
League of Women Voters of Newton

Newsletter

Volume 15, Issue 7

visit us online at www.lwvnewton.org

November 2009

November Topic Meeting: CPC Update

Ever since the Community Preservation Act was adopted in Newton in 2001, the League of Women Voters of Newton has followed its progress closely.

At our November 18 Topic Meeting (11:30 am - 1:30 pm at Vicki Danberg's home), that tradition continues as Newton League members update us on state CPA developments as well as on the city's all-volunteer Community Preservation Committee.

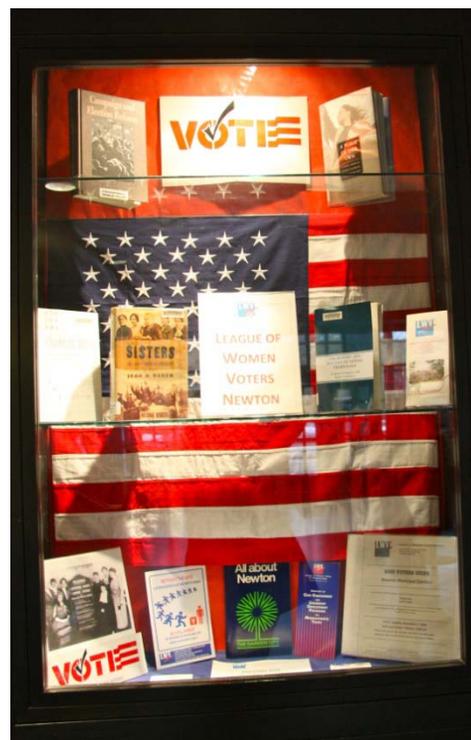
This thoughtful city committee has over the years approved dozens of stellar projects, among them the city's purchase of Angino Farm (the bond of which will be paid off after this fiscal year!), what is now a lakeside park at Crystal Lake, and more.

Members of our CPC Readers Committee will talk about the six proposals (totaling about \$2 million) which will be unveiled before the CPC at a public hearing Nov. 18 at 6:30. This year the CPC has about \$4 million in available funds—down from much larger allocations in past years due to the cool real estate market (the state matching funds come from a deed fee) and the increasing number of cities and towns signing up to get matching funds. Next year's allocation from the state is expected to dip below \$1 million for the first time since 2001.

Our CPC Readers Committee also considered the over \$3 million in future potential projects that were mentioned at the CPC's meeting of Oct. 20 (a list of these will be posted on our website at www.lwvnewton.org). Highlighting both present and future projects caused our committee last year to suggest that the CPC might be wise to set aside some funds for worthy future projects—and also reduce the amounts that we bond (borrow), so that money is available for one-time opportunities in the future. CPC Chair Nancy Grissom took up our suggestion at her committee's Oct. 20 meeting. For a full accounting of that meeting, see the Observer Report at www.lwvnewton.org.

LWVN and Library Team up

In honor of this month's election, Ellen Meyers, the Newton Free Library Program Director, asked if the LWVN would like to use one of the library lobby display cases to highlight both the election and the League.



League members rallied to the cause, providing a pristine US flag as a backdrop, a list of books of interest to feature in the case, samples of our work both new (this year's Voter's Guide) and old (copies of "All About Newton, published in the 1980s), and other historical artifacts from individual members as well as the LWVN archives.

Many thanks to Pat Acton, Anne Borg, Sandy Butzel, Mindy Peckler, Sharyn Roberts and Terry Yoffie for their contributions to this terrific display! Be sure to have a look when you are next in the Library -- is the display case to the left at the entrance to the Reference Room.

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS 2009-2010

OFFICERS

President

Terry Yoffie 617-965-1796

Vice Pres. Operations; Program & Action

Anne Borg 617-244-6366

Vice Pres., Communications

Lisa Mirabile 617-332-5374

Vice Pres., Voter Service & Fundraising

Sharyn Roberts 617-969-9588

Treasurer

Mindy Peckler 617-969-0991

Clerk

Tami Roberts 617-259-0131

DIRECTORS

Pat Acton 617-965-5572

Leslie Burg 617-969-0361

Sandy Butzel 617-332-8021

Bonnie Carter 617-969-0686

George Foord 617-332-1654

Gail Glick 617-964-5252

Ellen Glusman 617-332-1738

Ann Grantham 617-964-0333

Carol Ann Shea 617-527-5139

Newsletter Editor:

Lisa Mirabile, 617-332-5374

To receive an **audio version** of this Newsletter, call Terry Yoffie at 617-965-1796.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization. Regular membership is open to all citizens (men and women) of voting age; associate membership is open to young people and noncitizens. Your annual dues give you membership in local, state and national leagues.

For more information about the League of Women Voters, including information on joining us, call 617-964-0014 or visit www.lwvnewton.org.

