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# League of Women Voters of Newton

# Newsletter

Volume 18, Issue 1

visit us online at [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org)

January/February 2012

## LWVUS National Program Planning - 2012-2014

League program is a core component of the League's mission: it is a three-part process comprised of program planning, study and consensus, and advocacy. Because the League of Women Voters is a grassroots organization, its positions at *all* levels are based on members' study and consensus.

Every two years, local and state leagues are invited to participate in the LWVUS program planning process by reviewing existing LWVUS positions and making recommendations for League program for the next two years. The LWVUS will adopt national program for 2012-2014 at its biennial convention that will take place June 8-12, 2012, in Washington, DC.

LWVUS' current positions can be found in *Impact on Issues 2010-12*; you can find it online at <http://www.lwv.org/content/impact-issues>. We also have a limited number of print copies for use by members (please email: [program@lwvnewton.org](mailto:program@lwvnewton.org) or call 617-383-4598). More information about program planning can be found on LWVUS' website at: <http://www.lwv.org/programplanning>.

Several local or state Leagues are proposing new national studies and/or advocacy. Proposed studies

will be posted on our website: [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org). You can also propose a study yourself.

This year, each local League can make **one** choice from the following:

1. Review of existing position;
2. New study or program item;
3. Concurrence (agreeing with a position or statement; e.g., in 2006, LWVUS convention voted to concur with the LWV Illinois' Death Penalty Position); **or**
4. No recommendation (LWVUS would like Leagues to choose this if not recommending review, new study, or concurrence so they know how many Leagues actually did program planning).

If you would like to make a proposal, please email your recommendation to [program@lwvnewton.org](mailto:program@lwvnewton.org). Please respond by Wednesday, February 8. All Leagues must respond to LWVUS online by March 1.

For more information, please contact Anne or Sue, LWN Co-Presidents, at [info@lwvnewton.org](mailto:info@lwvnewton.org).

You are cordially invited to the League of Women Voters of Newton

## Open House for Newton's Elected Officials

Please join us as we honor our municipal and state officials



Monday, February 6, 2012, 6:30-7:45 pm  
Newton City Hall, Foyer outside the Board of Aldermen's Chamber

Please RSVP 617-383-4598 or [info@lwvnewton.org](mailto:info@lwvnewton.org)

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2011-2012**

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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 617-383-4598 or visit [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org).

**Welcome New Members!**

Chris Hill – Chestnut Hill  
Sharon Smith – Newton Centre

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

**Education Study Committee**

Jo Corro  
Lynn Scheller

**Elections Committee**

Nancy Criscitiello  
Ellen Glusman

**Environmental Issues**

Alison Leary Mooradian

**Environmental Issues**

**Water Subcommittee**

Priscilla Leith  
Mary Adelstein

**Environmental Issues**

**Transportation Subcommittee**

Lucia Dolan  
Andreae Downs

**Housing**

Leslie Burg  
Carol Ann Shea

**Land Use Study Committee**

Andrea Kelley

**Municipal Finance**

open

**Legislative Roundtable**

Tami Roberts  
Lynn Scheller

**Archives**

Ann Grantham  
Linda Morrison

**Membership**

Ann Grantham

**Nominating Committee**

Sue Rosenbaum

**Newsletter & Website**

Lisa Mirabile  
Anne Borg

**Topic Meetings**

Jo Corro

**Voters Service/Citizen Education**

Bonnie Carter  
Sharyn Roberts

**Board of Aldermen Pass EPR Resolution**

*By Alison Leary*

In December, the Board of Aldermen honored requests submitted by LWVN and other organizations by unanimously passing a resolution to support statewide Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework legislation. EPR laws require producers to have a plan to cover the costs of recycling their products. Passage would reduce municipal costs of recycling and disposal, increase the volume of recycled products and create an incentive for businesses to improve package and product design. EPR framework legislation would allow the addition of new product categories after review by a designated agency. This would eliminate the time, money and energy involved in writing/passing legislation to cover individual products. The E-Waste bill is an example of EPR legislation developed for an individual product.

