244-2647
Beth Lowd	617-332-1978
Sue Rosenbaum	617-332-0306

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Local Action	Deb Crossley	617-244-7597
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Voter Service	Sharyn Roberts	617-969-9588

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Handbook	Robin Maltz	617-969-1554
Human Rights	Holly Gunner	617-964-0767
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Recycling	Barbara Herson	617-964-7463
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Unit Meetings	Ruth Neiberg <i>Co-Chair</i>	617-969-9329
Web Site	Judy Jaffe	617-969-7427

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>

To: Members of the U.S. Congress
From: Kay J. Maxwell, President
Re: Social Security

The League of Women Voters is deeply concerned over proposals to privatize the Social Security system. We believe that any Congressional debate must address the broad social needs the system now meets, the long-term future of the system and the financial risks that privatization could place on individuals and on government.

In the 1930s, the League of Women Voters supported passage of the Social Security Act. Fifty years later, in a study of the fiscal policy of the United States, League members determined that the federal government has a role in funding and providing for old-age, survivors, disability and health insurance. For such insurance programs, participation should be mandatory and coverage should be universal.

Social Security is one of the most successful social welfare programs of the 20th Century – one that has contributed to unprecedented economic growth and the stability of the U.S. economy. It has been the primary safety net for older workers and their spouses. Before Social Security, one in three senior citizens lived in poverty. Today that number is one in ten. In addition, disability and survivors' benefits under Social Security have provided for millions of American families. We must recognize that Social Security is not merely a retirement program – it is a social insurance program with broad effect.

Concerns have been raised that Social Security is in crisis and that Congress needs to act now. The League of Women Voters believes that both the perceived crisis and the proposed solutions need to be thoroughly examined and debated. We believe there is sufficient time to do so. The long-term challenges do not manifest themselves until the year 2042. Even then, Social Security has 70 percent of needed funds. Diverting money from the Social Security trust fund into private accounts could hasten the insolvency of the fund. The results could include a substantial increase in the deficit and significant cuts in some or all of Social Security's retirement, disability and survivors benefits.

If Congress determines that changes in Social Security are needed, there are reasonable, moderate adjustments that can achieve solvency and fiscal soundness. But it is key that we have a full, national debate before making major changes in the system that has served so many Americans so well. ■

Welcome New Members!

HOWARD W. JOHNSON
39 BEMIS STREET NEWTONVILLE, MA 02460
617-965-4920

ELAINE STEIN-CUMMINS
22 EDGE HILL ROAD CHESTNUT HILL, MA 02467
617-527-6960

Legislative Roundtable

By Ruby Ajanee

“Informative,” “Interesting,” are some of compliments paid to the March Legislative Roundtable program on State Budget discussion, featuring all four of Newton’s legislators and skillfully moderated by Amelia Koch. The legislators critiqued the governor’s budget and provided insight on how they would like the governor’s budget proposal changed.

The May program promises to be a follow up on the State Budget with Amelia Koch returning to lead the discussion on the budget proposal submitted by the Massachusetts house.

In June, Sue Rosenbaum plans to take questions from Newton citizens as she moves outside the studio to the steps of the Newton Free Library and/or Farmer’s Market. She will tape the questions and present them to the legislators in the studio. We are actively soliciting citizens for their burning questions for the legislators. If you would like to participate, please send us your question at questions@lwnv.ma.lwvnet.org or call 617-964-0014.

Legislative Roundtable is a monthly half hour television show produced in collaboration with and aired on NewTV. In this forum the League hosts a discussion with Newton legislators to inform and educate citizens about important issues that affect them. Michael Padden Rubin, the director of the show and his team at NewTV help make this show possible every month. The show airs on the Red Channels.

Citizens and league members are invited to participate in this effort by contacting the league 617-964-0014 or NewTV at 617-965-7200. ■

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts



Convention 2005

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At Convention 2005, we will:

- ✓ Plan the program for 2005-2007
- ✓ Approve the budget
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*Mark your
calendars!*

For more information, contact the LWVM office:
617-523-2999 or lwmma@lwmma.org

Observer Notes

Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission

February 28, 2005

Due to Snow, this agenda represents two meetings

Observer Priscilla Leith

Present Fran Towle, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation; Peter Johnson, Chair (W3); Frank Rice (W4); Arthur Magni (W2); Jack Nevile, Alternate; Peter Kastner, Alternate; Jennie DeVito (W1); Gwen Fineberg (W7); Andy Stern (W6).

