

# Newsletter

Volume 13 Issue 1

January/February 2007

## Clarification Continues

*Andreae Downs, LWVN Observer*

### Committee Considers Lake Property

At its January 25 meeting, the CPC heard from Alderman Ken Parker and Patrick Hannon, owner of 20 Rogers Street. It is considering purchasing the property. The committee spent \$6,000 in the fall to have the property appraised. That appraisal came in at \$2.3 million. Hannon argued that his property was worth much more – at least \$4.5 million according to his broker – but indicated he might entertain any city offer of \$3 million or more. The committee went into executive session to discuss.

### City Archive Preservation Project Moves Ahead

The Committee approved spending \$75,000 to preserve vital documents in the city's archives (historical preservation). This is less than City Clerk David Olsen had requested, but more than what he indicated would cover "urgent" preservation tasks. The application will now be taken up by the Aldermen's subcommittee on the CPA.

### Three Applications Rejected

For the first time in the CPA's history in Newton, the CPC voted to reject three applications. The polishing and preservation of the Newton Fire Headquarters' brass door and lamp post was rejected because the entire building will be undergoing renovations. The committee said it was premature to pay the \$9,000 requested before knowing what the renovations would cover.

Also rejected was a citizens' proposal to put gas lighting in Jefferson Square, an intersection north of Washington and just west of Galen streets. A 1909 map showed only one gas light in the area. The committee said that the CPA law did not cover putting new lighting in an area where there wasn't any historically.

The final project rejected was the landscaping in front of City Hall. While the committee had several objections to the application, including that it had no community support, the main reason to reject this application was that the dredging of the pond, which needed to happen before other park restoration could be done, would not happen until FY 08.

### Remaining Projects Prioritized

The committee has now heard from all applicants at least twice. Some applications still need more information before the committee can determine whether it can or will fund them. Much of this information is pending.

However, a straw vote revealed that committee members are fairly unanimous in feeling that the most important project to fund with this year's dollars is the property along Crystal Lake, if that indeed can be done. Second on the list was the funding in some form of the Durant Kenrick Homestead. While committee members feel this is a vital project for the fund, they also want to further explore its restructuring to leverage the most outside dollars and keep the committee's funding strictly within the CPA statute.

## LWVN Supports Zoning For Energy Amendment

*Statement Presented by LWVN at the Zoning and Planning Committee Meeting, January 22, 2007*

The League of Women Voters of Newton enthusiastically supports the Zoning for Energy amendment. The League believes that conservation is the key to sound energy policy and must be encouraged through governmental action and incentives. This amendment would return Newton to the forefront of environmentally sensitive communities by considering energy, as well as building longevity and efficiency, in the special permit and design review processes. It makes explicit our concerns for the environment, and encourages developers to consider measures that benefit them and the surrounding community. It is one step toward preventing environmental blight and encouraging lower carbon emissions, which is one goal of our city's Energy Action Plan.

The League urges the Aldermen and the Mayor to quickly approve this modest measure toward improving our environment and saving energy.

**The discussion will be continued March 26th.**

*Continued on page 5*

*Read background for this action on Page 4 ■*

## LWVN Officers and Directors 2006-2007

### OFFICERS

President	Sue Rosenbaum	617-332-0306
Vice President Organization	Bonnie Carter	617-969-0686
Vice President Local Action	Andreae Downs	617-969-7123
Vice President Communications	Ann Grantham	617-964-0333
Clerk	Allison Stoner	617-527-4018
Treasurer	Andrea Kozinetz	617-964-6490

### DIRECTORS

Deb Crossley	Environment	617-244-7597
Andrea Kelley	Observers	617-964-4609
Sharyn Roberts	Voter Service	617-969-9588
Jennifer Stoner	Local Action	617-283-5687
Sharon Stout	Fundraising	781-856-0004
Greer Tan Swiston	Communications/ Webmaster	617-965-6008
Terry Yoffie	Education	617-965-1796