Twenty-three states have EPR laws, including Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island and New York. Because Massachusetts has yet to pass the e-waste take-back legislation, municipalities and consumers are left with the cost of proper e-waste disposal. According to Elaine Gentile, the Newton Director of Environmental Affairs, up until this past October, the City of Newton was paying almost \$90,000 annually to properly dispose of e-waste. As of October, Newton residents must pay to dispose of their e-waste. If the Massachusetts legislature passes the current e-waste take-back bill (S2078, which has passed the first legislative hurdle by being favorably approved out of committee), it will require producers to cover the cost for recycling e-waste; neither the residents nor the City will have to bear the cost.

The benefits to EPR are numerous, such as:

- \* Reduces municipal costs of recycling and disposal
- \* Increases the volume of products that get recycled instead of trashed
- \* Gives brand owners an incentive to design products that are durable and recyclable

The Newton Division of Environmental Affairs supports the EPR resolution, and has been active in the formation of the statewide council.

## Letter from the Presidents

*Happy New Year!*

The League has a busy 2012 planned; we hope that you can join us in as many meetings and events as you are able.

- We were pleased to see so many League members at the December **Holiday Party**. We want to thank *Historic Newton* for their generosity in letting us use the wonderful Jackson Homestead for our party, and for sponsoring our exhibit of LWVN's history, as part of their *Newton Salutes* series. Thank you to everyone who helped to set-up before and cleanup afterwards. Special thank yous also go to Russo's and Silver Lake Liquors for their generous donations of food and wine, respectively.

- The November **LWVN co-sponsored Transportation Forum** was a huge success with standing room only at the library. Thank you very much to our panelists, Stephanie Pollack, Eric Bourassa, Jacqueline Douglas, Candace Havens, and League moderator Priscilla Leith; we learned a lot from their informative and lively presentations. We also want to thank the Newton Free Library for their sponsorship, and Ellen Meyers, the Library's Program Director, for all of her help.

Thank you also to LWVN members Alison Leary, Andreae Downs, Lois Levin, Priscilla Leith, Mary Adelstein, Lucia Dolan, Ann Grantham, Sharyn Roberts, and Alicia Bowman, all of whom helped to make the forum such a success.

- Planning is continuing for the **LWVUS Privatization Study**. LWVN is looking for Consensus Study Committee members. It is guaranteed to be interesting; this study is very timely and needed. No experience in running a study is necessary. For more infor-

mation, please check our website: [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org) or email: [info@lwvnewton.org](mailto:info@lwvnewton.org).

- Please join us for an **Open House for Elected Officials on Monday, February 6**, from 6:30-7:45pm, at Newton City Hall as we honor our municipal and state officials, and welcome those city officials who were elected in November.

- Our next **Presidents' Hours** will be on Wednesday, February 29, from 9:00-10:30am, at the Panera Bread in Newton Centre. Please join us to discuss all things League! All questions, concerns, and suggestions are welcome.

- We will be finalizing our roster to submit to LWVUS at the end of January. If you haven't renewed your **LWVN membership**, it's not too late! Please look for a membership form in this newsletter or online at [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org).

- We are starting to work on the **2012-2014 Member Handbook**. Sponsors Wanted! Handbook sponsorships will be one of our main fundraisers for 2012. If you know a business that might like to be a sponsor, please let them know about the opportunity! A solicitation letter and forms are available on our website at [www.lwvnewton.org/lwvn-2012-member-handbook](http://www.lwvnewton.org/lwvn-2012-member-handbook).

- It is also time to start **LWV National Program Planning** for the 2012 LWVUS Convention. Please see the front-page article in this newsletter for more information.

In League,  
Anne and Sue  
[presidents@lwvnewton.org](mailto:presidents@lwvnewton.org)  
617-383-4598

### 2012-2014 LWVN Member Handbook Coming This Spring: Sponsors Wanted!

Handbook sponsorships will be one of our main fundraisers for 2012. If you know a business that might like to be a sponsor, please let them know about the opportunity. Look for the solicitation letter and sponsorship form on our website at [www.lwvnewton.org/lwvn-2012-member-handbook](http://www.lwvnewton.org/lwvn-2012-member-handbook).

## LWVN Co-Sponsored Transportation Forum a Big Success!

By LWVN Transportation Committee

Where we are, where we're going and how the heck will we get there formed the basis of the Transportation Forum on November 29, 2011, before a standing-room crowd in the Druker Auditorium.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Transportation Director, Eric Bourassa, outlined the developments recently built or planned for municipalities just north of Newton along Route 128. These developments could mean an additional 155,000 trips daily along that already-congested highway. He noted that the planned multi-billion dollar Urban Ring project within the inner transit circles of Somerville, Cambridge and Boston—which would have taken many drivers off roads and onto trains or buses—had stalled for lack of funds. But, he mentioned low-cost alternatives to transit that cities like Newton could implement—from bike lanes and safer pedestrian infrastructure to employee shuttles and car pools.

West of Newton, along Route 9, Bourassa said municipalities are also looking to build out. His group analyzed what such development would do to traffic, and estimated that if the projects were “smart,” that is, incorporated a mix of uses so that one wouldn't need to drive to work, play and shop, the congestion would be increased 16 percent, as opposed to 40 percent under a traditional build-out scenario.

Stephanie Pollack, a Newton resident, Northeastern University scholar and the chairwoman of the mayor's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), summarized the recommendations of the TAC. Pollack said that Newton's problem was not traffic congestion as much as it was a lack of a citywide policy to deal with transportation. The TAC's final report set 7 goals for the city along with recommendations for meeting these goals. One key goal is to consolidate all of the city's transportation related services into one transportation department. This would reduce redundancy and improve planning and coordination of services.

“Our goal is to create better choices, so that driving is not the only choice,” she explained. Transportation, she said, should not “get in the way” of the city's other goals—be that resident fitness, economic development, or environmental quality. (The full report of the TAC can be found at the LWVN's Transportation Study Documents web page at [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org).)

A vision of what Newton's streets could become, based on examples from around the world, was the focus of Jackie Douglas' presentation. Douglas is the director of LivableStreets, which advocates for changes that accommodate all street users. Well-designed streets benefit local economies. Retail is enhanced because “bikers and walkers stop and spend more” than drivers, she said. Her full slide show can still be viewed at [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org).

Responding to the panelists, Candace Havens, Newton's Director of Planning, highlighted what the city had already accomplished: 110 new bike racks, two Zipcars in Newton Centre, bike lanes and shelters on the drawing board, and our already-

walkable village centers. Having a citywide comprehensive transportation policy, as the TAC recommended, would also encourage developers to invest in Newton by providing certainty and predictability.

The audience questioned the costs of the TAC recommendations. Pollack said the initial recommendations are low cost - policy and paint. She also noted that the state had increased its contribution to local transportation funding. Newton now has both a policy to spend more on bike and pedestrian accommodations, and also the funds to start in right away. Pollack also mentioned that cost-effective jitney services (a small bus that carries passengers over a regular route on a flexible schedule calibrated by demand) are successful in other parts of the country, and might work here.

Improving and completing the pedestrian network (think sidewalks and safe crossings), is also a new priority for the city, along with re-timing signals so that walkers are not tempted to jaywalk, which further disrupts traffic flow. “Partly, this is a thought process,” taking the pedestrian view into account when planning, Pollack said.

Other audience members pointed out the role of the schools in transportation, from educating students appropriately at all levels about street safety, to allowing them to bike to school. Pollack noted that some of the worst city traffic occurred around schools at drop off and pick up times.

George Kirby of the Bike and Pedestrian Task Force asked about educating shop owners about the benefits of bike lanes and bike stalls. Bourassa agreed, saying that one parking space (and one driver) can take the room that 12 bike stalls (and 12 shoppers) can occupy, if allowed. Pollack suggested peer education—having merchants from more bike-friendly cities come and talk with merchants here.

An audience member asked whether Newton's traffic is mostly comprised of folks driving through to Boston. Pollack said it's easy to blame cut-through traffic, but the commute to and from work amounted to 10 trips per week per commuter, while the typical Massachusetts driver makes 100 trips a week. “The biggest trip category is errands,” she said. “That's the point to start” to reduce car traffic.

One solution to traffic is smart growth, but the city will have to push to create such growth near transit. Havens noted the ongoing work on the zoning codes, and suggested that the audience monitor that work. Other suggestions at the forum included thinking hard about where bike lanes and train tracks crossed intersections, and how to make that work; moving bike lanes between parked cars and the sidewalk to protect cyclists, collecting data on how bike lanes affect ridership, and examining how Newton might implement a demand-based jitney service to create connections and replace diminishing MBTA service.

The entire program was taped by NewTV and is available at their website ([www.newtv.org](http://www.newtv.org)).

## November Topic Meeting Re-cap: Privatization Study

By Jo Corro

The November Topic Meeting focused on Privatization, the next National League study. Former Mayor Thomas B. Concannon, Jr. and Alderman Ruthanne Fuller greatly assisted us in understanding how privatization is used in Newton for such services as snow removal, trash collection, school lunches and recycling, as we more broadly discussed privatization at all levels of government.

Discussion included understanding what is and is not privatization, sharing examples from our own experiences, as well as briefly reviewing case studies from the League that includes articles on privatizing prisons, schools and waste water treatment plants. The article titled, "The Legal Framework of Transparency and Accountability within the Context of Privatization" goes beyond a description of an individual case study and discusses the difference between the legal framework of public and private institutions such as the sunshine and open meeting laws that govern public entities that private entities do not have to follow. League study documents can be downloaded from LWVUS website: [www.lwvus.org](http://www.lwvus.org).

We also watched a very interesting story about cities privatizing parking and roads that you can also enjoy at: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/need-to-know/economy/privatizing-infrastructure-2/11574/>

**What is privatization?** Simply, it is changing public services and goods from government to private ownership or control. For a more extensive definition visit this link from the Government Office of Accountability: <http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/gg98087.pdf>

**Why would a service / asset or function be changed from public to private?** One of the main

arguments for the privatization of publicly owned operations is that it can be done more cost effectively and efficiently. The increased efficiency is thought to come from competition and the profit incentive in the private sector that is not present in the public sector. The reason for privatizing can also be an ideological belief that government should be kept as small as possible.

**Scope of the Privatization Study:** The purpose of this study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good.

*It is important to note that the study is not asking us to reach consensus on whether privatization is a good thing or a bad thing, but to educate ourselves so that we understand the details of how and why privatization occurs, and the policies that need to be in place to ensure that privatizing a public service is not only more cost effective, but that private entities are held to the same standards as government entities in their responsibility to the public.*

**LWVN is looking for moderators and recorders for the consensus meetings in March. To volunteer, or for additional information, please email LWVN at [info@lwvnewton.org](mailto:info@lwvnewton.org).**

### MBTA Proposes Service Cuts

The MBTA has proposed two plans to address its budget deficit. Both proposals contain fare increases and service cuts. All of Newton's bus routes are under consideration for reduction or elimination.

*What can you do? Let the MBTA know how these cuts will affect you.*

You have until March 1 to contact the MBTA by either e-mail at: [fareproposal@mbta.com](mailto:fareproposal@mbta.com), or by US mail to: Fare Proposal, 10 Park Plaza Suite 3910, Boston, MA 02116.

You can find more information at: [http://www.mbta.com/about\\_the\\_mbta/?id=23567](http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/?id=23567)

### Save the Date!

League of Women Voters Newton

75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, April 28

Look for more details soon!

