Over the last several years, serious financial problems have beset the majority of cities and towns in the Commonwealth, including Newton. The constraints of Proposition 2 ½ along with escalating local expenses and exploding unfunded liabilities for retiree pensions and health benefits threaten local services – including the enhanced performance of our schools as a result of the Education Reform Act.

The Commonwealth’s sources of revenue, in particular the capital gains tax, are volatile and recent economic declines have resulted in declines in state aid to municipalities.

A Fiscal Policy Update Study, adopted by the LWVM convention in 2005, was undertaken to “evaluate the current status of the financing of local government.” The 17 member FPU committee has been busy ever since.

In January of last year, the committee organized two all-member forums entitled: “Municipal Finance: Where does the money come from and where does it go?” Next, the committee designed a study on municipal finance so that Leagues could assess the fiscal health of their own communities. Then in October 2007, the Fall Conference featured a panel on “Who pays for local government? Why is it that my property taxes continue to go up while funding local services is a struggle?”

Now the committee is seeking consensus with respect to the fiscal relationship between state and local government.

Between now and May of this year, the Newton League, in order to participate in this consensus, will hold a series of meetings:

• The February 13 Topic Meeting at NewTV will kick off the series with a consensus meeting regarding fiscal policy.

• A second program will look at capital projects, including deferred maintenance, and financing needs and expectations in Newton to help us to better understand if these needs justify a tax override.

• A final program will look at the specifics of our proposed override, the amounts asked for and their relationship to the City’s operating and capital budgets over the next two fiscal years.

Please plan to participate in the consensus process and have your concerns be heard.

League of Women Voters of Newton
Newsletter
Volume 14 Issue 1
February 2008

LWVM STUDY:
Where’s the City Money Gone?
George Foord, Municipal Finance

Talking Trash

Many of you may be wondering why trash has become a topic of discussion in the TAB and on NewTV. Newton is in the midst of negotiating a new solid waste disposal contract. Solid Waste does not include our Recycling pick-ups, this contract is handled separately. Our current contract expires on June 30 this year. We’ve had a great 20 year contract - low cost, high convenience.

Two years ago the Mayor formed the Solid Waste Commission to look into a new solid waste contract. He appointed Alderman Sydra Schnipper as chair. Last fall the Solid Waste Commission (SWC) brought a proposed 5 year contract with Waste Management, Inc., for automated trash pick-up with a 64 gallon bin per residence to the Finance Committee and the trash talks began.

A non-governmental lobbying group for recycling, Citizens for Responsible Waste (CREW), started a public awareness campaign to reduce the bin size to 32 gallons per household to promote increased recycling. In November 2007 a public hearing on the proposed contract was held. Many residents expressed concern that a 64 gallon bin would be difficult for the elderly and disabled to manage. The League wrote a letter of support for a 32 gallon bin. On January 16, 2008, the Board of Aldermen held a discussion on the proposed contract, where many questions were raised.

On January 22, the Board of Aldermen voted against authorizing the Mayor to enter into the contract pro-

Continued on page 3
Starting the New Year with a Bang!

January was a busy month for our diligent League members. We began the New Year in style with our Holiday party on January 5th. Due to the unusually snowy December, we postponed the event to January. Our gracious hosts for the evening, Alderman Vicki Danberg and her husband Dr. John Ficarelli, provided a beautiful and warm setting for our get together. Our members provided delicious food, great conversation, and lively stories. Vicki and John have welcomed the League in their home before, but I hadn’t realized that I was one of their first guests at a party they hosted over 25 years ago. As it turns out, I was a guest at my boss’s wedding. It was my first job out of college and I was a technician at Forsyth Dental School for Dr. Phil Stashenko who was John’s roommate in dental school. When John mentioned that his friend had been named director of Forsyth, I asked what his/her name was. When he answered, Phil Stashenko, I told him that I had attended his wedding. He told me that the reception had been in their back yard shortly after they had purchased the house. Thank you Vicki and John again for your hospitality!

Our month continued with a lively and informative discussion on immigration as a consensus for the National League. LWVUS provided a lot of study materials and over 100 study questions for us to answer. I attended the day session on January 9th which was ably moderated by Andrea Downs. The evening session had a smaller group attending, but also well led by Andrea Kelley. I would like to thank the moderators as well as the committee which included chair Myra Tattenbaum, resource specialists Anne Borg, Bonnie Carter, and Ann Grantham, and recorder Linda Morrison.