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Jody Klein, Chair		617-244-4767
Amelia Koch	Andrea Kozinetz	
Andrea Kelley	Myra Tattenbaum	

### OFF BOARD SPECIALISTS

Housing	Robertta Leviton	617-965-0016
Handbook	Robin Maltz	617-969-1554
Human Rights	Holly Gunner	617-964-0767
Legislative Roundtable	Lucia Dolan	617-332-1893
Membership	Elaine Reisman Co-chair	617-244-6439
Topic Meetings	Pat Acton Linda Morrison	617-965-5572 617-332-6539
Recycling	Barbara Herson	617-964-7463

### NEWSLETTER

Editor Ann Grantham 617-964-0333

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.

PO Box 610207

Newton, MA 02461

617-964-0014

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

# What We Do Best!

On January 9, 2007 the Newton League engaged in the activity we are best known for, namely, voter education. In just under three hours, the citizens of Newton listened to a panel of experts from the city who have been involved in the discussion of the proposed financial plans to pay for a new Newton North High School. The panel included: the Mayor's chief administrative officer Sandy Poole; School Committee Chairman Anne Larner; Alderman and Chair of the Finance Committee Paul Colletti; and President of the Newton Taxpayers Association Jeff Seidman.

After the panel made their initial presentations, the floor was opened to questions. Moderator and former League President Amelia Koch, presided over the meeting. After each answer, Ms. Koch asked the questioner if they were satisfied with the answer given. The forum ended after 10:00 pm. Every person present was given the opportunity to voice his or her concern.

Anne Larner commented that the school was designed to house the same programs that are currently in place at Newton North and nothing more extravagant. When asked why the school would cost significantly more than other high schools that have been built in the state, Ms. Larner noted that the Voc-Tech program will cost approximately \$10 million and offer 115 majors. Eliminating this large program would cost approximately two million dollars each year to send the students to another program outside the city. The swimming pool will cost approximately \$ 5 million and it is used by Newton South High School as well as Newton citizens. The other significant difference comes from the fact that the design would be LEED certified, an environmental effort that would eventually lead to cost saving over the life of the building. When asked if the size of the classrooms was sufficient given the new state guidelines call for rooms which are approximately 70 square feet larger, she said they are sufficient and the difference represents 2 feet at the back of the classroom. She emphasized that the size of the classrooms is the same as those recently built at Newton South with the exception of the science laboratories. These have been enlarged due to safety concerns expressed by the science faculty at Newton South. Many other design issues were addressed during the evening and the sources of the monies to pay for the building were described in great by Sandy Pooler.

According to Mr. Pooler, the city would never have greater than 60% of its total debt dedicated to this project in any given year and \$3.5 million annually would be bonded for other capital projects around the city.

Mr. Colletti admitted that he was one of the aldermen that voted against the site plan but acknowledged that a new building was essential for the city of Newton. He remarked that the state had initially approved a \$ 77 million building and would reimburse the city for \$ 47 million. He acknowledged that the building itself would now cost an estimated \$116 million but the state would probably not make such a generous offer again.

Although the Newton League chose not to take a stand either for or against the referendum, I believe we did our job. We educated the voters so that each could decide for his or herself how to vote on January 23rd. I would like to especially thank Terry Yoffie, Andrea Kelley, Andrea Kozinetz, Amelia Koch, and the rest of their committee as well as the PTO Council, the Newton Schools Foundation, and New TV for contributing to this great effort.

*Sue Rosenbaum*  
LWVN, President ■

*January Topic Meeting*

# Before Another Flake Falls...

by *Andreae Downs*

Alderman Christine Snow Samuelson and Newton Officer Dawn Hough joined us in January to talk about a sidewalk snow clearing ordinance for Newton.

Businesses are already required to clear snow on sidewalks that abut their establishments. The city clears some of the sidewalks near T stations, city buildings and schools, but Officer Hough noted that even then it can be unsafe until front-end loaders can take away the piles near crosswalks. There are 600 miles of sidewalks, much of which are un-cleared.