COMMITTEES

Charter Study Committee

Sandy Butzel
Rhanna Kidwell
Lynne Sullivan

CPC Readers

open

Education

Gail Glick

Election Commission

Nancy Criscitiello
Ellen Glusman

Environment

Lucia Dolan
Beth Lowd

Housing

Leslie Burg
Myra Tattenbaum

Municipal Finance

George Foord
Terry Yoffie

Archives

Ann Grantham
Linda Morrison

Fundraising

Sharyn Roberts

Membership

Anne Borg
Sharyn Roberts

Nominating Committee

Andrea Kelley
Andrea Kozinetz
Ann Grantham
Ellen Glusman

Newsletter & Website

Lisa Mirabile

Topic Meetings

Pat Acton
Linda Morrison
Carol Ann Shea

Voter Service/Citizen Education

Bonnie Carter
Sharyn Roberts
Barbara Sydney

Save the Date! Annual Holiday Party Dec. 13

Save the Date! Sunday, Dec. 13, 4-6 pm will be the time to kick back, relax, and indulge in League conversation at the home of Ruthanne Fuller. Potluck--please bring finger-foods to share and either non-perishable food or monetary donations to be given to the Newton Food Pantry.

LWVN Sponsors Poll Worker "Thank You" Party

A thank you party co-sponsored by the LWVN and the Newton Election Commission Department will be held on Tuesday, November 17 from 6:00-7:30 PM in the City Hall cafeteria. In addition to providing light refreshments and opportunity to say thanks from the Election Department, the LWVN's goal in hosting this event was to collect suggestions from poll workers for improvements in election day activities and processes, which the LWVN task force will share with the Election Department.

From the President

November 2009

Dear League Members,

A warm welcome to our incoming mayor Setti Warren and to new and returning members of the Board of Aldermen and the School Committee! The League of Women Voters of Newton looks forward to working with all of you on city issues. With you, we hope to advance our work on safe walking routes, recycling, affordable housing, elections, schools, the study of the city charter and furthering the efforts of the Citizen's Advisory Group by discussing with citizens their priorities for the future of the city.

We also thank everyone who ran in the election and those who have served the city for many years. Congratulations to all of the candidates for raising awareness and offering stimulating conversations about what it takes to run the city and the school system. I want to extend our thanks to Bill Brandel, Paul Coletti, Ken Parker, George Mansfield, and Verne Vance for their service on the Board of Alderman as well as to Susie Heyman, Marc Laredo, and Dori Zaleznik for their work on the School Committee.

The campaign year offered an exciting mix of different opportunities for candidates to debate and present their positions on issues. The League, Newton 20/20, Stand for Children and other groups ran debates and provided other chances for the public to learn about the candidates. Organizing Voters Service efforts is a huge job at the League and involves coordinating debates, preparing the Voters Guide and registering voters. I want to extend thanks to our capable co-chairs Bonnie Carter, Sharyn Roberts, and Barbara Sydney. Thanks also to NewTV and the TAB for offering interesting candidate interviews and for NewTV being our partner in televising candidate debates. Thanks to the TAB for keeping up its weekly and daily commentary on the election and for joining with us to successfully distribute our Voters Guide to over 31,000 Newton households. The TAB and the League could not have published the Voters Guide without the very generous funding provided by Lasell College and Village Bank. We are grateful to them for their support of our efforts to educate voters. We are also grateful to Anne Borg and Sharyn Roberts, who worked extremely hard to prepare the Voters Guide for publication, as well as to all the candidates who took the time to provide thoughtful answers our questions – especially given the challenge to fit those replies into a mere 75 words.

Election Activities

Many League members work as poll workers and/or as wardens and we are proud that they have committed themselves to assuring that the city's elections run well. The Election Department and our Elections task force will host

an event at City Hall on November 17 for all poll workers to thank them for their service. Thanks to co-chairs Nancy Criscitiello, Ellen Glusman and their Election committee and to the Election Department for organizing the event.

At the state level, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has set up candidate forums for the open U.S. Senate seat. One of the forums took place on November 8 and can be viewed on the state League web site at www.lwvma.org; the second forum is scheduled for January 13 at Faneuil Hall in Boston. You can attend the forum in January or watch the podcast, which will also be posted on the web site. The primary is scheduled for December 8 and the general election for January 19. We encourage you to vote and if you would like more information about the candidates, please visit www.votinginfo.info.

November Topic Meeting

The League will have a discussion about the Community Preservation Act and what is happening on the state and local levels on November 18 from 11:30am – 1:30pm at Vicki Danberg's home. We hope you will join us.