Absent Ward 8: vacant seat; Walter Bernheimer (W5).

Alternate Michael Clarke was also present, but did not substitute as a voting member as did Kastner and Nevile.

MINUTES of December meeting were approved.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT (*Towle*). The biggest current issue is snow. There has been about 65" not counting tonight's storm. Cost so far to Parks and Recreation Department has been \$727,000.

CARNIVAL GUIDELINES for rides offered at Newton events were enclosed in the Commission packets for this meeting. The state is revising the requirements, and Newton will comply. The standards have been raised. Inspections will be done EACH time there is a carnival; insurance request goes up from \$1M to \$5M; the Law Department and Inspectional Services are involved. Parks and Recreation Department is involved because the carnival people use our parks and open space.

PLAY EQUIPMENT PRESENTATION (*Towle*)

Representatives from United Cerebral Palsy were supposed to come and present play equipment for the Newton Centre Playground. They didn't want to come up from CT due to the snowstorm. There was major discussion of issues behind such a presentation. In reality, it was about private donations to the City/Parks and Rec. Dept. and the Parks and Rec. Commission's ability to control what goes into public open space under its jurisdiction.

Stern commented that this is a laudable project, and that it would fit into the CPC proposal for NC Playground, to make it handicapped accessible. He has some reservations about whether the equipment really fits there as NC Playground is an Olmstead Park with historic background. He feels there should be some standards for play equipment that goes into historic parks. He said there is some ADA-approved equipment used in Boston, in a "tadpole park", that blends into the park. Color scheme and materials used today in parks may

not be best for this particular park. He suggested that there be additional funding in the CPC request to do an equipment design study. Discussion, mostly from Kastner, about the need for some more active role by the Parks and Recreation Department/Commission on determining what can go into Newton's parks. A subcommittee may be designated to work with Towle on this.

TENNIS REGULATIONS FOR 2005

Same fees as last year, except there will be an "off-prime time fee" for 12 noon to 4 pm weekdays for the clay courts at NC Playground. That used to be downtime for maintenance. There will also be an extended season.

NEWTON NORTH LITTLE LEAGUE (*Rich Morrissey, Co-President*) Requested permission for a portable sound system for opening day. Friends of Albemarle in support of this. Approved, unanimously.

UPDATE ON FORTE AND MILLENNIUM PARKS

Dedication probably in June, on a weekday.

BUDGET

There are cuts coming - 5%, equivalent to \$186,000. In addition, Parks and Rec. will have to meet the minimum wage for off-season workers. It is going up. There may be layoffs.

CPC PROJECTS (*Bob DeRubeis*)

Albemarle CPC project, with gazebo, landscaping and pathways is ongoing. Irrigation of West Newton Commons is having problems. Drilling has produced no water, so irrigation may not be possible. Irrigation at Bowen has run into conflicts with NStar on Langley Road.

NEW BUSINESS

Dogs in Newton Parks. There is to be a Dog Commission of some sort. Parks and Rec. is mandated to name one of its Commissioners to serve on this body. Rice volunteered for this, Kastner will be the alternate. Rice feels that the dog owners and proponents are looking at the Little League fields as a target for off-leash dogs to run, because these fields are fenced in. He feels strongly that this is wrong and should not be allowed. There is also a question of professional dog walkers using our parks for this purpose, and of out-of-city down owners coming in to run their dogs.

NEXT MEETING

Commission will elect new Chair and Vice Chair.

US Foreign Policy & its Impact on Women: International Trafficking in Women

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts is sponsoring a forum on International Trafficking in Women as part of "Women Engaging Globally," a joint project of the League of Women Voters Education Fund, the Center for Women Policy Studies and Women's Environment Development Organization. The purpose of the forum is to educate and raise awareness in the Boston area on the issue of trafficking. The theme of the forum will be "Global Comes Home: What should be the State and Community Response to International Trafficking of Women."