Samuelson noted that the police department currently doesn't issue tickets for the snow ordinances on the books—these include prohibitions against piling snow on sidewalks or on neighboring properties or streets. Officers would most likely inform residents of the new law, and make sure they are able to shovel - a list already exists of high school students who will shovel for a fee, and snow-clearing volunteers.

The city had such an ordinance for all of one year in the early 1990s, but it was rescinded by the Board of Aldermen who worried about seniors and low income residents unable physically or financially to get snow cleared from sidewalks.

Samuelson has docketed a new ordinance with the Public Facilities Committee, chaired by Ald. Sydra Schnipper. The roughly 25 people in the room agreed to work to get the ordinance passed. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force has agreed to join the League in promoting the ordinance, and the PTO Council may also be interested in getting walks to school cleared.

Several older League members said that when the city's miles of sidewalks were covered in snow and ice they risked falling, and that they would support this ordinance, which the Newton League adopted as a position nearly 20 years ago.

Others suggested issuing awards for neighborhood champions of sidewalk clearing and other educational efforts. Alderman Vicki Danberg suggested calling the MBTA if sidewalks, stairs and bridges were not cleared of snow.

Anyone interested in the educational or lobbying effort around this ordinance should call Andreae Downs: 617-969-7123. ■

## Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

- 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**

My email address may be shared with State and National LWV

## BACKGROUND FOR MARCH 26 HEARING

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# Natural Resources, Energy, and Special Permits: An Approach for Newton

*Philip B. Herr, Chair, Newton Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee*

The support of the City of Newton for wise energy conservation and use as well as for other aspects of sustainability has been evidenced in many ways ranging from the City's participation in the Department of Energy's "Million Solar Roofs" campaign to its exemplary residential recycling record. However, the Zoning Ordinance does not directly reflect that community intention. There is not a single appearance of the word "energy" in the Newton Zoning Ordinance. A computerized word-search Statewide showed that zoning laws in more than a quarter of the municipalities in Massachusetts have explicit energy-related provisions, in most cases indicating at least gestures of support regarding energy and other sustainability concerns. Although a leader on environmental concerns in other ways, Newton clearly is not leading in its use of zoning to advance them.

A two-step process for addressing those concerns under Newton Zoning might be taken, stemming from the work of the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC), the Newton Citizens' Commission on Energy, the Sustainable Newton Committee, the High Performance Buildings Coalition, and others. The first step has been proposed to the Board of Aldermen for adoption in hopes of gaining prompt implementation, to be followed by a second step with building onto what is learned through that initial effort to achieve an exemplary long-term approach.

In order to provide a clear indication of City intentions, as a first step a simple addition would be made to the stated Zoning Ordinance purposes and, consistent with that, parallel additions would be made to both the criteria for acting on special permits and the criteria for acting on site plan approvals. That would make energy and sustainability legitimized considerations for those two types of zoning decision, and would promptly provide a basis for guiding projects which the City may be acting upon in the near future. Virtually all large non-institutional developments are subject to those controls

Promptly acting on those concerns is important for several reasons. First, addressing energy and sustainability is already being advocated in regulatory hearings on development proposals, and that advocacy is being reflected to some degree in the resulting decisions. In fairness to all parties, the City's intentions about energy and natural resources should be made clear before, not after, plans are shaped by those proposing development. Second, adopting this step will provide justification for the substantial investment of public effort required to design and implement the major changes in a number of City ordinances and procedures which may be necessary for a more comprehensive approach to energy and sustainability. Third, experience in the use of the initial provisions will provide learning about how best to more comprehensively address those concerns in the future. Fourth, prompt action could make those provisions applicable to projects which otherwise might be built in the interim without the benefits which their provisions could provide to both public and private interests.

A number of Massachusetts communities have acted in ways which are closely similar to this first step. They include Cambridge, Brookline, Westwood, Westford, and Franklin.

