
League of Women Voters of Newton

Newsletter



Volume 19, Issue 3

visit us online at www.lwvnewton.org

November 2013

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LWVN CALENDAR

[Click here to visit the LWVN's Calendar Page for details.](#)

Thursday, 14 Nov 2013, 11:30am:

LWVN Information/Membership Meeting on
Transportation

Tuesday, 19 Nov 2013

The Role of the Free Market in Solving the Cli-
mate Crisis

Tuesday, 1-Dec 2013, 10:00am:

LWVN Environmental Issues Committee

Thursday, 16 Jan 2014, 7:30pm:

LWVN Board Meeting

Thursday, 13 Feb 2014, 7:30pm:

LWVN Board Meeting

Thursday, 20 Mar 2014, 7:30pm:

LWVN Board Meeting

Thursday, 17 Apr 2014, 7:30pm

LWVN Board Meeting

Saturday, 10 May 2014

LWVMA Council

Thursday, 15 May 2014, 7:30pm:

LWVN Board Meeting

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

→ <http://www.lwvnewton.org/calendar/>

Find us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/lwvnewton

Keep up with the workings of the Board of Aldermen!

Read the LWVN Docket Digest, available each week at www.lwvnewton.org

LWVN Letter on Election Changes to the City Charter

from the LWVN Board

July 19, 2013
October 22, 2013

Dear President Lennon
and Members of the Board of Aldermen:

The League of Women Voters of Newton (LWVN) urges you to either postpone the vote or vote against changing the election requirement for open seats on the Board of Aldermen and School Committee. We feel that, even after an unusual year of special elections and with the current election season upon us, there is no need for fast action, while there is need for the public to weigh in and to deeply consider the implications of the proposed changes.

This year has been extraordinary regarding the number of special elections. LWVN members understand the implications to the city budget and staff time of the most recent special election for the Ward 1 Alderman-at-Large seat, in addition to other preliminary and general elections. But having another year with a similar number of elections is highly unlikely and so there is time to consider how best to address this issue. We believe pushing this change through without thorough consideration is not in the best interests of the voters.

This section of the charter was last amended by the last Charter Commission in the early 1970s, because there had been situations where the Board of Aldermen (BoA) had abused its privilege to appoint members. A candidate would run for office, win, resign shortly after winning, and then the BoA would appoint whomever the group wanted for the entire rest of the term. The change was meant to check the power of the Aldermen so that only candidates approved by the majority of the voters would fill the seats. LWVN believes that the proposed change could undo this improvement, leading to the potential for a future BoA to delay a vote for an open seat if there were no candidates of whom the Board members approved. LWVN believes that the current structure of requiring elections within a certain time frame ensures that the voters are represented as effectively as possible.

As you know, LWVN has been calling for a new charter commission for over a year. This proposal is an area where a commission would research the charters of other communities and hold open meetings where members of the public could be presented with their findings and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such a rule change. There are certainly other options to consider that haven't been discussed using the current process.

Because we feel there is no reason that we need to change the charter immediately, and because such a change could lead to abuses by future

BoAs, the League of Women Voters urges you to either delay the vote or vote against a change in the charter. In addition, we invite all members of the Board to join us in our signature drive to form a charter commission, since there are issues that should be reviewed using a tried-and-true system for charter changes..

Sincerely,



Susan Flicop
President, LWVN

LWVN Letter on Engine 6 Proposal

from the LWVN Board

July 19, 2013

Dear Mayor Warren:

The League of Women Voters of Newton (LWVN) strongly urges you to reconsider your decision by reinstating the Engine 6 proposal and permitting the process to proceed with an extended period for public comment.

The LWVN supports adequate housing to promote self-sufficiency for a diverse population of low-income residents. We recommend that low-income residences be spread throughout the city rather than concentrated in a few neighborhoods, and that there be a preference for Newton residents. The Engine 6 proposal meets these requirements and should once again be brought up for public discussion.