Our CPA review committee was also very busy reviewing eight applications for CPC money. The committee was very thorough and came up with a list of questions and recommendations. Priscilla Leith presented these questions, concerns, and recommendations at the CPC meeting on January 23rd. I applaud the reviewers for their hard work. They included chairs Priscilla Leith and Deb Crossley, and members AnnaMaria Abernathy, Tamara Bliss, Leslie Burg, Lucia Dolan, George Foord, Lisa Mirabile, and Linda Morrison. Thank you especially to Deb Crossley and Priscilla Leith for organizing this process.

Our student poll workers were contacted to work at the polls on February 5th for the Democratic and Republican primary elections. The LWVM recently sent out a notice to local Leagues that they will award grants for any League that engages students to work at the polls for the November presidential election. The Newton League is way ahead as we have already trained 20 students and plan to train more for the fall.

Finally, we are gearing up for the upcoming discussions on the override question that we will be asked to vote on in the spring. There will be a lot of information to gather and study before we can make an informed decision. Please contact me if you want to be part of this process.

Sue Rosenbaum
Newton Trash  Continued from page 1

posed by the SWC with Waste Management, Inc. The vote was 19 against, 5 for, and 1 absent. The Mayor can, without Board approval, enter into a contract that lasts up to 3 years. If you are interested in how Newton manages its trash and recycling or other environmental issues, join the League Environmental Committee. Our next meetings are February 28 and March 29 at 9:15 am. Contact luciadolan@rcn.com for more information.

O b s e r v e r  N o t e s

Solid Waste Contract Discussion at Committee of the Whole
January 16, 2008
Lucia Dolan Observing

Present: Entire Board of Aldermen (BoA), except Mitchell Fischman; Elaine Gentile, Newton’s Energy Engineer; Solid Waste Committee (SWC) member Ann Dorfman; another SWC member; and a representative from Waste Management, Inc.

MEETING BEGAN WITH ALDERMAN SCHNIPPER, SWC CHAIR:

SWC is requesting the BoA authorize the Mayor to enter into a multiyear contract for automated solid waste pick-up with a standard 64 gallon bin per residence. The Mayor, on his own, has authority to sign contracts lasting up to 3 years.

SWC began meeting 2 years ago. They explored all options including bringing services back in-house. SWC determined automated pick-up was the best available option because it reduced costs and, by limiting containers, increases recycling. SWC decided after 1 year to enter into a ‘time limited, exclusive discussion’ with Waste Management, Inc., because they were pleased with current services and few companies large enough to handle Newton. The current contract ends June 30, 2008.

If changing to automated pick-up, need signed contract before March to order equipment.

SWC ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS

Automatic trucks can be calibrated to pick-up both 32 gallon and 64 gallon bins.

Residences can choose a 32 gallon bin instead of a 64 gallon.

City will not sell trash bags for overflow.

City will offer households 1 additional 32 gallon container for $4 a month.

If Waste Management needs to service more than 15% of Newton households with manual or semi-automatic pick-up because automated trucks are unable to pick-up a household’s trash, the additional costs are Waste Management’s, not the City’s.

Semi-automated trucks are smaller with automatic arm off the back of the truck. Driver would fetch trash bin and position it for auto-arm and then return bin to residence.

One year bridge contract costs: $193,000 per month for current services. If city signed contract for automated pick-up costs per month equal $147,000.

ALDERMAN’S QUESTIONS

Can there be a trial run of automated pick-up in Newton during the winter? Waste Management video of automated service in winter showed truck on a flat, wide street with no parked cars or traffic.

Up to 1% of households (290) in new contract could qualify for manual pick-up because disabled, elderly, etc. Is 1% enough? How would 1% be determined? What is cost for additional households over 1%?

15% of streets in contract would be serviced by semi-automated trucks because streets are too narrow/difficult for fully automated trucks. Aldermen want to see map of street to be serviced by semi-automated trucks to verify it meets their constituent’s needs.

Cost of a 2 year bridge contract? Recycling contract ends in 2010. Some Aldermen believe synchronizing the solid waste and recycling contracts would save money and increase recycling (Schnipper: the recycling contract can be reopened at any time. SWC will look at recycling contract once trash contract signed. Will look at various options including automated and single stream.)