Following that initial action and drawing on the learning which it enables, a longer-term effort should be undertaken towards a more comprehensive approach to addressing energy and sustainability concerns related to development. That would include but not be limited to further regulatory revisions, such as possibly modifying applicability of such regulations or establishing quantitative systems for incentives or disincentives. The only Massachusetts examples of such comprehensive municipal systems having been adopted are for two special cases: Devens, where an inter-municipal agency exercises regulatory control over that former

*Continued on page 5*

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## CLARIFICATION CONTINUES

*Continued from page one*

The remaining four applications: Warren House (community housing/historic preservation), Newton Centre Playground (recreation/historic pres) and Farlow Chaffin (recreation/historic preservation), and Cheesecake Brook (recreation/open space), the committee felt could be deferred a year or two if funding was not available this year because of the first two projects. Further, there was some feeling that funding parks should wait until the city had completed its new Recreation and Open Space Plan.

### **Newton is First Community to Fund Community Preservation Coalition**

A unanimous vote approved paying \$7,500 in administrative funds to the Community Preservation Coalition, a state-wide group that supports the CPA and which members felt had been very helpful in its struggle to define the law. ■

## Fundraiser

Enhance your entertaining  
(and support  
the League) with a

*Chocolate Fountain!*

Call Sharyn Roberts at  
617-969-9588 and rent one  
from the League.

*Suggested donation is \$25.*

# Natural Resources, Energy, and Special Permits

*Continued from page 4*

Army base, and at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station, where the four towns within which that site lies have each approved such zoning. At this writing, Boston has developed and is expected to shortly approve such a regulatory system for large-scale development. A number of other Massachusetts communities are working on such approaches, and nationally there are a growing number of places which have implemented measures which can provide useful precedents. Building on those precedents could possibly enable Newton to again be in a position of leadership in this field.

### **The Initial Approach**

To initiate the first step, a set of amendments has been prepared and docketed for approval by the Board of Aldermen. They (1) identify energy conservation and sustainability as purposes of the Zoning Ordinance and (2) oblige that approval of either a site plan or a special permit involving more than 20,000 square feet of gross floor area requires assurance that in at least one way the development will exceed other applicable city, state and federal standards regarding efforts towards those purposes, and offers an extensive but not exclusive list of possible ways of doing so. In either case the determination of compliance would be made by the Board of Aldermen. A separate but parallel amendment to the ordinance governing the Design Review Committee has also been prepared and docketed. It calls for essentially the same considerations to be reflected in that body's reviews of public development.

Satisfying the ordinance requirements will be easy in virtually all cases. Even without this language, most recent development to which such rules would apply has in one way or another exceeded the cited standards. However, the amendments:

- Would assure that the laggards catch up with the others in making conservation efforts;
- Would convey a clear message that development which includes substantial conservation efforts will be in a more favorable light in seeking City approval than otherwise; and
- Simply by listing an array of possible ways of furthering the conservation objectives, the amendment would give those approaches visibility, making their usage more likely. ■

## Committees - in - Action

### Observers

Coordinator: Andrea Kelley  
617-964-4609

ELECTION COMMISSION Nancy Criscitiello

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES Deb Crossley

NEWTON FREE LIBRARY BOARD 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

#### LOCAL ACTION

Contact Jennifer Stoner, Chair 617-283-5687

Focus *Community Preservation Act*

#### Members

Anna Maria Abernathy	Andrea Kelley
Deb Crossley	Amelia Koch
Lucia Dolan	Priscilla Leith
Andreae Downs	Roberta Leviton
George Foord	Myra Tattenbaum

#### ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Contact Deb Crossley 617-244-7597

Focus *Promoting resource efficiency and energy conservation in public facilities*

#### Members

Carol Bock	Beth Lowd
Halina Brown	Martha Richmond
Lucia Dolan	Sharyn Roberts
Katherine Gekas	Jennifer Stoner
Barbara Herson	Heather Tausig

•••

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

## Nominating Committee

The 2007-08 Nominating Committee is underway and forming a slate of Officers and Directors for the coming year. If you would like to actively participate, or would like to nominate someone, please contact Jody Klein at Jody\_Klein@newton.k-12.ma.us. or 617-244- 4767.

