
League of Women Voters of Newton

Newsletter

Volume 22, Issue 3

visit us online at www.lwvnewton.org

November, 2016

Happy 80th Anniversary Newton League!

Newton Gets an Early Voting Gold!

This year was the first in which Massachusetts voters could cast their ballots early, and Newton voters took full advantage of the opportunity, thanks in no small part to an early voting plan that won a “Gold Standard” rating from the Election Modernization Coalition (see letter, below). City Clerk David Olson reported just after the election: “During the two weeks of Early Voting 17,775 Newton Residents cast their ballot. This represents 30% of all registered voters in Newton. On Election Day 46,211 ballots went through the ballot boxes, which includes all the Early Voted Ballots and all Absentee Ballots and represents 78% of Newton Voters. We still have about 900 Military and Overseas Ballots that need to be added to the total which brings the final turnout total to around 80%. This is in line with the percentages that we saw at the last two presidential elections, which were 79% in 2012 and 81% in 2009.”

30%

**Percent of registered voters in
Newton who voted early**

Mr. David Olson, Newton City Clerk
Newton Election Commission
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

September 23, 2016

RE: Newton’s Early Voting Plan, the Gold Standard

Dear Mr. Olson and Newton Election Commissioners:

The League of Women Voters of Newton (LWVN) is pleased to note that Newton’s approved plan for early voting fully meets the Gold Standard established by the Election Modernization Coalition.

The Election Modernization Coalition, comprising of Common Cause Massachusetts, MassVOTE, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, MASSPIRG, the ACLU of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Voter Table, the

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2016-2017**

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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.

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Welcome New Members!

Jacob Auchincloss

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**Keep up with the workings of the City
Council!**

Read the *LWVN Docket Digest*,

available each week at

www.lwvnewton.org

Early Voting letter, continued

MIRA Coalition, and Progressive Massachusetts created the Massachusetts Early Voting challenge, which set the following standards for a Gold Medal implementation of the state law.

The standards and Newton's approved plan are as follows:

Number of sites: the Gold Standard calls for one site per 35,000 residents. Newton plans to exceed this requirement by offering early voting sessions at eight different locations around the city, including City Hall, the two high schools, and five senior housing locations.

Evening hours: the Gold Standard calls for two evening sessions per week. Newton plans to exceed this standard by offering four evening sessions per week, for a total of eight. Between October 24th and through November 3rd, Monday through Thursday, early voters may come to City Hall to vote until 8 pm.

Weekend hours: the Gold Standard calls for 6 hours of weekend voting. Newton plans to exceed this standard by offering early voting on Saturday, October 29 and Sunday, October 30, at both high schools AND at City Hall from noon to 5 pm, both days.

All locations are open to all Newton voters.

We congratulate you, Mr. Olson, and Newton's Election Commission on developing a plan that meets these requirements and offers Newton voters significantly greater access to voting than ever before.

We also thank Mayor Setti Warren and the City Council for funding the implementation of these early voting procedures.

Sincerely,

Pia Bertelli
President, LWVN

Cc: Mayor Setti Warren
City Council President Scott Lennon

Snow shoveling update

The temporary ordinance requiring residents and businesses to clear sidewalks of snow and ice has been extended. It was modified to require businesses and larger apartment building owners to clear walks within 12 hours. A permanent ordinance will be discussed in May.

Leaf blower update

On Monday November 14, the finance committee will discuss the impact to Newton's budget of a proposed ordinance to limit leaf blower use. The proposal under discussion would ban use of leaf blowers from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and would require equipment rated at 65 decibels or lower.

LWVN Display at Newton Free Library



In Memoriam

Judge Gordon Martin, husband of longtime Newton League member Stephanie Martin, died November 1, 2016. Judge Martin served as an associate justice of the Massachusetts trial court for over 20 years, and was the author of *Count Them One by One: Black Mississippians Fighting for the Right to Vote*, an account of his time as a young civil rights lawyer in Mississippi. Judge Martin was the featured speaker at LWV Newton's spring fundraiser in 2015.