## Sharing Our Stories – LWVN Member Tamara Bliss

by Ann Grantham

At the age of 10, Tamara J. Bliss watched her mother, Pearl Guzik, pack her suitcase to attend LWV meetings in Albany, NY. She also observed her mother guiding tours through the United Nations as a volunteer for her local League. When Tamara moved to Boston to attend the Boston University of Social Work to focus on Social Organizing, she had an opportunity to hear LWVMA specialist Nancy Beecher speak on Civil Service Reform. Nancy's articulate presentation prompted Tamara to join the Boston League and become engaged in housing activities.

In 1966, the Ford Foundation gave three Leagues an annual grant to work in an urban area to develop year-round citizen education activities. Boston received one of these grants and chose to implement it in Jamaica Plain. Tamara was key in setting up the Community Leadership Center. At this time, homes had been razed to make way for a southwest corridor to Route 128. The Community Leadership Center and other organizations successfully stopped this from happening.

Then Tamara moved to Newton, attended a League meeting, and met Florence Rubin.

“Florence was my mentor and role model for my initial experiences in community involvement in Newton in 1968. When she learned of my interest in affordable housing, she asked me to help her organize a major conference on Newton's need for affordable housing. Florence recruited five other organizations that represented many different constituencies to co-sponsor the conference with the Newton League. By working with Florence on planning the conference, I learned invaluable lessons on how to build an effective coalition. She taught me how to identify the strengths of each of the organizations that were involved in the coalition and how to use those strengths to plan a major conference. She asked the Chamber of Commerce handle all the publicity for the conference since they had credibility with Newton's very conservative local newspaper. As a result, we had front-page coverage of the event. She also taught me not to expect Chamber members to do some of the tasks that League and Fair Housing members were willing to do. Finally, she emphasized the importance of giving credit to other organizations. These were incredibly valuable lessons that I used through my career and as a worker and volunteer.”

These lessons and skills have helped Tamara to be able to start *Newton at Home (NAH)*. Since 2007, Tamara has dedicated herself to creating NAH, which supports seniors who elect to continue living in their own homes in Newton. A membership organization, NAH officially launched in January 2011, and now provides services as varied as transportation to the airport and doctors offices, to help with winterizing homes and reducing clutter.

If you would like to share a story about how you became a League member, please email [membership@lwvnewton.org](mailto:membership@lwvnewton.org).

### Coming up... February Topic Meeting

#### Discussion with Craig Manseau, Executive Secretary, Newton Election Commission



Join the League for a conversation about a variety of election issues, including proposed voter ID laws and how the recent redistricting affects Newton Wards/Precincts and polling locations.

Thursday, February 9, 2012, 11:30am-1:30pm, Room 202, Newton City Hall.

Brown bag lunches welcome light refreshments will be served Bring a friend!

## January Topic Meeting – Advocacy; Boards & Commissions

By Sue Flicop

### **Advocacy:**

Jo Corro welcomed those attending and presented the LWV process for advocacy.

Brooke Lipsitt, LWVN member and former President of the Board of Aldermen, can't remember NOT being a member of LWVN. Her mother was a member in Newton, and Brooke joined a long time ago. She has worked in the areas of low-income housing, the environment, elections, and charter review. Brooke was recruited by the state League to work with other leagues in Massachusetts building support and advocating for gay marriage. Brooke successfully ran for election to the Board of Aldermen and was a member for 12 years. Her knowledge of advocacy—what works and what doesn't—was gained from being on both “sides” of the table.

