
League of Women Voters of Newton

NEWSLETTER

Volume 14, Issue 4

July-August 2008

National Convention Adds to Program

By Anne Borg

This year's National Convention was enlivened by several interesting speeches. On Saturday, former Oregon governor Barbara Roberts discussed "Women as Political Leaders." On Sunday, John Kitzhaber, M.D., also a former Oregon governor, talked about "Health Care for the 21st Century." The Monday plenary session featured a Climate Change Panel with V. (Ram) Ramanathan of the Scripps Institute of Oceanography and Heather Kaplan, a senior policy advisor for Oxfam America, who spoke very eloquently about how global climate change affects people in developing countries.

The closing banquet on Monday featured a keynote address by former Colorado Supreme Court Justice Rebecca Love Kourlis. She is currently the executive director of the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver and, in her speech, she discussed the need for reform in the

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Your Membership Dues – Our "Bread & Butter"

by Pat Acton, Assistant Treasurer

Billing for membership dues is an important, though routine, League activity. The amount of local dues in the Newton LWV has been held at \$55.00 per year for each member for a number of years. The disbursement of each member's dues includes:

National per member payment (PMP)	\$28.00
State per member payment	\$23.00
Remainder for the LWWN budget	\$4.00

The "remainder" amount from each member is augmented by extra contributions in the form of Supporting, Household, and Sustaining member contributions at the time of dues payment.

A recent Board of Directors meeting discussed the time, effort,

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From the President

THINK NATIONALLY, ACT LOCALLY

Dear League Members,

Happy summer to all. Anne Borg and I had a remarkable experience representing Newton at the League of Women Voters' 48th biennial national convention in June. It was parliamentary procedure at its best and LWVUS president Mary Wilson effectively facilitated over 1,200 members along with the convention parliamentarian, Ann Gilson. I was very impressed with how effective we could be with clear rules and procedures in effect and a strong but fair hand to guide us.

The big news from the convention is that we are taking action on global climate change, health care reform, and methods for electing the President. Besides agreeing on the national program for the next two years, we also successfully elected the national officers and board of directors. You can learn more about all of the above in the national convention workbook at www.lwv.org

At the end of the convention we were given our most important directive - to return home and reach out to potential new voters (as we have always done) for this exciting election year! Our work will be helped by a wonderful new web tool at www.VOTE411.org as well as our traditional grass roots efforts. VOTE411.org is the League's portal for election and voting information. Take a look at it--it is an excellent resource--and share it you're your friends.

I also ask each of you to sign up with Sharyn Roberts to register voters and recruit new League members on Farmer's Market days, Tuesdays at Cold Springs Park and Fridays at the American Legion Post 440 from 1:30 to 6pm. Our effectiveness registering voters can and will be helped by your engagement. To volunteer, contact Sharyn Roberts at sharyn@neovana.com

Upon returning to Massachusetts, Anne and I met with our new Newton board to orient new board members. The board also reviewed and voted on our League's nonpartisan policy. No amendments were proposed and the policy established in 2007-2008 will remain in effect for 2008-2009. You will find this policy in our Member Handbook. We are pleased to welcome three new talented board members: Gail Glick, who

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Community Preservation Proposals

By Priscilla Leith, Local Action Committee Co-Chair

Five new CPA proposals submitted during 2007-08 cycle were recommended for funding by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), approved by the full Board of Aldermen and are underway:

- City Archives Preservation, phase II (\$77,076);
- Heritage Landscape Inventory (\$10,500);
- Purchase of 230 Lake Avenue (\$950,000);
- Purchase of 30 Wabasso Street \$358,600;
- Durant-Kenrick Homestead, phase 2 (\$1,270,000).

The Lake Ave. purchase links the City's beach and Gil bathhouse to city park land further along the shore of Crystal Lake. The house at 230 Lake Ave. is expected to be re-sold shortly with the City retaining a strip of beach and lakefront. Wabasso St. was an open space purchase that added to the City's riverfront land. The Heritage Landscape Inventory project provides money for the Planning Dept to identify public landscapes, evaluate their historic value, and set priorities for work on them in the future. Durant-Kenrick funding will allow the Newton History Museum and Newton Historical Society to proceed with the second stage of restoring this historic house and its surrounding orchards. Finally, phase II of the City Archives project allows City Clerk David Olson to move ahead with preservation of city archival materials and improve storage facilities and public access to them.