President's Letter

Dear LWVN Members,

We have had a busy start to this year's LWVN activities. In August, we held two candidates' forums at NewTV for the primary elections with Democratic candidates for Governors' Council and Middlesex County Sheriff. Since there were no Republican candidates, these races were decided in the primary. Thank you to Sue Flicop and Sharyn Roberts who organized the forums, NewTV for hosting, our moderator Karen Price from LWV Needham and all of our co-sponsors from the Leagues of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle, Melrose, Newton, Waltham, Wayland and Winchester.

In this active election season, Voters Service answered many questions about early voting, helped people to register, and gave out lots of information. Sharyn Roberts and team have been at the Cold Spring Farmers' Market on Tuesdays and at the West Newton Farmers' Market on Saturdays all summer and into the fall. We also had a table at Harvest Fair, several Village Days and held voter registration days at both Newton South and North High Schools. In addition to early voting as an option to election day voting, sixteen and seventeen year olds may now preregister!

Sue Flicop and others continue to observe meetings of the Charter Commission, and keep us up to date on what's being discussed. Find our [detailed observer notes](#) on our website. Neighborhood Area Councils (NAC), along with the ideal make up and number of City Councilors, have been areas of contention. We expect to begin to hold informational forums soon to help educate people about the Commission's decisions before the vote on the final proposed charter in November 2017.

Plans are underway for resuming our Topic Meetings. This year, we plan to cover Charter Schools (a state study this year), Solid Waste, Washington Place, Needham Street and the proposed Charter. If there is an issue you would like to see discussed, please contact Ellen Grody at ellen.lwvn@oneviedo.com.

Although Question 2, to lift the cap on the number of charter schools, was defeated on November 8, it is highly likely that charter schools will continue to be an issue in Massachusetts. The state league approved a study of charter schools at state convention in 2015, and that study launches this fall. We hope to join with another local LWV as we learn about the pros and cons of the issue. The League process is slow but thorough. The study committee has put together the [study materials](#), and the LWVMass will have a position after local Leagues submit their consensus reports which are due February 1. If you're interested in participating in the study group, please call and leave a message at 617-383-4598.

Last but not least, many thanks to the LWV Transportation Committee for presenting "The Road Less Traveled," a forum about reducing traffic held at the Newton Free Library on October 27. See Lois Levin's report elsewhere in this newsletter to learn more.

In League,

Pia Bertelli

LWVN President

LWVNewton Forum: The Road Less Traveled

By Lois Levin

Three dynamic speakers presented talks with slideshows at the well-attended League of Women Voters Newton Transportation Forum “The Road Less Traveled: a roadmap to reduce traffic in Newton” on Oct 27 at the Newton Library. Co-sponsors were Green Newton, Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce, Newton Department of Health & Human Services, Newton Council on Aging, Newton Safe Routes to School, Newton 350.org, Livable Newton, and the Newton Free Library. The program was very ably moderated by Brooke Lipsitt, former president of the Newton Board of Aldermen.

Sarah Lee of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) reported that 72% of Newton residents drive to work, most in single occupancy vehicles; 12% use transit, 1% bike and 6% walk. Many other towns and cities in the MAPC region have similarly high percentages of people who drive to work, but not all - in neighboring Brookline, for example, 45% drive, 27% use public transit, 4% bike and 16% walk. We could surely reduce congestion significantly in Newton by making alternatives to driving more attractive and feasible. Sarah noted that it's time to revise our understanding of traffic: rather than thinking “We're stuck in traffic,” we should think: “we ARE traffic.” While Newton has a high percentage of ownership of hybrid and electric vehicles, our greenhouse gas emissions are very high. Area residents spend 64 hours in traffic per year - the 7th highest number of hours in the US, negatively impacting directly residents' health, the quality of our air, and the incidence of traffic related crashes. The cost of car ownership in Massachusetts is high, \$12,583 a year. But as there is established evidence that patrons of neighborhood businesses who arrive by foot and bike visit those businesses most often and spend the most money, local merchants have incentives to promote alternatives to driving.