## Jane Leighton Award

Have you been working with a League member who exemplifies the characteristics of Jane Leighton? (see Page 37 of our Handbook) If so, send the name to Robin Maltz at robinm@comcast.net

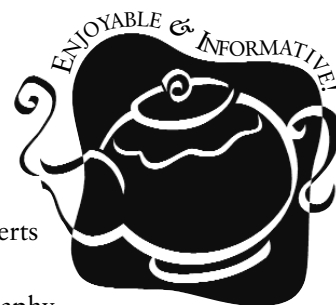
## Champagne & Chocolate

This is an exciting, educational fundraiser for our Local League. Please help in a small way to put this spectacular event together. Contact Sharyn Roberts at 617-969-9588 or Sharyn@neovana.com.

# MEMBERSHIP TEA

Thank you to the following people who helped make our League Membership Tea a lovely afternoon on Sunday, January 21.

- Ald. Vicki Danberg and John Ficarelli for their gracious and generous hospitality.
- Sue Rosenbaum, Newton League President, for her tasty pastries.
- Janet Sterman for her delicious trifle.
- Allison Stoner, Andreae Downs, and Tami Roberts for the fruit, tea, coffee, and other "fixins."
- Jim Stoner and John Ficarelli for their photography.
- All members attending, veteran and new, who spoke so eloquently and engagingly about their reasons for joining the League.



Sharyn Roberts

## Welcome New Members!

MARYAN AMARAL  
PO Box 600200  
Newtonville, MA 02460  
617 243-9411

ALISON MCCARTY  
40 Dearborn St.  
W.Newton, MA 02465  
617 964-8930

REGINA ELIOT-RAMSEY  
2320 Commonwealth Ave.  
#1-2  
Auburndale, MA 02466  
617 558-5554

TASSY WARREN  
102 Beaumont Ave.  
Newton, MA 02460  
617 332-6714

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## LWVN CALENDAR

### February

- 1 Thursday 6:30 p.m. **Working Board Meeting/Potluck** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 EastSide Pkwy, 617-964-0333
- 6 Tuesday, 7:15 p.m., **Legislative Roundtable** taping at NewTV studio. Lucia Dolan 617-332-1893
- 13 Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., **Local Action Committee** meeting at the home of Myra Tattenbaum, 210 Upland Ave. Newton Highlands, 617-527-2830
- 14 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., **Topic Meeting: Development and Newton's Comprehensive Plan** with Phil Herr at the home of Roberta Leviton, 84 Sumner St. Newton Centre, 617-965-0016
- 15 Thursday, 7:15 p.m., **LWVM Board Meeting** at the home of Andreae Downs, 854 Chestnut St., Waban, 617-969-7123

### March

- 1 Thursday 6:30 p.m. **Working Board/Potluck** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 Eastside Parkway, 617-964-0333
- 6 Tuesday 7:15 p.m. **Legislative Roundtable Taping**, NewTV Studio
- 7 Wednesday 7:30 p.m. **Local Program Planning** at NewTV Conference Room on Easy Street
- 14 Wednesday 11:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. **Topic Meeting: The Blue Ribbon Committee** at the NewTV Conference Room on Easy Street. Going West onto Needham Street, take the first right beyond National Lumber, to the top. NewTV is handicapped accessible.
- 15 Thursday 7:30 p.m. **LWVN Board Meeting** at the home of Sharon Stout, 95 Pearl St., Nonantum, 781-856-0004
- 18 Sunday, 3:00-5:00 p.m. **Champagne and Chocolate Fundraising Event** (Snow Date - March 25th)

If you would like to  
receive an

### AUDIO VERSION

of the Newsletter,  
contact  
Sue Rosenbloom at  
dsr2@rcn.com or  
617-332-6873.

### Legislative Roundtable



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

## League of Women Voters of Newton

PO Box 610207  
Newton, MA 02461  
617-964-0014  
[www.lwvn.ma.lwvnet.org](http://www.lwvn.ma.lwvnet.org)

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