During this FY2008 cycle, revenue from the CPA surcharge (1% of Newton property owners' real estate taxes) came to \$2,121,778; state matching funds were \$2,045,105, and income from local investment and miscellaneous revenue were \$266,345 for a total of \$4,433,228. New projects approved (above) totaled \$ 2,666,176 and Program Administration (\$194,942) and Debt Service (\$1,023,035) on previously approved projects (Kessler Woods, Angino Farm and 20 Rogers St) amounted to \$1,217,977. This left \$549,075 as of June 30, 2008.

For FY2009, the best estimates are that Newton will receive about \$2,191,656 from the real estate surcharge; \$1,351,572 from state matching funds, and \$200,000 from local investment and miscellaneous revenue. Adding in \$1.5M from debt financing on 20 Rogers Street and the \$549,075 left from FY2008 leaves \$5,792,303 in total revenues; subtracting \$1,432,847 for Debt Service and Program Administration will leave about \$4,359,457 for new projects in the FY2009 cycle. Note that these figures are still estimates, not firm amounts.

The CPC has already recommended to the Board of Aldermen proposals for: community housing at 29 Coyne Road, Waban (\$576,000); community housing for the Newton Homebuyer Assistance Program (\$969,500); historic preservation at Farlow-Chaffin Park, phase 1 (\$40,000); Newton Fire Dept brass doors restoration (\$6,000); and the Newton History Museum Archives (\$359,400). These have already had hearings and are in process; some are already approved by the Board of Aldermen. They add up to \$1,001,750 in costs for the 2008-09 cycle. The LWVN supports the Coyne Rd. and the History Museum proposals, but opposes the Fire Dept. project. We also supported the Durant-Kenrick, Wabasso St, and City Archives proposals during the FY08 cycle.

Submitted in prior years but not yet finalized is a community housing proposal for Warren House Apartments (\$2,002,750) in West Newton. The Accessory Apartment Incentive Program continues under a 2006 aldermanic Board Order appropriating \$320,500 to be administered by Community Living Network. LWVN supports both of these.

FY08 proposals for the Newton Centre Playground (\$320,000), Edmands Park historic stone wall (\$102,000) and Newton Upper Falls Playground (\$450,000) were deferred and held by the Community Preservation Committee.

The annual CPA surcharge totals and the State Matching funds for Newton are expected to shrink in future years, due to the decline in real estate sales and to the increasing number of cities and towns who will be receiving CPA matching funds. ❖

CPC News Notes

by Leslie Burg, observer, meeting of June 25, 2008

Community Preservation Committee Reorganization

Joyce Moss (Planning and Development appointee) is the committee's new chair. Ken Kimmel (Open Space appointee) remains vice chair. Doug Dickson (Conservation Commission appointee) has been replaced by Dan Green.

Annual Plan to be Prioritized

The CPC's annual Plan will try to prioritize the city's many goals for community preservation. Three meetings with stake-holders and the public will be held on the four core areas:

- Sept. 24, Community Housing
- Oct. 22, Historic Resources

- Nov. 19, Open Space and Recreation

Website Improvements

Community Preservation Program Manager Alice Ingerson is working to improve the CPC website, which can be accessed via the city website. Eventually, she hopes to post quarterly project updates and budget figures.

Bad News for Parklands

The city's Open Space and Recreation Plan has expired. Because of budget cuts, the Planning Department cannot undertake this task. Unfortunately, this will disqualify the city from applying for a number of state grants in this area. Members of the League and other organizations are exploring a volunteer effort to update the plan. ❖

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Carol Ann Shea & Jodi Klein

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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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 or visit www.lwvnewton.org.

Annual Meeting – President’s Address

Sue Rosenbaum, LWVN outgoing president, gave this speech at Annual Meeting May 27, 2008

I want to begin by thanking this year's Officers and Board of Directors. At the risk of repeating my thank-you's from last year, I want to reiterate my extreme gratitude to **Bonnie Carter** and **Ann Grantham**, who have been dedicated League leaders for more years than they probably care to admit. Ann continued to produce our monthly newsletter, an informative and impressive publication, and Bonnie continued to provide historical perspective and a mean net shot.

Rejoining the board this year, **Priscilla Leith** kept everyone on their toes and kept us well-informed about the Community Preservation Committee applications. **Deb Crossley** also spent many hours alongside Priscilla to lead the Local Action Committee and bring current items to the Board. At her recommendation, the League urged the Aldermen to adopt the Comprehensive Plan as well as the PMBD zoning ordinance which would allow higher density, mixed use development of some city parcels. Both items were adopted.

