

League of Women Voters of Newton

# Newsletter

Volume 12 Issue 3

March/April 2006

## More Designs on CPA Dollars

By Andreae Downs

An increasing number of applicants are taking advantage of a previously little-known clause in Newton's Community Preservation Act, which allows late submissions of any housing or planning applications.

Since the October 2005 deadline for applications, two housing and two planning applications have been submitted, and the Community Preservation Committee heard two in January. Another two are scheduled for the early-March hearing.

League readers have diligently read everything as soon as they could, and made recommendations. Below are three recommendations that the League Board has reviewed and approved.

### Cambria Road #2

**Submitted by:** CAN-DO

**Location:** 11-13 Cambria Road, West Newton, Ward 3. (Between Parmenter Rd and Falmouth Rd. and a small corner of the back yard is in Waltham.)

**Cost:** \$320,000 out of \$816,129 estimated total development cost. Other funding sought from Community Development Block Grant (\$280,000), and other grant programs. Combined funds will be used to pay down the existing mortgage to \$176,000 and costs of renovations needed.

**Description:** The project would create two 1,200 square-foot affordable two-bedroom apartments in an 125-year-old two-family house located in a neighborhood of mainly two-family houses near the Newton-Waltham line. Rents would be \$1,300 each, and would be covered by Section 8. The house requires de-leading and minor renovations (electrical wiring, rug removal, window replacements, painting). CPA funds would be used to reduce the mortgage for the acquisition cost.

**Comments/Questions:** The proposal leverages funds from a number of other sources. It seems well thought out.

- The annual net cash flow is only \$625. What happens if maintenance costs are higher than estimated?
- The operating budget has no replacement reserve fund. CAN-DO will apply for grants to establish a \$10,000 reserve. What happens if grant applications are not successful or if the fund is depleted?

**Recommendation:** This is the kind of in-fill affordable housing that several Newton forums have brought forward as the ideal for this fully built-out city. It would be in line with the character of the surrounding neighborhood. The League supports the creation of more affordable housing, and this kind of development in particular.

**Developments:** The Newton Housing Partnership recommended that CAN-DO increase the budget to allow for management costs and to provide for the possibility of Section 8 cuts. The Community Development Committee raised the request to \$350,000 to allow "moderate income" renters, working people who make 80% of the area median income. It is now before the aldermanic CPA subcommittee.

*Continued on page 3*



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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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617-964-0014

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

## From Members of the Board

### LOCAL PROGRAM PLANNING

What issues would you like the Newton League to focus on next year? Come to local program planning on Thursday, March 30 and help us decide. The meeting will be held at the home of Alice Wolpert, 260 Lake Street in Newton Highlands at 7:15 p.m. We will discuss what has been happening in the city and what the League's priorities should be for next year.

"League program" is jargon for issues that the League has selected for study and action. The League engages in political action or advocacy after reaching consensus on a given issue. The Local Program, which encompasses a long list of issues, is included in the Newton League Handbook. (Also included are the positions in brief for the state and national levels of the League.)

The League prides itself on being a grass roots organization and program planning starts at the grass roots. At the meeting on March 30 we will start the process of adopting the League program for the next year. The suggestions from the meeting will be reported to the Board and, based on this, the Board will submit its recommendation to the members in the Annual Meeting Workbook. The program will be voted on at Annual Meeting.

*Bonnie Carter, Steering Committee member*

### NEW HANDBOOK

It's here! The 2006 League Handbook has been completed and is in the mail. Our admiration and gratitude go to Robin Maltz for volunteering to take on this task. Even in the age of electronic data processing this job can turn out to be more tricky than one would think! Thanks for your perseverance, Robin!

*The LWVN Board* ■

# Curriculum & Standards in the Newton Schools

Superintendent Jeff Young, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Carolyn Wyatt, and Mary Eich and Janet Buerklin, coordinators for Math and Social Studies, respectively, will be among those discussing changes to the NPS K-12 curriculum, at the March 15 Informational Meeting at the Windsor Club, 1601 Beacon Stree, Waban; 11:30 am - 1:30 pm. Anyone with questions about Newton's curriculum, or state and national standards is welcome. Brown bagging encouraged. Please RSVP - 617-969-7123. ■

# CPA Proposals

*Continued from page one*

## Covenant Residences on Commonwealth

**Submitted by:** B'nai B'rith Housing New England, Inc.

**Location:** 27-35 Commonwealth Avenue, Ward 7

**Cost:** \$1.2 million out of \$17,430,712 estimated total development cost

**Description:** The project proposes renovation of an existing 12-unit brick apartment building into 12 condominiums and new construction of a four-story, wood-frame building containing 44 condominiums. Fourteen units (seven each one- and two-bedroom) would be reserved for purchase by people at or below 80% of median income. Eleven affordable units would be in the new building and three in the old one. Deed-restricted appreciation is planned to maintain affordability. Prices would be approximately \$140,000-\$160,000 for the affordable units and \$300,000-\$430,000 for the market units. Monthly condo fees are estimated at \$150 for the affordable units and \$350 for the market units. Three of the units will be accessible.