The forum will be held on April 30, 2005 at UMass Boston at 9 a.m. In addition to the League, principal cosponsors of the forum are the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, Women and Public Policy Program (WAPPP) at the Kennedy School of Government, UMass Boston Women's Studies Department and Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

Trafficking in persons – also known as "human trafficking" – is a form of modern-day slavery. Traffickers often prey on individuals who are poor, frequently unemployed or underemployed, and who may lack access to social safety nets, predominantly women and children in certain countries. Victims are often lured with false promises of good jobs and better lives, and then forced to work under brutal and inhuman conditions. It is among the fastest growing criminal activities, occurring both worldwide and in individual countries. Annually, at least 600,000-800,000 people, mostly women and children, are trafficked across borders worldwide, including 14,500-17,500 persons into the United States.

People are snared into trafficking by various means. For example, physical force is used or false promises are made regarding a legitimate job or marriage in a foreign country to entrap victims into prostitution, pornography and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation or slavery-like labor conditions in factories and fields. Victims suffer physical and emotional abuse, rape, threats against self and family, passport theft, and physical restraint.

It is a high priority of the Department of Justice to pursue and prosecute human traffickers. Human trafficking frequently involves the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, a brutal crime the Department is committed to aggressively investigating and prosecuting. Trafficking also often involves exploitation of agricultural and sweat shop workers, as well as individuals working as domestic servants.

The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution outlaws slavery and involuntary servitude. The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (VTVPA) supplements existing laws and establishes new tools and resources to combat trafficking in persons and to provide services and protections for victims.

For more information go to www.lwvma.org or 617-523-2999.

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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on City Finances with
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SANDY POOLER

Community Preservation

continued from page one

A substantial group of Newton League members have become enthusiastic observers of the CPC process and decisions. Usually the LWV is the only observing group present during committee meetings, and our presence and attention are appreciated. LWV Newton members with professional training in city planning, landscape preservation and development, and long-term municipal goal setting have added interest and enthusiasm to the group's work.

With specific proposals to consider, and the chance to make a contribution within the context of long-term civic planning, this group finds these topics engaging and rewarding to consider. During our March meetings we also looked at what city departments have "master plans" and which are in need of new or better ones. There are several areas branching out from the CPC that promise excellent opportunities for LWV observation, learning and contribution.

Find your area, and join us! ■

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LWVN CALENDAR

April

- 4 Monday 6:30 p.m., **Pizza and Planning** at the home of Nancy Crowley, 77 Kirkstall Rd., Newtonville, 617-965-0818
- 7 Thursday, 7:00 p.m., **Working Board/Potluck Meeting** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Parkway, 617-964-0333, Chair- Amelia Koch
- 10 Sunday, 2:00-4:00 p.m., **Making Democracy Work Awards Event**, Faneuil Hall, Teresa Heinz Kerry, Keynote Speaker plus Ellen Goodman's Q&A with winners.
- 13 Wednesday 11:30 am to 1:30 pm, **Unit Meeting**, Finances of the City of Newton, Coordinator: Ruby Ajanee, at the home of Mary Adelstein, 63 Gammons Road, Waban 617-527-5503. Brown Bagging encouraged.
- 14 Thursday, 7:30 p.m., **Local Program Planning**, at the home of Bonnie Carter, 177 Homer Street, Newton Centre, 617-969-0686

Deadline for **Annual Meeting Reports**
Nominations for the **Jane Leighton Award**

- 28 Thursday, 7:15, **Board Meeting**, at the home of Andrea Kelley, 29 Putnam St., West Newton, 617 964-4609, Chair-Amelia Koch

May

- 12 Thursday, 7:00 p.m., **Working Board/Potluck Meeting** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Parkway, 617-964-0333, Chair- Amelia Koch
- 13-14 Friday & Saturday, **LWV State Convention**, Westborough
- 17 Tuesday, 7:00- 9:00 p.m. **Housing Affordability: Can Newton stay diverse in the 21st Century?** Uniting Citizens for Housing Affordability in Newton (U-CHAN) and NWLV co-sponsor the Spring Forum, Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library,
- 26 Thursday, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., **Annual Meeting**, Chair-Amelia Koch.

Legislative Roundtable



For current schedule log on to www.newtv.org

League of Women Voters of Newton



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