Public understanding and participation in decision-making is a core belief of the League. LWVN is concerned that closing down discussion before the public comment period was over did not encourage more understanding and participation from the community. We recommend treating the 30-day public comment period as a minimum, extending this period to encourage all residents to review the facts, and letting Metro West/Pine Street Inn make revisions to address Newton's concerns.

In particular, our review has led us to the following conclusions:

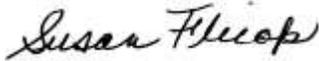
1. The community impacted by projects such as Engine 6 is the entire city of Newton, not just the immediate neighborhood. Distributing low-income and special needs housing throughout the city adds diversity to villages, as well as opportunities for all Newton residents to work together to address socioeconomic issues and stereotyping.
2. The standard notification process for affordable housing projects requesting CDBG funding is one of the sources of the present controversy. The existing communication process of contacting the local paper and posting meeting information in City Hall may no longer be enough. We suggest that the Planning and Development Board, which has significant jurisdiction in the area of CDBG funding, reconsider current notification policy and entertain changes that would inform abutters and community members more effectively. However, attention to a notification process should not preclude action on pending/available proposals that can benefit the entire city.
3. While it is not required, an early community meeting is usually held before any low-income housing project is approved by the Planning and Development Board. A community meeting in May where residents could have expressed concerns and asked questions would have led to changes and improvements in the proposal before the official 30-day public comment period. Without this meeting, many Waban residents felt blindsided by elements of the project. While opposition to the proposal was vocalized loudly and quickly, those in support of the Engine 6 proposal needed more time to adequately prepare their statements.
4. The Metro West/Pine Street Inn group was not fully prepared for the comments from the community. Stereotyping and fear regarding the potential Engine 6 residents took hold before the petitioners were able to present accurate information. Metro West/Pine Street Inn made changes in response to the expressed concerns, but they were not able to present them when the process was cut short.

A proposal that encounters such intense opposition, much of it based on emotion and incorrect assumptions, needs strong leadership. We firmly support an open and honest conversation about low-income housing, and consider this process the community equivalent of a "teachable moment," where neighborhood fears are ex-

pressed, questions responded to, and information from similar residences in other communities used to show how a proposal such as Engine 6 may enhance our community. We will be sharing our position with the community via the Newton TAB.

An extended comment period is a better solution than cutting the process short. We ask you to reinstate the Engine 6 proposal.

Signed,



Susan Flicop
President, League of Women Voters of Newton

cc: Emily Costello, Editor of the Newton TAB

Updated Bottle Bill (UBB) Petition

from Bonnie Carter

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) is working in coalition with about 90 other organizations to bring the Updated Bottle Bill (UBB) to the voters as a ballot question for the November 2014 election. The bottle bill is the state's single most effective recycling and anti-litter tool. Under the current "Bottle Bill" containers for beer and carbonated beverages have a 5-cent deposit. The Updated Bottle Bill will include water, sports drinks, flavored teas, juices and other beverages.

For fourteen years we have been trying to get the legislature to pass an Updated Bottle Bill, but it has not come up for a vote in the house due to the opposition of special interests like the beverage bottling, and supermarket industries. A ballot question will bring it to the voters. LWVMA was committed to collecting 10,000 signatures, with LWVN's contribution one-tenth of that. LWVN submitted 700-1000 signatures. They were not all from Newton, since we found people willing to sign who were from neighboring towns.

Many thanks to all who gathered signatures on the petitions for the Updated Bottle Bill!

They include: AnnaMaria Abernathy, Pat Acton, Joanne Cooper, Jo Corro, Nancy Criscitiello, Andrea Downs, Ellen Glusman, Ann Grantham, Linda Green, Ann & Bill Hartner, Ingrid & Lee Kefauver, Andrea Kelley, Rhanna Kidwell, Liz Kirsch, Andrea Kozinetz, Priscilla Leith, Lois Levin, Brooke Lipsitt, Sharyn Roberts, Tami Roberts, Sue Rosenbaum, Amy Sangiolo, and Beth Wilkinson.