Overflow pick-ups. Who monitors how often a household can request an overflow pick-up? Is there a minimum or maximum size?

Snow. Will households be willing to shovel a space at curb for bins?

Storage. Will households, especially on small lots, duplexes, etc., have room for bins? In Rhode Island town w/ automated pick-up bins stored in front of house.

Bin questions. Will they roll downhill on steep streets? If the lid is not fully shut for pick-up will trash get dumped on the street?

City is offering Waste Management a $10 million contact for 5 years. Should it have been put out to competitive bid for additional savings?

What changes would be required in Newton’s ordinances? Mayor promised Alderman Coletti a draft of new ordinances would be given to Aldermen by Feb. 14.

Dumpsters? Currently 161 dumpsters picked-up by city that have no size constraints. How can we make sure the list of dumpsters doesn’t grow?

$14 per household saved in switching to automated pick-up. Is it worth the aggravation?

Request for references from other similar communities using automated pick-up.

Observer Notes

Vote in Committee of the Whole: Yates abstained; Hess-Mahan, Vance, Schnipper, Baker – Yea; Sangiolo, Fischman absent; All others – No.

The Committee of the Whole (same members as the Board of Aldermen (BoA)) then reports the vote back to the BoA, who will consider it at their next meeting in 2 weeks. ■
Observers: The Eyes and Ears of the League

By Andrea Kelley, Observer Corp Coordinator

Effective League activity in a community relies on an understanding of how local government works. A League Observer is the eyes and ears of the League, learning how government works and about issues that are, or may become, items for local study and action. Consistent League presence at these meetings also adds to the League’s visibility and credibility.

The Open Meeting Law ensures “the right of all citizens to have advance notice of and to attend all meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting the public is discussed or acted upon, with certain limited exceptions to protect the public interest and preserve personal privacy.” Consistent with this purpose, the general requirement of the law is that “all meetings of public bodies shall be open to the public at all times.” As an Observer, you are exercising that recognized right to be present at any public meeting.

OBJECTIVES: To monitor governmental bodies for information of importance to the League and the community/state.

Functions/Advantages of the Observer Corps

- Enables greater coverage, information gathering
- Can provide early warning of upcoming issues of concern
- Trains future leaders
- Increases the League’s visibility
- Assists with networking with other groups

Responsibilities of Observer

- Awareness of LWV positions and areas of concern
- Attend assigned meetings, arriving promptly.
- Take notes/fill out observer report form.
- Report to the board.
- Advise the board of opportunities for action based on League positions.

The Newton League provides training, both written guidelines and expectations, as well as hands-on help such as teaming up with an experienced Observer to attend meetings. This can be an easy way to learn more about something you are interested in, use your professional expertise in a volunteer and flexible way, and see City government in action. There are currently several Observers in place, but we could use more for other boards and commissions, and to share or alternate with current assignments.

Continued on page 5
PUBLIC MEETINGS

School Committee
Meetings are the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month. Meetings take place in the Frazier Room, in the Education Center, 100 Walnut Street, unless otherwise specified.

Board of Aldermen
Meetings are the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month except for July and August when they are on the 2nd Monday of the month. Meetings are held at 7:45 p.m. at City Hall.

Both School Committee and Board of Aldermen meetings are broadcast live by NewTV and rebroadcast during the week following. See www.newtv.org for current schedules.

Newton Parks & Recreation Committee
Meets on third Monday of each month
(If a holiday falls on the 3rd Monday, the meeting would take place on the 4th Monday) 7:30 p.m. at City Hall.

Subcommittees of the Newton Board of Aldermen

Land Use Committee
www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Agendas/LandAgenda.htm
Working sessions on the Tuesdays following the first and third Mondays of each month, and Public Hearings on the Tuesday following the second Monday of each month.

The Land Use Committee reviews matters relating to Special Permit and Site Plan Approval petitions; utility petitions relating to Special Permit and Site Plan Approval projects; zone change petitions relating to individual, specific parcels; sign permits; lodging house and dormitory licenses; licensing of automobile dealers; and permits for storage of towed vehicles.

Programs & Services Committee
www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Agendas/programsAgendas.htm
Meets on the Wednesdays following the first and third Monday of each month.