**Comments/Questions:** B'nai B'rith has been extremely responsive to community feedback and considerably revised its first two proposals. The current proposal is a tremendous improvement over the original, and we commend the applicants for listening to feedback on a 40B project.

The site is an excellent location for multi-family housing, and fits with the city's draft Comprehensive Plan by locating denser housing near transit. The Boston College MBTA Green Line, a row of stores and two other small apartment buildings are nearby.

Newton currently has only 26 affordable ownership units. There is a clear need for more affordable ownership units as well as more reasonably-priced market units.

B'nai B'rith is generously proposing to share its developer's allowance (if there is one after all costs are met) with the city. According to distribution criteria, the city could receive up to \$300,000 for future affordable housing.

The League readers had a number of questions not answered in the otherwise well-written proposal:

- The applicants have scaled back the development from 136 to 56 units, and have created more one-bedroom units, which cannot be used by families. We wonder if it is worthwhile to save the old building in front, or whether the applicants might be able to enhance the streetscape as well as increase the number or size of the units by replacing this structure?
- Reducing annual operating costs and ensuring the long-term affordability of the condominiums created are in the interests of the developer, the future owners and the city. In both public and private buildings, Newton is discussing higher performance standards for energy and durability. What measures have the applicants considered to assure the long-term sustainability of the project?

- Is the estimate of what it will take to renovate the old building and create 12 quality, marketable units realistic?
- Do the applicants have enough units in the development to make it financially viable in the long term?
- The requested CPA subsidy per unit is \$86,000. The remaining subsidy would be funded internally through sale of affordable units and application for a \$500,000 grant from the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund. But, no funding options are presented if this grant is not received. What happens in this case?
- The League would love to see more green in the landscape plan. The city allows developers to allocate fewer parking spaces for affordable units, and the building is near public transit. Would it be possible to add more trees, perhaps to screen the parking area from the sidewalk and to give parked cars the benefit of shade? Could a play-area be added?

**Recommendation:** The proposal is in line with the League's support for affordable housing.

**Developments:** The CPC approved this application March first. It is now before the aldermanic subcommittee.

## Durant Kenrick Homestead

**Submitted by:** Newton History Museum, Newton Historical Society, Durant Homestead Foundation

**Location:** 286 Waverly Avenue, Ward 7. On the corner of Kenrick/Sargent Street, near the Brighton border

**Cost:** \$77,500 in planning/assessment funds. Eventual work on the property would be paid for with a combination of CPA, grants, contributions and sale of easements.

**Description:** The Durant Homestead Foundation would donate the house, original furnishings and land to the Newton History Museum/Historical Society as well as a \$300,000 maintenance endowment, if the new owners can provide an appropriate level of stewardship, preservation and community education. The museum/historical society sees this as an opportunity to preserve this pre-Revolutionary property and open it to educate the public on many aspects of 18th century life in Newton and nearby. The funds would assess the current condition of the property, develop a master plan for it and its use in public/education programs, develop budgets and raise funds and an endowment.

**Comments/Questions:** The information available to the League was unfortunately still very preliminary. However, it is clear even at this stage that this is just the kind of opportunity for which the CPA was created. We commend the applicants for working quickly to seize the opportunity to preserve this kind of resource.

- The estimated planning budget seems modest. It would be advisable to have other sources of funding for the property identified as soon as possible. It is also critical that the committee know ahead of time whether the Newton

## Committees - in - Action

### Local Action

Contact: Andreae Downs, Chair 617-969-7123

### Observers

ELECTION COMMISSION Nancy Criscitiello  
 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES Martha Richmond  
 FINANCE COMMITTEE, BOARD OF ALDERMAN  
 Ruby Ajanee Amelia Koch  
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 Mary Adelstein  
 NEWTON PARKS AND RECREATION  
 Priscilla Leith

### Representatives

NEWTON CITIZEN COMMISSION ON ENERGY  
 Deb Crossley, LWVN Representative  
 SUSTAINABLE NEWTON COMMITTEE  
 Sharyn Roberts, LWVN Representative

### Committees

CPC LEAGUE REVIEW COMMITTEE  
**Focus** *To follow the process of the granting of Community Preservation funds by studying proposals and observing meetings.*