The LWVMA goal was exceeded by getting 20,006 signatures. And the coalition's goal of 100,000 was exceeded. The petitions have been submitted to the cities and towns across the state for certification of the signatures.

Congratulations!

Voters Service Activities for the 2013 Municipal Elections

From Sue Flicop

Debates: LWVN is proud to have once again provided a variety of opportunities for Newton voters to learn about the candidates in the recent municipal elections.

This year, LWVN worked closely with NewTV to co-sponsor a series of debates for both the preliminary and the general elections for the following contested elections:

- Ward 1 Ward Alderman
- Ward 2 Ward Alderman
- Ward 5 Aldermen-at-Large
- Ward 2 School Committee
- Mayor (preliminary election debate only).

These debates were recorded at NewTV studios and shown on NewTV's Government Channel at various times prior to the elections. Improvements in the debates this year included the gathering of questions from community members through email, Facebook and Twitter, both before and during the debate and in conjunction with NewTV, shorter, more direct questions to the candidates, an opportunity for candidates to ask questions of each other, and a more flexible system of rebuttals, allowing for more interaction between the candidates on contested topics. Questions touched on a variety of topics relevant to each race, and to elected offices in Newton in general.

LWVN also co-sponsored a debate with the Newton Free Library for the Mayoral race in the general election. This was held in the Druker Auditorium, in front of an audience of approximately 60 people. This debate was recorded by volunteers and shown on NewTV's Community Channel a number of times before the general election.

LWVN would like to thank both NewTV and the Newton Free Library for their sponsorships of these events. We would also like to thank the following volunteers for their time and effort in providing these debates:

Pat Acton, Maryan Amaral, Sharalyn Arntz, Joe Benn, Bonnie Carter, Jo Corro, Ellen Glusman, Ann Grantham, Linda Green, Linda Greenberg, Lee and Ingrid Kefauver, Andrea Kelley, Lois Levin, Robin Maltz, Maureen Reilly Meagher, Susan Mirsky, Linda Morrison, Ron Quint, Helen Rittenberg, Tami Roberts, Sharyn Roberts, Michael Crossen-Sills of NewTV, and Irwin Sterbakov.

We also wanted to express our gratitude to our wonderful League moderators: Jo-Ann Berry, Nancy Carapezza and Debbie Winnick of the Leagues of Action, Wayland, and Needham, respectively. Finally, no debate would be complete without the candidates! Thanks to all who decided to run for a municipal office and give the voters a choice.

Voters Guide: LWVN also created a 2013 Voters Guide that provided responses to three questions from most candidates for office, including those in uncontested races. This was distributed online on LWVN's website and in print at locations around the city, including the Newton Free Library, Newton City Hall, Newton Senior Center, Evans Park, etc.

LWVN would like to thank Anne Borg and Linda Green, Voters Guide co-chairs, and Sharyn Roberts for her help in distributing the guide. We'd also like to thank the candidates who responded for participating and helping us keep to our deadlines.

Rides to the Polls: We want to thank Sharyn Roberts and her crew of drivers who help bring voters who have difficulty getting around Newton to the polls.

Note from the LWVN President:

Dear LWVN Members:

LWVN has had a very busy fall, and I'd first like to thank all those who helped us achieve what we set out to do. In particular, I'd like to thank Sharyn Roberts, Bonnie Carter, Anne Borg and Linda Green for their monumental efforts and support in producing seven debates and the 2013 Voters Guide. Thanks as well to the Village Bank, NewTV and the Newton Free Library for their sponsorship of these activities. Without our sponsors and volunteers, none of this would have happened. Together we've helped voters make informed choices at the ballot box.