The Programs and Services Committee reviews items relating to the Human Services Dept., Library, Recreation Dept., Law Dept. (except for claims), Veterans’ Services Dept., Licensing Commission, City Clerk, Clerk of the Board, Rules of the Board, Election Commission, Health Dept., City Physician, Newton Public Schools, Community Schools, Newton Housing Authority. As well as matters relating to the inter-relationship of the School Committee and Newton Public Schools with other areas of City government.

Public Safety and Transportation Committee
www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Agendas/psAgenda.htm
Meets on the Wednesdays following the first and third Monday of each month.

The Public Safety and Transportation Committee reviews matters relating to the Fire Dept., Police Dept., and Civil Defense Dept., as well as matters relating to the Traffic Engineer and Traffic Council; taxi routes, stops and licensing; bus routes, stops and licensing; public transportation; and utility petitions relating to specific traffic signals.

Public Facilities Committee
www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Agendas/publicfacilitiesAgenda.htm
Meets on the Wednesdays following the first and third Monday of each month;

Public Facilities also holds utility hearings on the Wednesday following the third Monday of each month.

The Public Facilities Committee reviews matters related to the Dept. of Public Works, including the Water and Sewer Division; Public Buildings Dept.; and Engineering Dept. including: street acceptance, layout, construction, repair, and maintenance; relocation and discontinuance of public ways; water and sewer services; storm drains; street lighting; public utility easements and poles; and construction, repair, and maintenance of public buildings.

Zoning and Planning Committee
www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Agendas/ZoneAgenda.htm
Meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month.

The Zoning and Planning Committee reviews matters relating to the Inspectional Services Dept., Planning Dept., Conservation Commission, and Historic Commission.

Finance Committee
www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Agendas/FinanceAgenda.htm
Meets on the second and fourth Mondays of each month.

The Finance Committee reviews requests related to Budget review and transfers, policy oversight and review, capital improvements, and matters relating to the Assessing Dept., Parking Fine Administration, City Treasurer and Collector, City Comptroller and Accounting Dept., Purchasing Dept., Executive Office, Personnel Dept., and Data Processing Dept.

Real Property Reuse Committee
www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Agendas/RealProp.htm
Meets on the Tuesday following the fourth Monday of each month.

The Real Property Reuse Committee reviews the sale or lease of city-owned property.

Post Audit and Oversight Committee
www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Audit/Audit.htm
Meets on the Tuesday following the fourth Monday of each month.

The Post Audit and Oversight Committee reviews matters relating to the status of items previously passed by any other committee.

Committee on Community Preservation
http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Community/Community.htm
Meets on the Tuesday following the fourth Monday of each month.

The Committee on Community Preservation reviews requests for appropriations from community preservation funds and all other matters relating to community preservation.

Long Range Planning Committee
www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/Agendas/LongRange.htm
Meets on the fourth Wednesday following the fourth Monday of each month.

The Long Range Planning Committee is a special committee of the Board currently reviewing the long-range financial resources of the City of Newton.

Contact Andrea Kelley if you have any interest or questions: rtdesign@aol.com 617-527-2467
Newton Community Preservation Program
2008 Proposals LWVM Review

By Deb Crossley and Priscilla Leith, Co-Chairs

This year’s readers did a thoughtful and efficient job reading and assessing the merits of each of the eight proposals before the Newton CPC. Several readers reviewed each proposal, communicated via email and drafted reports to the committee. At a single two-hour meeting, the committee was able to reach consensus on its recommendations and testimony. The reports were edited to incorporate our discussion. At 1/15 working board these committee reports were approved as written, and a cover letter highlighting key findings was recommended. Deb drafted the letter, which was reviewed via email and approved by six board members plus the president. Priscilla Leith delivered our testimony at the January 23 public hearing in the library; copies of the reports, cover letter and summary sheet were distributed to the CPC.

In general, the hearing ran smoothly and finished well ahead of time. It was noteworthy that the three proposals that requested funds for cataloguing historic resources and preserving historic documents at the History museum and City Archives were excellent. It should also be noted that the presentation of the partial restoration of the Newton Centre Playground incorporated far more information and graphic material than was evident in the proposal, about which LWV was highly critical. The full text of the professional study completed of that park was made available to us only that evening.

Several proponents of certain proposals spoke in favor of them. Some opposition was expressed. Overall, the hearing was otherwise lightly attended.