While the LWVN has been an effective advocacy group, advocating as an individual requires five elements:

1. Base individual positions and arguments on facts. Regarding the issue of sidewalk snow clearing, for example, many opponents of an ordinance think that the city should clear the sidewalks. While we all would like this, the city no longer has the money and resources to accomplish such a task. Another example is the pay-as-you-throw trash collection process and the need to know what words, what doesn't, and what the costs and benefits are
2. Be realistic in your expectations. For example, during the discussion of building a Stop and Shop on Needham Street, some opponents advocated instead for a commercial fish farm on the site. This idea was based on their philosophy rather than what was realistic and appropriate. Considering the potential Riverside development, as another example, some think the developer should be responsible for mitigating the traffic on Route 128. This is also not realistic, since even city government couldn't do that.
3. Understand the process and timetable. If the School Committee is going through their budget process and a person wants to have an impact, he/she needs to go to the public hearing and not wait until the budget process is over. If there is an issue in front of the Board of Aldermen, a person can't wait until the issue has been in committee for 6 months and is going to the full Board to make their comments. This can only delay a process, not effectively modify the result.

4. Individual voices are not as powerful as a group. Elected officials pay more attention when a group reads a letter or makes a comment. An example is the group advocating for a greenway behind Needham Street, developed by Bike and Pedestrian Task Force. This group has effectively organized themselves, bringing in other members of the community and other local neighborhood groups.
5. Identify pressure points. Regarding the greenway advocacy group above, they have identified where to put pressure to make the greenway happen. They recognized that it would not be effective to go directly to the MBTA or the Board of Aldermen. Instead they worked to pressure the Mayor to get involved.

### **Local Boards and Commissions:**

Megan Costello, Director of Community Affairs in the Mayor's Office, is working to improve communication and get people involved. One way for Newtonians to engage in their community is to join one of the 78 Boards and Commissions in the city. The city also benefits by using freely given resources in our community. Areas of interest range from solid waste to schools to biking and pedestrian safety; some boards and commissions have vacancies, some are full or will be available in 6 months. Specifically, Design Review is looking for members, as is the Transportation Advisory Group.

How would someone express interest in a board or commission? The best route is to contact Megan, who can describe the process to become a member, which is dependent on which board or commission a person wishes to join. Some positions are appointed by the Mayor, by the Board of Aldermen, or by both. In general, a person would submit their name, resume, and why they are interested, followed by an interview process. An alternative for someone who wants to be involved, but is flexible about which board or commission, is to contact Megan and give their personal experience and area of interest.

The city is in the process of redesigning its website and will be creating a central place for this information. Currently it is only in paper form, though it will be posted on the LWVN website, [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org). The City Clerk's office will be updating a booklet with the list of Board and Commissions, as well as their members.

# LWVN CALENDAR

## FEBRUARY

- 1<sup>st</sup> Wed., 7pm, **LWVN Board meeting.** Anne Borg's house.
- 6<sup>th</sup> Mon., 6:30-7:45pm, **LWVN Open House for Elected Officials.** 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Newton City Hall.
- 9<sup>th</sup> Thurs., 11:30am-1:30pm, **February Topic Meeting.** *Conversation with Craig Manseau, Executive Secretary, Newton Election Commission.* Room 202, Newton City Hall.
- 29<sup>th</sup> Wed., 9-10:30am, **LWVN Presidents' Hours.** Panera Bread, Newton Centre.

## MARCH

- 1<sup>st</sup> Thurs., 7pm, **Housing Forum.** Board of Aldermen Chamber, Newton City Hall.
- 6<sup>th</sup> Tues., 7am-8pm, **Massachusetts Presidential Primary.**
- 7<sup>th</sup> Wed., 7pm, **LWVN Board meeting.** Location TBA.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Thurs., 11:30am-1:30pm **and** 7-9pm, **March Topic Meeting.** *Local Program Planning.* NewTV Conference Room. 23 Needham St.

→ *Archives Mornings: Email [info@lwnnewton.org](mailto:info@lwnnewton.org) for scheduled dates/times.*

→ *Don't forget to check our online calendar for any late-breaking changes! [www.lwnnewton.org](http://www.lwnnewton.org)*

→ *Find us on Facebook! [www.facebook.com/lwnnewton](http://www.facebook.com/lwnnewton)*

## Keep up with the workings of the Board of Aldermen!

Read the *LWVN Docket Digest*, available each week at [www.lwnnewton.org](http://www.lwnnewton.org).

## League of Women Voters of Newton

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