I'd also like to thank our Education Committee co-chairs, Jo Corro and Lynn Scheller, for organizing an informative forum on the importance of early childhood education, co-sponsored with the Boys and Girls Club of Newton. We saw several new faces at this event and hope to continue exploring and updating our understanding of these issues. Be sure to keep an eye out for upcoming forums from this committee!

Another thanks goes to Membership Committee chair Ann Grantham, for her continued efforts to grow our membership and engage current members. Ann also spearheaded our annual membership mailing—I encourage everyone to renew their memberships and help support all the work LWVN does.

One more thank you goes to Douglas Leith, who has graciously agreed to be LWVN's newsletter editor. Doug edited the Dutchess Co. (NY) Genealogical Society Newsletter for 12 years, and now brings his expertise to support LWVN. We are so happy that he will help us provide more regular communications to our members.

Since July, the LWVN Board has weighed in on two issues of importance to our membership: the **Engine 6 low-income housing proposal** and process, as well as the **proposed change to the City Charter** affecting special elections for open seats that the Board of Aldermen were recently considering. Both letters are reproduced in this newsletter, though the Engine 6 letter was also printed in the Newton TAB.

Please be sure to mark your calendars and join other League members for one of two discussions of a proposed transportation study specifically focused on local issues such as road safety for all users. There will be two sessions on Thursday, November 14th, at 11:30 am and 7 pm, both in the NewTV conference room at NewTV studios, 23 Needham Street, Newton Highlands.

Thanks so much for all your help and support.

In League,

Sue Flicop
LWVN President

LWVN Transportation Position

from Lucia Dolan & Andreae Downs

This year the Massachusetts LWV adopted California LWV's Transportation Positions by concurrence:

Support a transportation system to move people and goods which:

- includes a variety of transportation modes, with emphasis on increased public transportation services and other viable alternatives to reduce vehicle miles traveled;
- is efficient, convenient, and cost effective;
- is safe and secure;
- serves all segments of the population and diverse geographic needs;
- minimizes harmful effects on the environment;
- is integrated with land use; and
- is supported by extensive public education.

Concurrence Proposal for a Transportation Position

from Lucia Dolan & Andreae Downs

In keeping with the State League's Transportation Position and LWVN's Land Use Position "to support the goals set forth in Newton's Comprehensive Plan," the Environmental Issues Committee proposes the adoption the following Concurrence Proposal for a Transportation Position for the LWV of Newton.

Newton adopts the state transportation position for local roads, with emphasis on safety, preserving quality of life and consistency across City transportation decisions.

- **Safety First:** safe travel should be the first priority and transportation policies, investments and enforcement strategies should be based on the principle of "safety first" so that everyone (from children to seniors and including pedestrians, bicyclists and scooter riders) feels safe and so that motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians practice safe travel behavior.
- **Quality of Life:** Newton's transportation system and policies should support and advance a broader vision for the Newton that we all want to live in, maintaining the quality of life in our neighborhoods and village centers and reducing the negative impacts of traffic and
- **Congestion** in neighborhoods and village centers.
- **Consistency:** Newton transportation practices, including policies, investments, and decision-making, will be consistent with and support the City of Newton's goals and 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

Please join us November 14 at NewTV to discuss this concurrence proposal at either 11:30 am or 7 pm. If you have any questions, contact Lucia 617 332-1893 or dolanlucia@gmail.com

Progress Underway on Newton's Water, Sewer and Storm water Systems

*Summarized by Priscilla Leith from
9/20/13 Report by Ald. Deb Crossley & Ruthanne Fuller*

A Water-Sewer-Storm water Working Group composed of COO Bob Rooney, Utilities Director Fred Russell, Commissioner Dave Turocy, Lou Taverna of Engineering, CFO Maureen Lemieux, here team and Ald. Crossley and Fuller met over the summer and into September to implement the strategic plan to remove I/I, restore/add capacity to the sewer and water mains, remove illegal private inflow connections from the sewers, advance the storm water assessment, and complete a rate analysis for re-evaluation of the rate structure.