Steve Miller, co-founder of LivableStreets, who teaches at Harvard School of Public Health, spoke about “Mobility Decongestants” - how to facilitate “Car-Lite living.” He explained that “Complete Streets - streets that accommodate all types of road users - facilitate “Traffic Calming.” And talked about “Vision Zero,” a relatively new program cities are adopting to eliminate traffic fatalities. He explained that “Demand-Responsive Parking Pricing” typically puts higher prices on more desirable parking, which dramatically reduces the tendency of drivers to circle around (and create traffic) looking for cheap or free parking. He noted that putting controls on the hours that trucks and delivery vans are permitted in village centers can dramatically reduce traffic and reduce fatalities of bicyclists and pedestrians. As there is no more powerful solution to commuting more than 5 miles than public transit, he said it is time to improve our public bus service. Some changes are simple, such as locating bus stops on the far side of intersections. Other changes, such as selectively using reserved bus lanes, revising routes to better accommodate where people actually go to work and shop and enabling commuters to make optimal first and last mile connections (as by shuttle), will take more planning. He introduced the term “Transportation Demand Management” (TDM) to identify an overall approach that can involve zoning changes, facilitating car pools, and generating reimbursement for alternative transportation.

Nicole Freedman, Newton's new Director of Transportation, is an Urban Planner who recently served as Director of Active Transportation for the City of Seattle. She talked about “Newton Leads 2040: a long term transportation Strategy” already underway. A main goal of the program is to alleviate traffic congestion while preserving Newton's sense of place and village character and making sustainability a priority. Anticipated signal optimization is needed and will create safer and more efficient travel in Newton. The plan is to introduce “Smart Parking Management” that will employ

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Using Big Data to Get Out the Environmental Vote

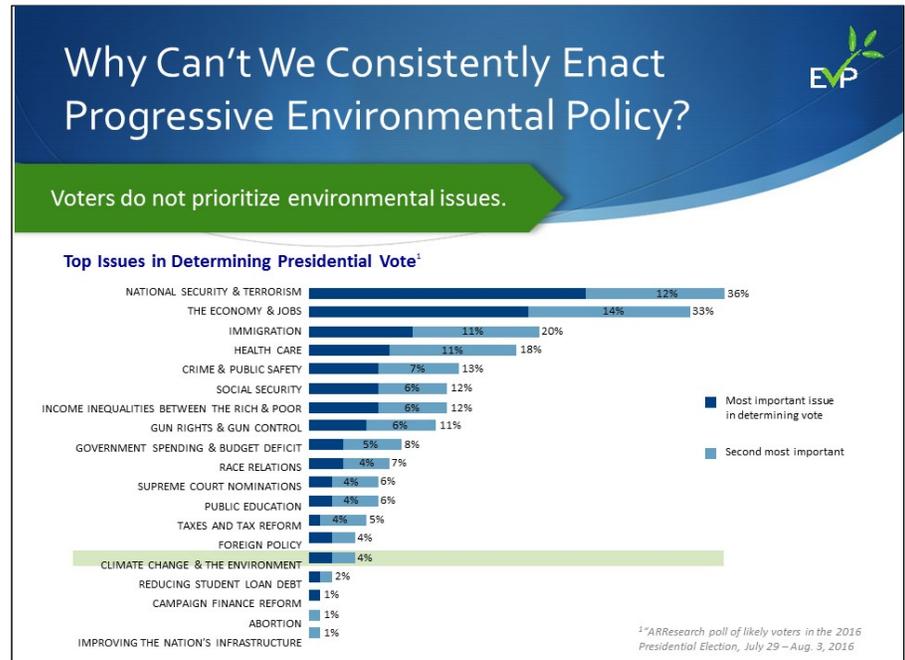
by Pia Bertelli

Big Data can be used to target non-voting environmentalists to change the outcome of our elections and raise the environmental issues, according to Environmental Voter Project founder and CEO Nathaniel Stinnitt. LWV Needham hosted Stinnitt on October 6 to learn about the EVP, a nonpartisan nonprofit that used big data analytics and behavioral science to identify 15.78 million environmentalists nationally who don't vote. Their next step was to encourage them to register and/or vote regularly to increase visibility for environmental issues.

Campaigns only target likely voters. People who don't vote are not called and their opinions are not solicited; when environmentalists don't vote, they leave environmental issues at the bottom of the list of important issues for elected officials.

How do we elevate environmental issues? The EVP determined it is easier to persuade a non-voting environmentalist to vote than it is to persuade a voter that the environment is a priority. In Massachusetts, 277,250 environmentalists who did not vote in 2014 were identified and targeted with messages about the importance of voting.