Organizing the observer corps again this year was **Andrea Kelley**, an experienced Leaguer who ably mentored some of our newer members. As we all know, our Treasurer, **Andrea Kozinetz**, kept up almost all of her League responsibilities during a very stressful personal year. To make this possible, a few of her responsibilities were picked up by **Pat Acton**, a dedicated friend and League leader. Pat said she had held almost every position in the League except treasurer. She decided that this would be a good time to jump in and she assisted Andrea with membership billing.

In addition to these long time members, I want to commend the new Board members who gave more of their time, energy, and expertise than they probably anticipated. **Terry Yoffie**, **Lisa Mirabile**, **Sue Flicop**, **George Foord**, and **Anne Borg** learned the meaning of being League members during busy on-the-job training. They spent the year studying municipal finance and organized several forums in order to educate members and Newton citizens about the costs of services in our community. As a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission, George had a head start and was able to provide lots of background information on fiscal policies. A special thanks to **Sue Flicop**, our clerk this year, for her detailed minutes and notes from every meeting. Also, a big thank you to **Lisa Mirabile** for producing our Handbook this year. This entailed a tremendous amount of work. And, by including several pages of sponsors, Lisa was able to add to rather than subtract from the bottom line.

Anne Borg joined the board after the early departure of Allison Stoner, who needed to attend to personal commitments. Anne jumped right in and organized eight topic meeting this year. She spent many hours researching the topics and provided an enormous amount of background information so our League could participate in the National Immigration Study and Consensus as well as the State League's Consensus on the fiscal relationship between state and local government. The topic meetings were well run and all took place at NewTV so they would be accessible to all. Thank you to **Linda Morrison** for helping Anne with the logistics of these meetings. Our membership chair, **Robin Maltz**, attended the fall state council in an effort to learn how to expand our membership. She worked hard to create a membership letter that each of us can send out to our friends in an effort to spread our message and personalize the importance of the League in our lives. Although **Andreae Downs'** career took her away from our executive board she continued to work diligently on local action this year. Thank you also to Andreae for organizing this meeting. Our honors don't come without a price!

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Citizen's Advisory Group Gets Organized

Lucia Dolan, Observer

Background

The CAG (nicknamed the Red Ribbon Commission) was formed by Mayor David Cohen, Board of Alderman President Lisle Baker, and School Committee Chair Dori Zaleznik. Its preliminary charge is to:

- help define the choices facing the City with respect to municipal and educational service levels and their long-term funding requirements.
- help identify innovative ways of increasing short- and long-term operational efficiency and effectiveness and developing new or enhanced sources of funding for City services.
- make sufficient progress in these tasks by the end of this calendar year so that the promising strategies and actions can be incorporated into the process of planning for the fiscal 2010 budget and beyond.

The first meeting of the CAG was on the afternoon of June 1, 2008. Superintendent Young gave a "Helicopter View of Newton's School Budget." Young described "four drivers" in the budget: student enrollment (up 6% in past 10 yrs.); student needs (esp. English Language Learners (+26% in 2 yrs.) and autistic students (+71% in 4 yrs.); contractual salaries & benefits; utilities costs and maintenance needs. He listed recent efficiencies the School Dept. has achieved (reduced paper use, consolidation of special education programs and bus routes, reorganization of Education Center, etc.)

Alderman Paul Coletti asked why Comptroller David Wilkinson did not present, questioning the one-sidedness of the presentations. "Many people just don't move to Newton for the schools. No one ever puts up a chart with the biggest budget buster – salaries." He mentioned blue collar workers and retirees on limited incomes.

Options for CAG

Chairman Malcolm Salter discussed how to break up the group's charge. He suggested beginning by drafting reports that make specific recommendations and articulate trade-offs which could be put out in the community for discussion.

1. Repair Shop – list choices and operational efficiencies
2. Reposition the conversation with taxpayers. What are Newton's priorities and how much do they cost?
3. Re-establish confidence in the City budgeting process.

Problem of Structural Deficit:

Salter listed 4 variables:

- 1) Cost Structure – activities too expensive
- 2) Revenue Structure – costs growing faster than revenue
- 3) Capital Structure – backlog of repairs, etc.
- 4) Decision and Control Structure – How does Newton do business?

Next Steps

CAG needs to:

1. understand how things currently happen;
2. look at options;
3. make recommendations.

The committee discussed how to keep their business open and transparent.

