

# Newsletter

Volume 23, Issue 1

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

March, 2017

## A New Charter for Newton?

The Newton Charter Commission elected in November 2015 has nearly completed its work. It held a formal vote on its proposed recommendations at its meeting on Wednesday, February 15. There will be a public hearing Wednesday, March 15, to hear comments from the public. We will all get a chance to vote on the proposed changes on the municipal ballot in November. It is an “up or down” vote, meaning the vote is for all the changes or none.

The main proposed changes to Newton’s government include:

- A reduction in the size of the City Council, from 24 to 12.
- A new configuration for the City Council, with 8 members elected city-wide with residency requirements (one elected member per ward, just like the School Committee) and 4 members elected truly at-large (from anywhere in the city)
- Term limits for all branches of government: 8 years for School Committee (as it currently stands), 12 years for Mayor and 16 years for City Council (both new)

In addition, there are a number of updates to ensure the charter is consistent with state laws and many changes on a smaller scale. The Charter Commission is preparing a document to explain their changes and the rationale they used in their discussions.

Most public comments are focused on the main changes outlined above, particularly the reduction in the size of the City Council and the removal of Ward Councilors. If you would like to comment on any part of the proposal, you can either email the Charter Commission at [chartercommission@newtonma.gov](mailto:chartercommission@newtonma.gov), attend the March 15th meetings, or attend an informational meeting that the League will be holding (date still TBA).



**LWV Newton has rejoined the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber of Commerce!** Pia Bertelli attends a breakfast with other members (courtesy NNCC).

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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).

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**Welcome New Members!**

Marla Hoffman

Matthew Miller

Stephanie Mullane

Michelle Sparks

Steffi Karp

Mary Kelley

Sue Dickinson

Roberta Paul

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

Read the *LWVN Docket Digest*,

available each week at

[www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org)

## CPC Proposal for Crescent Street

January 2, 2017

Alice Ingerson  
Community Preservation Committee Program Manager  
Newton City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

RE: CPC Proposal on Crescent Street – Affordable Housing & Community Park: Final Design

Dear Alice:

The League of Women Voters of Newton (LWVN) has evaluated the proposal by the City of Newton for a master plan/feasibility study and design of the park and the housing on Crescent Street. We find it is well-written, clear, and complete, and the plan fits well into the City's Recreation and Open Space Plan Update (2013-2019).

Our questions about the proposal, and the project in general are as follows:

- The City has not undertaken a project of this type before. This raises several questions:
  - Has the city looked for outside sources of funding for the construction phase?
  - Should the City consider partnering with a non-profit developer for the project to add needed expertise?
  - Would a private non-profit developer be able to leverage outside funding for construction?
  - How will the city insulate itself from the risk of higher vacancy rates?
- Have the proponents considered studio apartments or micro-apartments in this location? This would mean smaller per-unit square footage and more units (perhaps 10 or 12) in the same footprint.
- Will the study include the feasibility of traffic-mitigating measures such as the off-road walking path to West Newton, car share, bike storage, and separate charges for parking and housing?

LWVN recognizes the strong need for alternative and affordable housing in Newton, and we truly want to support this proposal to add badly needed housing. However, our concerns outlined above—in particular, the go-it-alone approach by the City—leads us to a neutral stance on this proposal.

Thanks to members of the Community Preservation Committee and of the City's Building Department for their efforts on this project so far.

Sincerely,

Pia Bertelli  
LWVN President

## Message from the Vice Presidents

February 2017

Dear LWVN Members,

Lisa and I are filling in for Pia Bertelli for the next few months. We appreciate your patience with any communications to us, as we are working to get back up-to-speed on many issues.

As you might have seen in recent LWVN emails, the LWVN Board voted to support the Washington Place proposal on Washington Street as part of the Livable Newton coalition. We are also continuing to monitor the work of the Charter Commission, and will be planning a vote of the membership on whether or not to support the proposed changes. League members continue to observe the City Council, Election Commission and Community Preservation Commission, among other boards and commissions at City Hall. League members continue to work on and plan for voter registration. Thanks to all LWVN members who help with these endeavors!

We would love to observe more and plan more discussions and events—not only on local issues, but also on state and national issues—but we need YOU to help us! There are many ideas and opportunities, but we need the manpower (or womanpower) to help them happen. Contact [info@lwvnewton.org](mailto:info@lwvnewton.org) if you can help us!

In League,

Sue Flicop and Lisa Mirabile  
LWVN Vice Presidents

## Proposed Charter - Ballot Question Committee

A ballot question committee is being formed to promote a Yes vote on the new charter being proposed by Newton's charter commission. This will be an independent, privately funded committee as provided for under state campaign finance laws. The committee is seeking volunteers to serve on the committee, which involves attending meetings and taking on organizing responsibility. The committee is also seeking volunteers to help with specific tasks, such as leafleting at events or public places, hosting or placing yard signs, or knocking on doors. If you would like to be involved with this work, please email Rhanna Kidwell, [RhannaKidwell@comcast.net](mailto:RhannaKidwell@comcast.net).



Members from Leagues across the Commonwealth gathered on Boston Common to participate in the Women's March on January 21, 2017



## League of Women Voters of Newton

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