The City Charter Study

Sandy Butzel and Rhanna Kidwell, co-chairs of the League's City Charter Study, report that members are continuing to make good progress in their work. Committee members have divided into sub-committees to study the various parts of city government, including the Executive Office; the Legislature; the School Committee; Administrative Departments; Financial operations; the Electoral process; and Land Use. Confirmation of facts and findings will be made in interviews that are starting this week with city officials and experts. Please keep an eye out for publications from the charter study committee.

A final consensus on whether to change Newton's city charter is scheduled for April 7 from 11:30am – 1:30pm and again in the evening from 7 to 9pm. If you are interested in participating in the study or learning more about the committee's findings, please call Sandy Butzel at 617-332-8021 or Rhanna Kidwell at 617-244-3832.

More opportunities for you to get involved

Visit our web site to learn about what we do, send an email to me at president@lwvnewton.org about your interests, or call the League phone 617-964-0014 and we will contact you. We have many exciting projects going on that need volunteers and we are always happy to take time to work with volunteers on what interests or topics they would like to pursue.

Respectfully,

Terry Yoffie

President, League of Women Voters Newton

Election Season Roundup

by Sharyn Roberts

Election season 2009 was busier than usual, with 45 municipal candidates running in both contested and uncontested races. Voters Service ran a total of 14 debates—two for the Preliminary and 12 for the General Election. A big thank you to NewTV, who partnered with us and televised them all. We also had two new co-sponsors, the Newton Free Library and Lasell College, who provided venues for both League mayoral debates. Also thank you to Lisa Mirabile who stretched our bandwidth and posted the September 3rd mayoral debate on our League website, which was a new experience for us.

There are many more people to thank whose help made the debates a true team effort. Our out-of-town moderators, Marcia Hirshberg, Risa Nyman, Nancy Carapezza, Debbie Winnick, Maryann Scali, and Libby Atkins were from Westwood, Brookline, Wayland, Needham, and Belmont respectively. Our in-house team of greeters, ushers, time keepers, and question sorters were Pat Acton, Maryan Amaral, Anne Borg, Bonnie Carter, Lucia Dolan, Shirley Farnham, Gail Glick, Ellen Glusman, Linda Greenberg, Ingrid Kefauver, Lee Kefauver, Alison Leary, Beth Lowd, Linda Morrison, Tami Roberts, Carol Ann Shea, Janet Serman, Barbara Sydney, Karol Tager, Myra Tattenbaum, and Terry Yoffie. Most of these volunteers worked on multiple debates: a sincere thank you to all of you. And a special thank you to Bonnie Carter who mentored us through this whole process and looked over and edited every debate script and also worked the teleprompter for the League at NewTV.

The Voters Service Committee — Bonnie Carter, Lucia Dolan, Shirley Farnham, George Foord, Linda Morri-

son, Lynne Sullivan and Barbara Sydney — also ‘manned’ the event and Farmers Market tables from July 4th through October and prepared, with the help of the LWVN Board, two sets of Voters Guide questions, one for the Preliminary and one for the General Election. We printed the Preliminary Voters Guide in-house and distributed it at the Preliminary Debates, at selected public sites around Newton, and at the Farmers Market tables. The General Election Voters Guide was distributed as an insert in the Tab and went to every household in Newton. Thank you to Barbara Sydney and Carol Ann Shea for procuring the funding for the insert from Village Bank and Lasell College. Thank you to Anne Borg and Barbara Sydney who prepared two sets of the tri-fold brochure of the Newton Municipal Election Calendar with polling place and debate listings. A huge thank you to Anne Borg whose professional layout of both sets of Voters Guides is a credit to the expertise of our Newton League.

Thank you to all those who volunteered as poll workers at the Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council election (Ward 9) from 7:00 am–10:00 pm: Bonnie Carter, Alice Wolpert, Barbara Balasa, Jeanne Scott, Ena Lorant, Barbara Gore, and Tami Roberts. League volunteers engaged all citizens who came through the doors to vote at the Hyde Community Center. Because of their efforts, 520 people participated in the NHNAC Election this year, as opposed to approximately 300 people in the 2007 Election and fewer than 50 participants in the 2005 Election. Voters enjoyed using the antique voting machine, hand cranking their ballot into the ballot box and listening for the bell to ring.

Also thank you to all those who volunteered their time to drive people to the polls both for the September 15th Preliminary and the November 3rd General Election.

LWVMA “90 for 90” Phonathon 2009

by Sharyn Roberts

Over a period of four days, Newton League members made over 600 calls and raised approximately \$4,000 in pledges for the state League. We called all League members from Newton and also from Boston, Boxford, Brookline, Middleton, Sharon, Stoughton, Swampscott, Topsfield, Weston, and members-at-large. In return for our help, the LWVN will receive 15% of the total collections. We are grateful to Coldwell Banker in Newton Centre, one of our phonathon hosts, as well as to Anne Borg and Tami Roberts, who also hosted. And of course thank you also to our phonathon callers, some of whom volunteered for multiple days: Pat Acton, Maryan Amaral, Anne Borg, Bonnie Carter, Shirley Farnham, Joan Portnoy, Tami Roberts, and Terry Yoffie. We hope that when you receive the mailed request for a contribution to the state League, you will please keep in mind that Newton also benefits from your donation.