The CAG decided to divide into subgroups around:

1. Cost Structure
2. Revenue Structure
3. Capital Structure
4. Decision and Control Structure

Membership billing, continued from page 1

and expense of collecting dues. The Board decided to move to a system of billing all membership dues annually, in the fall, rather than the quarterly billing system currently used. This would allow a more orderly collection, with a grace period and reminders in the late fall. Once a year, on January 1, the National LWV scans our membership database, and we are billed for the national and state per member payments based on the number of members at that time. Needless to say, if some members are not paying their annual membership dues, the amount of their national and state per member payments must then be paid out of the local budget. This drain on the local budget impacts our program and local action responsibilities, which are met through the "remainder" monies and any fundraising efforts throughout the year.

We will try to make the transition to an annual membership billing as easy as possible for everyone. Memberships will now be valid from September to August each year. For 2008-2009, if you have made a recent payment, your bill will be prorated. We will send out the membership bills in early September; there will be contact information included in case you have any questions. If payment of your dues presents a financial burden, we have set aside a budget for subsidizing a limited number of memberships. Please contact treasurer Andrea Kozinetz (617-964-6490) if you would like to request a reduction in your membership dues. ❖

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Jane Leighton Award 2008

Andrea Kelley gave this speech at Annual Meeting May 27, 2008

Winners of the Jane Leighton Volunteer of the Year Award have often fit into one of two categories: strong visible leaders, or behind the scenes do-ers. This year, the winner is one of the latter. She is not a woman seeking recognition, acknowledgement or gratitude for her work. She is more comfortable and effective just doing what is needed without the spotlight.

Like many League members, this year's winner has varied areas of interest and expertise. Both issues and administrative needs have benefited from her attention. Not only capable, but pleasant to work with, she has proven to be utterly reliable and count-on-able, bringing the requisite Leighton humor and goodwill to all tasks.

A Massachusetts native, born, bred and college-educated here, she moved to Newton almost 20 years ago with her family. From the start she began to be a part of this community. Working outside the home, she exemplifies the key characteristic of juggling many priorities, all well.

She participated on the League's Nominating Committee in 1999-2000. This always gives members a sense of the full board needs and often leads to greater participation – a very sneaky benefit to the league!

In 1999, she joined the LWVN's Education Committee. This reflected her family focus at that time, as she was very involved in her local elementary school and its PTO. She went on to co-chair the LWVN Education Committee, and was simultaneously active in her child's middle and high school PTOs. Her scope expanded beyond the local school, when she joined and ultimately co-chaired the city-wide PTO Council.

Her background with business, finance and fiscal knowledge was a perfect fit for the Treasurer role. Starting in 2001, she has served efficiently and pleasantly (not always easy) in that capacity ever since.

Being a supporter of public education, beyond her PTO and League volunteerism, she became active on the board of the Newton Schools Foundation, working on the grants and nominations committees, as well as advising them on policy development and personnel issues.

Maybe being the oldest of three sisters helped form her ability to work so well with others. She is warm, responsive and dependable. She follows through on what she commits to. She does this without requiring accolades.

She loves running. I was envious of how fit she became when she took up running a few years ago. I'm sure that the benefits extend beyond physical fitness and endorphins. It's a crucial outlet for balancing out the curve balls that life has been throwing at her recently.

Hank Philipi Ryan just quoted Winston Churchill as saying "Never, never, never give up." She gave us a few other slogans on the same premise: "Press On" and "Just Do It." This year's winner personifies these attitudes as well.

Many of us who have known her through the years are familiar with the talents and accomplishments of her son. Thomas, now a young man in college, is lucky to have grown up with such parents. His mom was a loyal fan at his baseball and basketball games, and now track meets as well, even though that involves driving out of state. I told her just a few weeks ago, jokingly, that I used to think she had a partial and skewed motherly perspective on him, but then I spoke with him and realized she was utterly realistic- he is wonderful at the same time as "normal" and unpretentious. No small feat in this town of competitiveness and "helicopter" parenting.

Her dogs are another passion. Cute, fluffy toy poodles, Lily is white and Griffen, the older one, caramel colored. They get agenda time too, for cuddling, patting, walking, feeding, being held, in between and around meetings, work, and her full life.

As Countryside, Brown, Newton South, PTO Council have all benefited by her involvement, so have her family, friends, the Hamilton Company, Newton Schools Foundation, and the Newton League of Woman Voters. We have heard from all these organizations about her instrumental contributions. Friends and family attest to her abilities as a supportive sister, aunt, friend and neighbor.

The 2008 Jane Leighton Volunteer of the Year Award is hereby conferred upon Andrea Kozinetz, for the responsibility, grace, and goodwill with which she does everything. ❖

National Convention, continued from page 1

US civil justice system.

It was very exciting and instructive to be part of the actual business of the convention. The LWVUS Board proposed two new recommendations for the 2008-2010 Program:

- that the League principles be amended by adding the following: “The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.” On Monday, June 16, the delegates voted unanimously in favor of this motion.
- that the League establish a “Health Care program to educate members and communities in order to be better prepared to do health care advocacy as needed.” This motion was also approved on Monday, June 16.

In addition, two major, non-LWVUS board-recommended program motions were passed. One was to adopt a “Multi-Level Education and Advocacy Campaign to promote solutions to global climate change.” The delegates also voted to adopt a study item entitled: “The advisability of using the National Popular Vote compact among the states as a method for electing the President.” Local and state leagues also made motions to adopt some resolutions and some not-recommended program items. It was fascinating to watch the lobbying outside the sessions and the maneuvering inside the sessions.

On the final day of the convention, the delegates voted to elect the slate of officers proposed by the nominations committee (there were no nominations from the floor), to adopt the FY2008-2009 LWVUS budget, and to adopt PMP rates of \$28 for FY2008-2009 and \$29.20 for FY2009-2010.

If you would like additional information about the convention, contact either Terry or Anne or visit www.lwvus.org. ❖

From the President, continued from page 1

will serve as our clerk, Ellen Gibson, and Leslie Burg. Our fourth new board member, Tassy Warren, has stepped down to work on her husband’s mayoral campaign. She will continue in an off-board role on our revitalized Education Committee.

In upcoming newsletters, we will be talking about our program plans for the year. If you are interested in working with us on program, education or advocacy, please let Sharyn Roberts or me know at www.lwvnewton.org or call the League phone at 617-964-0014.

Respectfully, Terry Yoffie, President, League of Women Voters, Newton

Annual Meeting Address, continued from page 2

Although League efforts require more sweat than money, we do need a moderate amount of income. **Sharon Stout** and **Sharyn Roberts** ran several fundraisers this year culminating with our signature event, *Champagne and Chocolate*. **Sharon Stout** has many personal connections, which she uses to help the League. In all, we raised over \$7,000.00 this year, and hope to provide small local scholarships to deserving high school students next year. Speaking of **Sharyn Roberts**, Sharyn really does seem to be in three places at once. In addition to all the candidate forums that she ran, she spoke to a Brownie troop about government and voting, drove many people to the polls, registered many new voters, shopped for supplies, rented equipment, and set up many functions including our Holiday party. The only word that Sharyn has not yet mastered is the word “No.”

It has truly been a privilege to have worked with these talented women. I would be apprehensive about ending my term as President if it were not for the fact that I am passing the gavel to a very intelligent, hard-working, and eager leader. **Terry Yoffie** does not shy away from hard work. One of my proudest accomplishments this year was the coordination of high school students to work at the polls. Without Terry, this never would have happened. Terry and I proposed the hiring of students to the Election Commission, coordinated the training of the students, and contacted the teachers at the two high schools to get volunteers. Over 25 students were trained, 15 worked at the polls, and one was hired permanently. I know we will be in good hands with Terry at the helm.

Although I have mentioned primarily the Board members there are many other people who have contributed a lot to the League this year, and I am sure they will continue to be valuable members of this great organization. It is an honor to be associated with such a competent group of women and men. One off board specialist I would like to acknowledge is often behind the scenes. **Lucia Dolan** did a great job again this year organizing Legislative Roundtable, our monthly TV show where we chat with our legislators. The show is produced by NewTV.

All members should congratulate themselves for being part of an organization that is so well respected both here in Newton and nationwide. In all, we should be proud of all of our actions and I look forward to another year of dispensing information and taking action with all of you. ❖

LWVN CALENDAR

AUGUST

- 15th **Newsletter Deadline**
18th Tuesday, 7:00 pm,
27th **Last day to register to vote** and to change
party enrollment for the State Primaries
28th Thursday, 7:00 pm, **LWVN Board**
meeting at Pricilla Leith's, 162 Islington
Rd.

SEPTEMBER

- 10th Wednesday, 11:30 am, Topic Meeting,
about Trash and Recycling, NewTV
Conference Room.
12th Friday, 9:30 am, Local Action
Committee Meeting, AnnaMaria
Abernathy's, 45 Islington Rd.
15th **Newsletter Deadline**
16th Tuesday, **Election Day, State Primaries**
18th Thursday, 7:00 pm, **LWVN Board**
meeting at Anne Borg's, 155 Winchester
St.
27th Saturday, 11:00 am, LWVMA
President's Breakfast, Newton Marriott

League of Women Voters of Newton

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