#### Members

Anna Maria Abernathy Priscilla Leith  
 Deb Crossley Roberta Leviton  
 Andrea Kelley Jennifer Stoner  
 Amelia Koch Myra Tattenbaum  
 Jody Klein  
**Contact** Andreae Downs, Chair 617-969-7123

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES COMMITTEE  
**Focus** *Promoting source reduction and recycling programs in municipal offices and public schools*

#### Members

Deb Crossley Robin Maltz  
 Katherine Gekas Sharyn Roberts  
 Barbara Herson Heather Tausig  
 Beth Lowd Linda Walden  
**Contact** Martha Richmond 617-244-2076

### LWVN MASTER PLAN CONCURRENCE COMMITTEE

**Focus** *A study to support a Master Plan for all public open spaces, parks and recreational facilities in the City of Newton.*

#### Members

Carol Bock Andreae Downs  
 Sheila Butts Andrea Kelley  
 Doug Dickson  
**Contact** Priscilla Leith, Chair 617-969-6837

•••

Feel free to call committee contacts or a Board officer or director to learn more.

# Traffic, Parking and its Discontents

Andreae Downs

Congestion, safety, speed and competition for parking spaces held the interest of roughly 20 League members as Alderman Christine Samuelson and Candace Havens, chair of the city's Public Safety/Transportation Committee and Traffic Council respectively, spoke on January 11.

The two Aldermanic committees are in the throes of classifying streets for parking and traffic calming purposes, and setting standard policies for where certain traffic or accident mitigation measures might be installed.

Until now, Samuelson explained, the committees had been dealing with streets piecemeal and without a plan for the whole city. Samuelson and Havens are hoping coherent policies will:

- preserve the viability of village centers,
- protect residential streets,
- make walking and driving safe for all users, and
- encourage the use of public transit.

They are particularly interested in making transit accessible for Newton residents. But over 40,000 cars are driven into Newton daily, and compete for spaces near transit.

Part of the cause is parking restrictions in Boston and Brookline, Samuelson noted.

Havens has been exploring the possibility of Parking Benefit Zones—where abutters of a popular block for parking can allow the city to issue annual parking permits to non-neighbors. The city would set aside the funds raised for street improvements selected by the abutters—examples might include landscaping, improved sidewalks or curbs, or snow plowing. The question is who would administer the districts, and how they could be enforced. Belmont Street in Newton Corner is being considered for such a district.

The committees have also been working to increase the cost and reduce the time that cars can park right in front of businesses, and reduce the cost and increase the time cars can be parked further away from village centers, Havens said.

League members inquired about how Newton Corner might be made safer and easier to navigate, and both speakers mentioned improving the signage. Needham Street was also raised. Samuelson said that for the businesses on the street, slower traffic was a benefit—as it meant more shoppers. She favors improving pedestrian safety on the street so that shoppers can park and walk to more of their destinations. ■

LWVM presents:

# Improving the Partnership Between the State and Local Communities

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**DAY ON  
THE HILL**  
March 15, 2006  
State House Boston

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Senate President Travaglini

House Speaker DiMasi

MA Municipal Assn President Claire Higgins

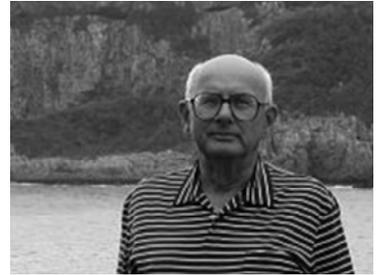
For more information contact  
Sharyn Roberts, 617-969-9588

# Ask the Professor

Sue Rosenbaum

Take the opportunity to hear about the origins and consequences of the war in Iraq - from the first Gulf War in 1991 through the 9/11 attacks, Bush's National Security Statement of September 2002, to the present.

"President Bush, National Security, and the Perils of Regime Change." is the title of the talk being brought to us by Professor Arnie Offner at the **Champagne and Chocolate reception**, Sunday afternoon, March 26, 2006.



Arnold A. Offner is Cornelia F. Hugel Professor of History at Lafayette College, and is also a past president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. He is author of many scholarly books and articles on U.S. foreign policy, including *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* and *The Origins of the Second World War: U.S. Foreign Policy and World Politics, 1917-1941*.

Keeping to tradition, our fifth Champagne and Chocolate fundraising reception will be held in a gorgeous setting, as Laurie and Paul Gershkowitz have graciously opened their home to us this year. Along with the opportunity to meet friends and make new acquaintances, we should come away with new perspectives on interesting topics from our guest speaker.

Tickets to the event provide support for the operating expenses of the LWVN.

Special thanks go to Sharyn Roberts for her leadership in this event. ■

## Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

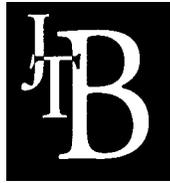
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- I would like to join the League of Women Voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for \$55 payable to LWVN.
- Lifetime membership \$1000**
- I would like to receive materials about the League.
- I would like to be contacted by a League member to talk about LWVN.

Mail this form (and your check, if joining) to:  
Andrea Kozinetz Holtz at 8 Stony Brae Road,  
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# CPA Proposals

*Continued from page three*

History Museum/Historical Society can afford to maintain this property in the long term.

Other questions that the preliminary documents did not address:

- Are there any deed restrictions on the property? Any legal encumbrances such as a will?
- What kind of easement sales are envisioned? How would they raise funds in the long run?
- Can the CPA fund a maintenance endowment?
- Why is the empty lot at the corner of Waverly and Kenrick significant? Is there a case to be made for preserving the trees? What kind of condition are the trees in? What would maintaining them properly cost? Could our tree warden, Mark Welch, assess these trees?

If the home is to become a public museum, this raises further issues:

- Can this be publicly accessible without parking? If not, where does that parking go?
- Do the proponents have an idea of what hours the house would be open to the public? That might make a difference in the amount of parking required, the traffic it would generate.
- What kinds of changes need to be made for handicapped accessibility?
- Is there a plan for such necessary additional amenities such as toilets? Would the garage in back be suitable or is that also historic?

**Recommendation:** The LWVN board supports funding this study.

**Developments:** The CPC approved this application March 1. It is now before the aldermanic CPA subcommittee. ■

## Welcome New Members!

PIA K. BERTELLI 31 Locke Road Waban, MA 02468 p.bertelli@comcast.net

LESLIE BURG 75 Fuller Terrace West Newton 02465 617-969-0361 laburg@rcn.com

RHANNA KIDWELL 56 Kenwood Avenue Newton, MA 02459 617 244-3832 rhannakidwell@comcast.net

MINDY FRANKEL PECKLER 188 Franklin Street Newton, MA 02458 617 969-0991 mpeckler@hotmail.com

TERRIE SAVAGE 211 Plymouth Road Newton 02461 617 527-4032 besavage@aol.com

## LWVN CALENDAR

### *March*

- 8 Wednesday, 7:15 p.m., **Local Action Committee** meeting, at the home of Myra Tattenbaum, 210 Upland Ave., Newton Highlands, 617-527-2830
- 9 Thursday 6:30 p.m., **Working Board Meeting /Potluck** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Pkwy, Newtonville, 617-964-0333
- 15 Wednesday, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., **Day on the Hill 2006**, State House Boston, Contact- Sharyn Roberts 617-969-9588  
  
Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., **Informational Meeting: Education** Curriculum standards, state and federal mandates, what Newton has changed & why. RSVP Andreae Downs, 617-969-7123, Brown Bagging encouraged.
- 16 Thursday, 7:15 p.m. **LWVN Board Meeting** at the home of Roberta Leviton, 84 Sumner St., Newton Centre, 617-965-0016, Chair - Sharyn Roberts
- 26 Sunday, **Champagne and Chocolate Reception** 3:00- 5:00 p.m., at the home of Laurie and Paul Gershkowitz, 50 Green Park, Newton Corner. Contact- Sharyn Roberts 617-969-9588 (Snow Date Sunday, April 2)
- 30 Thursday, 7:15 p.m., **Local Program Planning** at the home of Alice Wolpert, 260 Lake Ave., Newton Highlands, 617-964-0333 (Parking on the North side of Lake Ave.)

### *April*

- 3 Monday, 7:15 p.m., **Local Action Committee** meeting, at the home of Priscilla Leith, 162 Islington Rd., Auburndale, 617-969-6837.
- 5 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. -1:30 p.m. **Informational Meeting: City Finances** at the home of Nancy Crowley, 77 Kirkstall Rd., Newtonville, 617-965-0818, Brown Bagging encouraged.
- 6 Thursday, 6:30 p.m., **Working Board Meeting/Potluck** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Pkwy, Newtonville, 617-964-0333
- 26 Wednesday, 7:15 p.m., **LWVN Board Meeting**, at the home of Amelia Koch, 117 High St., Newton Upper Falls, 617-244-2647., Chair Sue Rosenbaum

### *Upcoming Dates*

- May 20 LWVM Council
- May 25 LWVN Annual Meeting
- June 10-13 LWVUS Convention, Minneapolis, MN

### Legislative Roundtable



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



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## League of Women Voters of Newton

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