Environmental Committee Action

To: Community Preservation Committee
cc: Board of Aldermen, Committee on Community Preservation
Re: LWV Review of Proposals for CPA funding; public hearing January 23, 2008

Once again, the League of Women Voters of Newton convened a subcommittee to review and assess CPA proposals, taking into consideration both the law and the CPC’s own plan and guidelines. The LWVN continues its enthusiastic support of the CPA in Newton and monitors the implementation process closely to assure that this valuable program be administered so as to build public trust and ensure its future.

This year, the League is encouraged to see several proposals that seek to protect and plan for the future, by establishing long term protection of city and museum archives, and by establishing an inventory and catalog of historic landscapes in the city. The League heartily supports these efforts and believes that the results will be extremely useful as tools to guide future preservation efforts.

However, the LWVN is concerned that some proposals attempt to fund maintenance work using CPA monies, and no long term maintenance plans are detailed in the applications for new work. Several proposals that seek to enhance or improve public park lands as historic landscapes or historic elements within parks, are not well documented. The Heritage landscape inventory would be extremely useful in helping to identify and prioritize need.

We understand that although each project is much desired by proponents and may appear to be meritorious and benefit the community, it may still not be appropriate for funding under CPA guidelines. We remain concerned that only those projects that conform to both the letter and the spirit of the Law, as well as the Community Preservation Committee’s own guidelines, be funded.

The League thanks the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for its great service to the community. We very much appreciate the time and commitment that your task entails.

Sincerely,

Sue Rosenbaum, President
League of Women Voters of Newton
### CPA Proposals Summary

All are Historic Preservation category, unless otherwise noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title, Location</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Submitted by</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>CPA Rqst</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. City Archives, Ph II Citywide</td>
<td>Preserve archival matrix &amp; impr access, storage facilities.</td>
<td>David Olson, City Clerk</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$70,076</td>
<td>LWVN support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Edmunds Park Wall W2, Blake St., NV</td>
<td>Restore historic stone wall surrounding Park</td>
<td>Steve Tocci, DPW</td>
<td>102,000</td>
<td>102,000</td>
<td>Urge proponents to seek other sources of funding; city shld pay for its own masons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Farlow-Chaffin Pk, Ph I W1, Eldridge &amp; Church St</td>
<td>Determine feasibility of restoring pond, using well water, do design</td>
<td>Friends of Farlow Park, Parks &amp; Rec Dept</td>
<td>492,927</td>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>Comments, questions re proposed pond, maint. costs, long term op. costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Heritage Lnsclp Invnty Citywide</td>
<td>ID, evaluate preservation &amp; restoration priorities for public landscapes, etc</td>
<td>Mike Kruse, Planning Dept</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>LWVN support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Newton Centre Plygrd W6, Tyler Terr, NC</td>
<td>Initiate, improve access &amp; increase passive rec. opportunities</td>
<td>Parks and Rec Dept.</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>Questions, comments re leveraged funding, FR, cost estimates, need for community support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Newton Fire Dept. HQ W6, 1164 Centre St., NC</td>
<td>Restore 1928 bronze doors, entrance hrdrwr</td>
<td>Capt. Mark Roche, Newton Fire Dept</td>
<td>5,082</td>
<td>5,082</td>
<td>LWVN oppose, citing Sec of Interior's standards, rec's re patina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Newton History Musm Archives Presrv W1, 527 Washington St.</td>
<td>Rehabilitate, expand the research library, archives to improve public access</td>
<td>Cynthia Stone, Newton History Museum</td>
<td>357,400</td>
<td>357,400</td>
<td>LWVN support, with comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. NUF Playground Restoration W5, Chestnut &amp; Penna., UF</td>
<td>Improvements to provide rec benefits, aesthetic enhancmnt to old park</td>
<td>Parks &amp; Rec Dept.</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>450,000</td>
<td>Comments, questions. Urge other funding sources more community support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$2,437,409</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,358,558</strong></td>
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Quincy, MA 02169
League of Women Voters of Wellesley invites you to
Meet with Congressman Barney Frank
Sunday, February 10th at 2:45 p.m.
First Unitarian Church  309 Washington St. (Rte 16)  Wellesley Hills
Congressman Frank has been a member of Congress since 1981. He is presently Chairman of the Financial Services Committee, which considers legislation relative to issues such as predatory and sub-prime mortgages, executive compensation, and the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Congressman Frank will share his views on these and other issues as well as respond to questions from the audience.

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