Environmental Issues Committee Walks the Walk

How can Newton residents and visitors be encouraged to use their own feet for transportation? This year's Annual Meeting charged the Environmental Issues Committee with exploring transportation, and after researching the issue, it quickly became clear that walking was a transit mode that was valued in Newton—but saw little in the way of advocacy.

In an effort to begin tackling the challenge, the Environmental Issues committee explored this and other topics in a wide-ranging discussion with David Koses, Newton's transportation coordinator in the Planning Department, and his predecessor, Candace Havens, now a chief planner for the city. We asked them where our committee might best work to promote walking—both its safety and its enjoyability.

Immediately, our guests suggested that we tackle the thorny issue of uncleared sidewalks. (We have an ad-hoc committee of League members and partner organizations that is working on this already—see last month's Newsletter for details).

Koses explained that the city's sidewalk betterment program has added about 50 miles of sidewalks – leaving only about 550 miles yet to be installed! Roughly 200 residents have signed up to share the cost of installing new sidewalks in front of their properties, but since no funds have been appropriated for the program in the last nine years, little has happened beyond the city-funded installation of sidewalks on major streets during reconstructing projects.

Another issue the city is working on is safer street crossings. Koses and Havens said they are trying to get uniform school zone markings for all areas. They would like to add raised crosswalks on either side of school zones, but the Fire Department says that speed bumps damage

equipment and have injured firefighters riding over them in fire trucks. As a result, Newton has raised crosswalks only where private funding has made it possible—mostly around Lasell College.

Another tactic to improve the safety of street crossings is “neck downs,” where intersections are narrowed by curbs or paint to lessen the distance pedestrians have to cross in traffic. In some cases, however, these have made bike travel less safe. Lois Levin, who also leads Bike Newton, suggested cuts be made through neck-downs so that bikes are not forced into car traffic.

Transportation is complicated, because when traffic is calmed in one area, the problem often shifts to another, Havens and Koses said.

Beth Lowd asked about walking to transportation nodes. Koses invited us to contact a person who works at the regional level on making communities more walkable. Koses added that the city lacks an MBTA advisory committee, and one is needed. He suggested that the Aldermen could docket the creation of a Transportation Advisory Committee, which is mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan, and our committee could work to bring that forward.

One idea the committee had was to help classify walking routes in Newton—which are safest, which most need pedestrian improvements, and so forth. Koses said that identifying the highest-priority needs for pedestrian safety improvements would be the most helpful to him.

The Environmental Issues Committee will meet again Nov. 20, 8:45 am at Lucia Dolan's home. Among other topics, we will discuss the offer of some free professional help in determining how walkable Newton is. All interested League members are welcome.

Earn \$\$\$\$ Shoveling Snow

The Newton Department of Public Works is preparing a list of students –or adults --willing to shovel snow for local senior residents for a fee. Can YOU help out?

Students/participants should be aware:

- When you sign to be on this list, your name, village and phone # will be made available to those residents, often the elderly, needing assistance w/snow shoveling.
- Students under age 18 should check with parent(s) before signing up to be on this public list.
- When you receive a phone call for a possible job, you will be responsible for negotiating a price and establishing parameters for the job. This is a private negotiation with no City involvement.

If interested, please provide your name, street address, village name, zip code, phone number and email address to Beverly Droz at bdroz@newtonma.gov.

LWVN CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

- 18th Wed., 11:30am-1:30pm, Topic Meeting: CPC Update, at Vicki Danberg's house. *NOTE CHANGED DATE!*
4:30pm, LWVN Working Board/Program & Action Meeting at Ellen Glusman's house
- 20th Fri., 8:45am, LWVN Environmental Issues Committee Meeting, Lucia Dolan's house
- 24th Tues., 7:00pm, LWVN Board Meeting, Location TBA.

DECEMBER

- 1st 1:00pm, LWVN Election Commission Task Force Meeting
- 13th Sun., 4:00-6:00pm, LWVN Holiday Party at Ruthanne Fuller's house
- 16th Wed., 7:00pm, Combined Board and Working Board/Program & Action Meeting
- 18th Fri., 8:45am, LWVN Environmental Issues Committee Meeting

→ Don't forget to check our online calendar for any late-breaking changes! www.lwvnewton.org

League of Women Voters of Newton

P O Box 610207
Newton, MA 02461
617-964-0014
www.lwvnewton.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

Nov. Topic Meeting: CPC Update	1
LWVN & Library Team Up	1
From the President	3
Election Season Roundup	4
Environmental Issues Committee Walks the Walk	5