The focus on big data analytics and predictive modeling surfaced with the 2012 Obama Campaign; data and tech operations made up 30%-40% of the HQ staff. Who



you vote for is a secret, but whether or not you vote is public record. Aggregate consumer and voter data can be used to determine who is an environmentalist with alarming accuracy. Each voter is assigned a score of 0-100 based on how likely the person is likely to prioritize the environment when voting.

EVP learned that peer pressure is more effective than trying to convince someone an issue is important or one candidate is better than another. Motivating people by telling them everyone is “doing it” or “you should be part of the group” increased voter turnout by 7.5%. Another EVP technique – asking people to sign a pledge to vote -- increased people’s commitment to vote tremendously.

I emailed EVP shortly after November 8 to ask what they’d learned from this election. I look forward to reporting back what they say.

Road Less Traveled, continued

new meters, and encourage Shared Transit- which includes shuttles and services like Uber and Lyft, and to bring HUBway to Newton. HUBway is the popular and highly successful shared bike program Nicole oversaw as Director of Boston Bikes for 6 years. She noted the impact a range of village enhancements and corridor improvements could have on addressing traffic congestion. Finally, she said she plans to advocate for better MBTA service, and will create a street design guide, integrate stormwater management into street design and expand electric vehicle charging. This is a comprehensive and bold set of future plans. When the audience had an opportunity to ask question of the panelists, many opted to express enthusiasm that Newton is starting to move forward with transportation improvements and innovations already proven to reduce congestion in other cities without inhibiting or compromising residents’ mobility.

Harvest Fair 2016

This year at the Harvest Fair, Bonnie Carter, Ellen Grody, Tami Roberts and Sharyn Roberts spent hours staffing a LWVN booth. A big thank you to Sharyn and Tami Roberts in particular, who both spent the entire day assisting voters.

Together, they:

- registered a minimum of 23 voters, with an additional 3 people taking blank forms for family at home
- facilitated a minimum of 5 absentee ballot applications filled out on the spot with at least another 8 blank forms taken home
- handed out more than 40 early voting schedules for Newton and looked online to answer questions on the schedules of other Massachusetts communities
- handed out more than fifteen MA red booklets on the four ballot issues
- responded to many queries on where the League stands on these issues
- assisted two voters in changing their party status
- encouraged at least eight people to join the League, two of whom will hopefully join their own local Leagues, two who joined LWVN on the spot, and the remaining four will hopefully join LWVN soon



Sharyn Roberts, LWVN's voter registrar extraordinaire, stays safe from the sun at the Farmer's market this summer.



Sharyn and Tami Roberts offer voter registration, absentee ballots, and information at this fall's Harvest Fair.

September LWV Leaders Lunch

By Linda Morrison

Twenty-five local Leagues were represented when Pia Bertelli, Bonnie Carter, Sharyn Roberts and I participated in the LWV Leaders lunch sponsored by the state LWV in Hingham on September 19.

We considered the challenge that many people claim that our LWV process of study and consensus is too slow and cumbersome. Remember, though, that virtually all the issues we take positions on persist over ten years or even much longer. Because we are a member-driven organization, the procedure of study and consensus means that when our members are ready to take action, we have become very well informed, which is a major contribution to public discussions.

The most electrifying presentation was given by the Springfield Area LWV, which developed a “Candidating” alternative to the usual candidates’ forums. By using a “speed dating” style, they created an event that was far more conversational and less adversarial. Attendees sat at roundtables of 7 or 8 people with one of the candidates, and had ten minutes for discussion and questions. Then the candidates rotated to a new table, and the process was repeated. Springfield was also able to attract a far more diverse group of about 100 attendees by publicizing the event through “Neighbor to Neighbor” programs, “Voices from Inside” and “Western MA Women’s fund.” They also advertised on social media.

Although this procedure would work only when the number of candidates is rather low, the idea is a splendid innovation and the ideas are well worth considering.

After the program, we drove over to the Linden Ponds community and had a really nice visit with Nancy Criscitiello. Nancy has been a longtime volunteer with both the Newton LWV and the Friends of the Newton Free Library. Most recently she focused her attention on Newton’s election commission and the workings of the election department. Good to see an old friend!



Linda Morrison, Sharyn Roberts, Bonnie Carter and Pia Bertelli at the September League Leaders Lunch