In mid-July the city received bids and signed a contract with Green Mountain Utility Services to clean and reline sewer mains in Project Area 1, repair a failed sewer main in the Crystal Lake basin and Woodland golf course, and increase to fire flow standards designated water mains. Work is being done man-hole to manhole and will proceed through winter and into spring, 2014.

The Utilities department now has a half-time employee focusing just on correcting illegal sump pump connections. Notices have been issued to 334 of 447 property owners identified as such during water meter replacements, and the rest were to receive notices in October. Over 45% have corrected the condition. The Utilities Dept. is giving technical assistance to help homeowners identify cost-effective solutions.

Weston & Sampson conducted smoke tests in areas of the city not previously tested, to identify improper connections to sewers from downspouts and driveway drains. Follow-up is underway.

The Mayor allocated \$100K in the FY 14 Budget from the Storm water Enterprise Fund for a partial assessment of the storm water system. After a RFP in June, the City received proposals from CDM, Weston & Sampson, and Brown & Caldwell. Interviews were held in Sept. to better understand the scope of each proposal and how far it would take us toward the goal of detailing a strategic plan to restore the system. We need to understand how new EPA and DEP regulations may impact the assessment and eventual scope of work.

We continue to look at restructuring storm water fees, to tie them to the amount of impervious surface of commercial properties and mitigation that owners already have on site. The Storm water Enterprise Fund must have sufficient revenue to complete the assessment, pay for ongoing maintenance and make repairs to the system. We are aiming for a more precise accounting of the costs to maintain storm water operations at a desired level and overlap with sewer work. An overall objective is to assure that rates are both fairly allocated and sufficient to run operations, pay the MWRA, and continue the needed repairs on schedule. CFO Lemieux continues to work with Utilities' accounting and billing staff to explore impacts on users under various scenarios, including second meters, using a seasonal rate structure, and/or adding more tiers.

Water and sewer Reserves are healthy, so the Board voted to move funds that accrue beyond what is required in Reserves into a separate capital stabilization fund for each system.

The Administration has pushed back the schedule for presenting the rates analysis. In early December, the Administration plans to provide an overview at a Public Facilities Committee meeting to which all Board members will be invited. The goal is to have a detailed presentation in January or February for the new Board, reviewing all elements of the plan for water, sewer and storm water, then move into details on possible rate re-structuring.

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS 2013-2014

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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.

Visit LWVN
on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/lwvnewton

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Education Committee
Jo Corro
Lynn Scheller

Elections Committee
Nancy Criscitiello
Ellen Glusman

Environmental Issues
Alison Leary Mooradian
Lucia Dolan

Municipal Finance
Chris Steele

Housing
-

Topic Meetings
-

Nominating Committee
Emily Prenner, Chair.

Charter Commission Initiative
Rhanna Kidwell

Voters Service/Citizen Education
Sharyn Roberts

Legislative Roundtable
Tami Roberts
Sue Rosenbaum

Archives
Ann Grantham
Linda Morrison

Membership
Ann Grantham

Newsletter & Website
Sue Flicop
Doug Leith



Recent new members include:

- Barbara Berenson
- Linda Fenton
- Laurie Halloran
- Dana Hanson
- Meryl Kessler
- Dan Silver
- Shannon Vyff

LWVN needs (more than) a few good League members for both long term and short term commitments – have fun while you help LWVN!

- Transportation Study
- Observer at Board of Aldermen Finance Committee
- Events planning
- Photographer to record events for our Facebook page
- Membership Team
- “Ambassadors” to greet and sign in people at events
- Publicity
- Fundraising
- Print and web communications: newsletter, monthly postcard, email blasts, website, LWVN Facebook (training provided)
- Committees: Archives, Environmental Issues, Education, Elections, Housing, Municipal Finance

Contact Sue Flicop at info@lwvnewton.org if you are interested or have questions! YOU are the League!

League of Women Voters of Newton



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