
League of Women Voters of Newton

Newsletter

Volume 14, Issue 8

November 2008

Would you join a study of the city charter?

Adapted from meeting minutes by Andrea Kozinetz

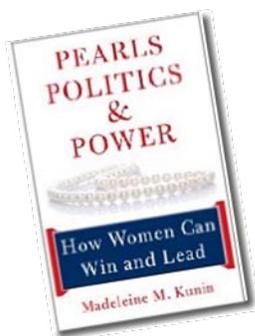
On Wednesday, October 29, the LWVN held an open member meeting to discuss a motion to change the local program for 2008-2009 to undertake a study of the city charter. The goal of the study would be to determine whether the LWVN should support an official charter review.

Prior to this meeting, Terry Yoffie contacted LWVN members Ellen Lipson and Ruth Fernandez-Herlihy, both of whom were active League members at the time of the League's last study of the city's charter in 1967. Terry came away convinced that another such study would require tremendous time and commitment and expressed concern that there are simply not enough current members willing or able to undertake such a

project at this time. Terry also pointed out that a new study would need to review the entire Charter, not just selected portions, as the Charter review process opens the entire Charter to possible revisions. She added, however, that any current study would benefit greatly from being able to draw on the work currently being done by the Newton's Citizen Advisory Group (CAG).

Tom Sheff suggested that in contrast to the 1967 study, much of the research for a study today could be done online, thus decreasing the amount of work required. He also mentioned that there are a number of ad hoc groups and subcommittees that have already looked at the existing charter, and that a group has already begun to gather

Continued on page 6



BRUNCH WITH Madeline M. Kunin

*Pearls, Politics and Power:
How Women Can Win and Lead*
in conversation with Robin Young
Sunday, November 16, 2008, 11:00am

The Boston Jewish Book Fair is honored to present the first Jewish woman to be elected as governor of any state. Madeline M. Kunin was elected to three terms as the governor of Vermont and served as the Deputy Secretary of Education and Ambassador to Switzerland under President Bill Clinton. Join us for a fascinating discussion about women's role in government and contemporary leadership

Robin Young is the award-winning host of WBUR's *Here and Now*. She has hosted the *Today Show* and *CBS Morning* and is best known to Boston audiences for her part in launching the popular *Evening Magazine* on WBZ-TV.

Admission: \$12 general; \$10 JCC member / LWVN member. Tickets are available by calling 617-965-5226 or online at http://www.lsjcc.org/home/cultural_book.html.

LWVN is a co-sponsor of this important program.



From the President

November 2008

Dear League Members,

On election night I sat with my daughters watching the nation celebrating, crying, and reflecting on the election and a great moment in history. I thought about how different my excited daughters are feeling now and how I felt thirty-four years ago as I watched Nixon resign over the Watergate scandal. Today, I am inspired again by the unique effort and collaboration of so many different groups to move our country away from its fractured, cynical character. I am very proud to join with all of you in working in the League, and proud that for the first time in many years, I am observing Americans hopeful and engaged again.

Locally, your League worked hard to defeat Question 1. The ballot initiative failed by more than a 2 to 1 margin, giving us cause to celebrate our collective commitment to Massachusetts as we know it. To defeat Question 1, we wrote a letter to the TAB and supported our members who published editorials against the initiative. We focused a Legislative Roundtable on Question 1 that ran on NewTV, and we offered an event on the subject at Alderman Vicki Danberg's home with Senator Cynthia Creem, Newton's Chief Administrative Officer Sandy Pooler, and Alderman Ted Hess-Mahan. Finally, I was interviewed for a NewTV news story on Question 1. Thanks to all of you who worked to help defeat Question 1.

On October 29, we had an open member meeting to discuss changing our annual program plan to begin a study of the city charter instead of working on our municipal finance agenda. At this first meeting, attendees expressed concern about the proposed change for two reasons. The first is the concern that the effort to place an initiative on the ballot in November 2009 is too rushed. The last time a commission convened, both the League and the Republican and Democratic parties had already studied the charter and made recommendations for change. This is not the case today. A number of members questioned the urgency to put the question about forming a charter commission on the ballot. The second concern is whether there are enough League members to work on a study. We find our group of active members is fairly small and already stretched to the maximum with existing work. As your president, I hope that you will consider the challenges of completing such a huge project without an adequate supply of volunteers. I would prefer we spend our energies on the current program, and in my conversations with members, their preference was for the

League to continue to study Newton's current fiscal situation. We will have a final meeting for members to vote for or against the proposal on November 13 at 7:00 pm, at my house (363 Waverley Ave.). We hope you will attend and cast your vote.

On **November 16** we are co-sponsoring a **Brunch with Madeleine M. Kunin at the JCC in Newton, starting at 11 am.** Governor Kunin will discuss her book, *Pearls, Politics and Power: How Women Can Win and Lead* with **Robin Young of WBUR**, at the Boston Jewish Book Fair. At noon, a roundtable discussion will follow as the League of Women Voters hosts **Madeleine M. Kunin, State Senators Marian Walsh and Cynthia Creem** and other women involved in state, local and national politics. Join us for a fascinating discussion about women's role in government and contemporary leadership and how to motivate women to run for public office. Madeleine Kunin was elected to three terms as the governor of Vermont and was the first Jewish woman to be elected governor of a state. She also served as the Deputy Secretary of Education and Ambassador to Switzerland under President Bill Clinton.

On November 20, the League's Environmental Committee is sponsoring a forum called **Cash in the Trash** to explore and better understand how Newton citizens can reduce solid waste and save money. Speakers for this event include **Brooke Nash, Branch Chief, Municipal Waste Reduction, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.** Ms. Nash has worked in the environmental and recycling field for 25 years. Her presentation will describe how cities and towns in the Commonwealth are saving money on their trash and recycling services. **Tom Daley, Newton's Commissioner of the Department of Public Works** will describe pilot programs getting underway in five Newton neighborhoods to test whether single-stream recycling and automated trash pick-up will work here and encourage more recycling by home-owners and businesses. He will discuss how these and other practices could favorably impact the city's budget for solid waste removal and recycling. The evening will conclude with a question and answer period moderated by **Brooke Lipsitt, former president of the Board of Aldermen.** Our co-sponsors for this event are the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce, Green Decade Coalition/Newton, Newton TAB, Newton Free Library, Newton Solid Waste Commission and Newton For Fiscal Responsibility (NFFR).

Sincerely,

Terry Yoffie

Terry Yoffie, President, