

Newsletter

Informational Meetings

Formerly known in League jargon as “Unit Meetings,” our monthly informational meetings focus on issues of high interest to our members. The topics presented at the monthly meetings are determined at our Local Program Planning meeting in the spring when we decide the local program to present for adoption at Annual meeting.

This edition of the Newsletter brings you reports from our September and October Topic Meetings. We also want to interest you in attending the November meeting on the CPA, by providing you with background information prior to the meeting. LWVN members are encouraged to invite others who may be interested in the topic. ■

November 15 Topic Meeting

Roundup of New CPA Applications

For Fiscal Year 2007, the Community Preservation Committee received nine applications request a total of \$6.36 million. The funds available for applications, after paying for long-term commitments such as Angino Farm, administration and legal costs, is roughly \$4.8 million. The bulk of the applications involve historic preservation – a change from previous years, when recreation or housing dominated.

The following chart, modified slightly from the one produced by CPC staff, is a summary of the proposals. These will be discussed at the November Topic meeting. See the calendar for time and location.

The Newsletter will publish the League's comments, questions and recommendations in the next issue.

PROJECT	CATEGORY	CPA FUND REQUEST
Durant Kenrick Homestead	Historic Preservation/Open Space	\$2,710,000
City Hall Historic Landscape:Phase 1	Historic Preservation	\$1,154,000
Warren House Apartments	Community Housing/Historic Preservation	\$750,898
Newton Centre Playground Access Improvements: Phase 1	Historic Preservation/Recreation	\$616,000
Farlow and Chaffin Parks Historic Preservation and Recreation Improvements: Phase 1	Historic Preservation/Recreation	\$472,000
Cheesecake Brook Greenway Improvements	Open Space	\$347,036
City Archive Preservation Project	Historic Preservation	\$150,000
Jefferson Square Historic Lighting Project	Historic Preservation	\$117,790
Newton Fire Department Bronze Door Restoration	Historic Preservation	\$9,000

■

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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>

News and Views

Directors' Notes

What's Voters Service Been Up To?

- Voters Service is pleased to announce that as part of the Empowering Voters Project the League-drafted Massachusetts Voters' Bill of Responsibilities was unveiled at a press conference at the State House on October 13, signed by the state League President Madhu Sridhar along with Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin. A companion to the historic Massachusetts Voters' Bill of Rights, developed by the League in 2004, this document will advance citizens' knowledge of their duties as voters and will help build a more effective and active electorate. See www.votinginfo.info
- Voters Service registered over 100 new voters in 5 different communities at Harvest Fair.
- Voters Service has been interviewed by the NNHS newspaper *The Newtonite* and worked with students who are interested in the election process.
- Voters Service co-ordinated rides to the polls in September and November.

Sharyn Roberts

Conversations about Newton North

A pair of public forums will be co-sponsored by the League, the PTO Council and the Newton Schools Foundation. The first forum is on November 28 from 7:30 to 9pm in Lasker Auditorium. The topic that evening will be the site plan and the referendum election. The second forum will be scheduled for January and will be about the cost of the project and the mayor's financing plan. Panelists representing various positions will discuss the issues. Amelia Koch will moderate both forums.

Terry Yoffie ■

October 11 Topic Meeting

The NNHS Plan Now

What do the current plans for a new Newton North High School include?

The heated debates around traffic, financing and design have left casual observers with little idea of what's in the current overall plan. So on October 11, the League held a topic meeting to discover the general outline of what was under discussion.

Building Commissioner Nick Parnell described the building & grounds outlines, School Committee Chair Dori Zaleznik explained the educational program needs as the school committee saw them, and Aldermen Amy Mah Sangiolo outlined her view of the plan's shortcomings. Ellen Light, an architect and member of the Design Review team for NNHS, moderated the lunchtime meeting at First Baptist Church. Approximately 40 people attended.

In November, the League is co-sponsoring a public forum in which the high school plans can be further discussed.

The plan, which the Aldermen approved in September, has a "ceremonial entrance" at Walnut St. and Trowbridge Avenue that has raised some neighbors' concerns. The buildings are ranged in the middle of the lot, running roughly north-to-south, with athletics at the south end and the theater and arts wing in the north. Academics, the main office, guidance, the library, and the cafeteria are grouped in the center.

Continued on page 4

A brief history of the Newton North High School Project

1 9 9 9 - T o d a y

1999

November The architectural firm of Strekalovsky & Hoit and New England School Development Council were retained to write a Feasibility Study for the NSHS & NNHS – including a space needs study & demographics analysis.

2000

Spring Superintendent Jeffrey Young recommended a comprehensive High School Building Project to the Newton School Committee, which it accepted unanimously on May 8 and passed onto the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen for necessary funding approvals;

August \$5.7M was approved by the Board of Aldermen for design work and reaffirmed in September. Overall budget was set for North and South at \$95 million; DRA was selected as the design architects.

November The citizens of Newton were asked to uphold the Board of Aldermen's vote in a special election on November 7, and they did so in overwhelming numbers. All wards voted in favor of proceeding. In favor, 27,267; opposed 9,374.

2001

Spring Superintendent Young recommended two midsize high schools, which led to redistricting (South increased their enrollment; North decreased their enrollment); the Massachusetts School Building Assistance Program, "SBAB" approved the educational specs and the financing plan for the two high schools as a single package;

Fall/Winter/Spring 2002 Work was focused on NSHS Renovations & Additions.

2002

October Mayor announced that there would be 2 significant changes in the design of Newton North: the Project Manager (Turner Construction) recommended the building be vacated during construction (projected to take 2 years) & there would be cost increases in NNHS construction; NNHS Project was placed on hold while community and the Mayor's office worked to sort out the new issues.

December Mayor created the Citizens Task Force to review options for design of Newton North.

2003

May The Citizens Task Force recommended the large hybrid addition with renovation of existing building to the School Committee. Mayor applauds the Task Force's results and requests funding from Board of Aldermen to review feasibility of proposed options, including a new high school.

December Feasibility analysis was completed and recommendation made for new school option with a budget of \$108 million.

2004

Spring City analyzed new school option and communicated with state to learn in June that it would receive \$46.58 million reimbursement funding for either a new building or hybrid renovation project.

July School Committee voted in favor of a new high school.

September School Committee approved design criteria for new high school.

2005

January RFQ (request for qualifications) for Project Manager was put out for new high school;

March Mayor selected Turner Construction (also managed Newton South renovation project) from 12 applicants

May City put out RFP (request for proposal) for Architects;

August Mayor selected architectural design team Gund Partnership with Dore & Whittier from a pool of 15 applicants

November Turner published time schedule with construction start date in April 2006. Gund notified city that there would be significant cost increases due to several factors including sharp rise in building material costs (steel, concrete demand from Asian construction boom), labor & energy (rising oil prices) and Hurricane Katrina devastating the Gulf Coast.

December Revised cost estimates for North ranged from \$137 to \$160 million.

2006

February NNHS construction cost estimates were refined to \$139 - \$164.9 million for new building. (Task Force hybrid cost estimates were adjusted to \$95.6 to 124.4 million to reflect inflation issues) Gund Partnership presented site plan options.

May Design Review Committee recommended Site Plan Approval to Board of Aldermen for option 5A

September NNHS site plan approved by Board of Aldermen by a majority vote; petition launched to gather signatures for referendum opposing North site plan; Mayor names blue ribbon long term financing commission. A RFP is put out for a General Contractor for NNHS, which is scheduled to begin construction in Spring 2007 (5 construction firms pre-qualified: Dimeo; Gilbane; O&G; Skanska; Suffolk)

October Election Commission confirms that the Newton North Referendum Petition is valid with 3,223 signatures - Special Election will be considered by the Board of Aldermen.

Terry Yoffie, Education Chair

Continued from page 2

The NNHS Plan Now

The currently-proposed building is 399,000 square feet; the current building is 470,000 square feet (the smaller size was part of a 2001 recommendation by Superintendent Jeffrey Young that Newton's two high schools be made equal in size). The lobby will be in the middle section, facing the ceremonial entrance on Walnut St. Drop-off points for students are scattered around the site. Buses will enter from Lowell Avenue and drop-off on Elm Road. No cars will have access to Elm Street during school hours.

The athletic field for football will be sunken and water will be retained. Ball fields along Lowell Avenue will be slightly higher.

Parnell said that all soil will be kept on site. Any excavated soil will be needed to backfill where the old school is and to develop the playing fields and new building foundation. Fill removed to depress the field was needed to elevate the planned new building 1.5 feet—to assist with proper water drainage away from the new building. Parnell noted that the swale of the Hull-side hill also would be restored to its original topography with the construction.

The athletic department requested the football field be reoriented to fit sports league standards, and Parnell said that the angle of the sun was better for players in the new field position. Also, the stadium will be hidden by the Hull hill, the bleachers will be located away from the neighbors on Hull, and the current plan assures that the cafeteria and main building will have a better vista over the playing fields looking out toward Lowell Ave.

Parnell said the building is S-shaped to take advantage of natural light and ventilation and make sure each classroom has outside windows that work. It is also designed to look small from the street, despite being 4 stories high. Houses on Hull will look over the roof of the athletic wing. Main Street will be

retained in the new building, and although the building is longer, it will be easier to find your way around, in part because students can see the outside wherever they are in the building.

Science labs will be located on the fourth floor to ensure adequate ventilation. Industrial Arts, including the student-run café, will be on the first floor, where supplies can be delivered easily, and customers off the street can quickly find the café.

Zaleznick said the planned building is long to save on costs – while a gym could be put over the pool, that added to the cost, whereas having both, as well as the auto shop (driving cars in and out) and the café (customers in and out), located on one level would be cheaper. A TV studio is part of the planned new building.

Parnell said that the building had enough water and energy-sustainable features to be close to a silver LEED status (LEED=Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System™, the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance, green buildings). The plans include photo voltaic cells on the roof, clear story lighting and other energy benefits. The current NNHS has energy costs that are twice those of NSHS. Other options, such as geothermal heating & cooling, and whether plants on the roofs would be cost-effective, would be explored in the next phase.

Both high schools will hold about 1,800 students, but if enrollment increases, the design for Newton North could accommodate about 1,950, with scheduling changes. Eight more classrooms could be added in two spots at the back of the planned structure. Newton North has additional room for its career and technical education programs, which are much more developed at this point than those at Newton South. A significant amount of space will be taken up by the auto shop, culi-

nary arts program and other career programs. Newton North also has the only indoor public pool operated by the city.

Classroom spaces are modular in design, which means a modicum of cost savings. The library is to be on the second floor, near the heart of the classroom areas. The School Committee considered the time it takes for students to get from class to class, and this design allows students to be on time for classes – something the current high school does not allow.

Science labs will be larger than at South, where labs have been proven to be too small. One chemistry lab will be even larger than average, at 1,400 square feet, since this has been shown to need more space.

The school is designed so that the athletic wing and theatre wing can be locked off from the classroom area, providing extra security for computers and other valuables. Also, because of their placement, athletic and theater events can be held simultaneously without inducing competition for parking.

The old building will not be touched until the new one is complete. The old building will be torn down in such a way that its materials can be recycled, and this could take as much as 2 years.

Sangiolo said that there was no question that anything was better than the old North building. She questioned the need for and advisability of depressing the football field and changing the contours of the site near Hull Street.

Sangiolo also raised concerns about traffic gridlock being shifted from Lowell to Walnut, without much mitigation, and said the ceremonial entrance might be better on Elm Road, if cars and busses could share the street. She mentioned the way the building is situated makes it difficult to cross the site from Walnut to Lowell when the building is closed.

The other issue she is concerned about is that there do not appear to be

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The NNHS Plan Now

many places to expand the building, should enrollment go up substantially. She pointed to the development of housing on the Woodland T-stop and noted most of those children will need education somewhere. Sangiolo said a more compact building would allow for more places where the building could be expanded later, and would allow more playing field room. She said that she and other aldermen felt they had asked questions, sometimes repeatedly, of the architects, and had not received an adequate response.

Jeff Seidman of the Newton Taxpayers presented the referendum position: he said they are not just disgruntled neighbors, but represent people across the city. The school on the site plan looks 400 ft. longer than the current school. The petitioners also are unsure the city should put every penny of available funding into this \$165 million project. A recent state assessment registered seven other Newton school buildings with the same level of need to be repaired as NNHS, but there is no plan in place to deal with the other schools, and no funds left for them. This topic may be explored further at the Leagues' January forum.

Andreae Downs ■

Report from September Topic Meeting

Voting Issues: Apathy and Fraud

What you need to know about voting!

by Sharyn Roberts

With another election this November, the Newton League's topic meeting for September was right on target. Concerns over "one person, one vote" and "every person's vote counts" triggered the discussion. Our guest speaker was Catherine Dowd, LWVMA Vice President for Program and Action and a prime mover in the Empowering Voters Project. The moderator was Beth Lowd, LWVN.

Few federally mandated pieces of voting legislation have existed since the women's suffrage Amendment 19 in 1920.*

All other legislation has been left up to the individual states.

Our LWVMA Empowering Voters Project (EVP) is designed to make the voting process easier. People don't vote for reasons in two categories; it's too difficult to vote and the "I don't care". There is a growing voter cynicism that elections are bought and there is incumbent privilege. People feel less empowered and less rooted. They also feel guilt about not being as informed as they would like to be. Part of this comes from the lack of access to information on issues and candidates.

The Boston Globe says they will not publish a guide due to money issues, even when the LWVMA does all the preparation. The Newton League encountered the same with the TAB in the 2005 fall election.

Despite all this, Massachusetts is making progress in removing some of the barriers to voting. In July 2006, the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention passed a proposal to remove restrictions on absentee ballots. On Friday, October 13, Governor Mitt Romney signed Bill #S2277, the "Strengthening Voting Rights and Voter Confidence" bill. (See Page Two)

Our discussion of what is being done to remove barriers to voting as well as creative strategies of what our local League can do to overcome voter apathy generated many ideas for those interested in joining in the work of Voters' Service. It's so important.

Come and join in.

*Amendment 23 in 1961, Washington, D.C. suffrage; the Voting Rights Act of 1965; Amendment 26 in 1971 allowing 18 year olds and older the right to vote; and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002. ■

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 \$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,
Newton Highlands, MA 02461

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617-283-5687

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Coordinator: Andrea Kelley
617-964-4609

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- Barbara Herson Linda Walden
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...

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

Local Action



October 12, 2006

The Honorable Mayor David B. Cohen
The Newton Board of Aldermen
Lisle Baker, President
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Dear Mayor Cohen and the Newton Board of Aldermen,

The League of Women Voters of Newton supports replacement all of the city's nearly 6000 mercury vapor street lamps with lower wattage, high pressure sodium (HPS) lamps, as advocated by the Newton Citizen's Commission on Energy. We understand that high pressure sodium is the most efficient lighting technology available today, and that a conversion will pay for itself in a very short time frame in avoided energy costs.

In addition, we support reducing lighting levels to more evenly disperse light to the street level to increase driver visibility and pedestrian safety. We understand that overly bright streetlights can blind peripheral vision and therefore make it difficult to see pedestrians. We understand that recently established industry guidelines support this change.

To convert the street lamps to HPS using the same poles and arms would cost the city about 1.3 million dollars. The reduced operating costs will pay for the investment in only 1.7 years, without outside funding.

If the city acts quickly, it can apply for a grant of up to \$500,000 from NSTAR to defray the installation cost. Such grants are increasingly rare, and the December 2006 deadline could be the last round of funding from NSTAR for this type of project.

Most of Newton's mercury vapor lamps are well beyond their useful life, operating at only 25-50% of capacity, but consuming the same amount of energy as when they were new. It is normal to replace these lamps every six years to maintain desired light levels.

Also, the federal government is phasing out the use of mercury vapor, by prohibiting the manufacture or import of the required parts by the year 2008.

Finally, some have argued in favor of 'white' light (HPS is 'gold'). Other communities, such as Arlington, have tested consumer preferences and found that they don't care about or notice a difference. In addition, all white light alternative technologies are either more expensive initially, less energy efficient, or both. All have higher life cycle costs.

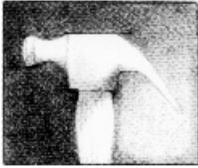
The LWVN urges the mayor and the Board of Alderman to act quickly to allocate and seek funding for the replacement of the city streetlights to high pressure sodium lamps to save energy and to make our street lighting more uniform at lower levels to increase safety.

Sincerely,

Susan Rosenbaum
President, LWVN

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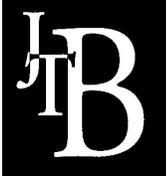
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LWVN CALENDAR

November

- 2 Thursday, 6:30 p.m., **Working Board Potluck/Meeting**, at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Pkwy, 617-964-0333
- 7 Tuesday, Polls Open 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., **STATE ELECTION DAY**
- 9 Thursday, 7:30 p.m., **Local Action Committee** meeting at the home of Jennifer Stoner, 31 Colgate Rd., Newton Lower Falls, 617-283-5687
- 15 Wednesday, 11:30 am.- 1:30 p.m., **Monthly Topic Meeting, Newton CPA Update**, at the home of Myra Tattenbaum, 210 Upland Ave. (Off Dedham) Newton Highlands, 617-527-2830.
- 16 Thursday, 7:15- 9:30 p.m., **LWVN Board Meeting**, at the home of Allison Stoner, 31 Colgate Rd., Newton Lower Falls, 617-527-4018.
- 17 Friday, **Newsletter Deadline**
- 28 Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., **Conversations About Newton North Public Forum**, Lasker Auditorium. Terry Yoffie, 617-965-1796

December

- 3 Sunday, 4:00- 6:00 p.m., **MembershipTea** at the home of Sue Rosenbaum, 121 Winslow Rd., Waban, 617-332-0306. Contact Carol Bock, 617-594-7293.
- 6 Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., **Local Action Committee Meeting**, at the home of Lucia Dolan, 20 Devon Rd., Newton Centre, 617-332-1893.
- 10 Sunday afternoon, **Holiday Party *Save the date!***
- 14 Thursday, 7:15 p.m., **LWVN Board Meeting**, at the home of Andrea Kelley, 28 Putnam Street, W. Newton, 617-964-4609.
- 15 Friday, **Newsletter Deadline**

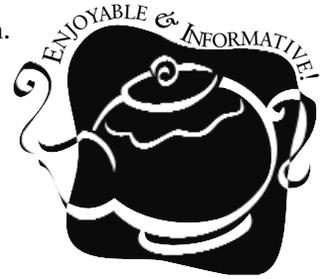
MEMBERSHIP TEA

Welcome New and Prospective Members

Sunday • December 3 • 4-6 p.m.

Take this opportunity to bring a friend to this Sunday afternoon gathering at the home of Sue Rosenbaum.

Contact Carol Bock at 617-594-7293 for information.



Welcome New Members!

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38 Paul Street Newton 02459
sonjaloar@verizon.net 617-928-1054

ENA A. LORANT
36 Paul Street Newton 02459
617-332-6293

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53 Bothfeld Road Newton 02459
617-605-1521 tobyrichard@comcast.net

JULIE SALL
18 Solon Street Newton 02461
617-965-3972 Julie@sall.net

Legislative Roundtable



For current schedule log on to www.nwtv.org

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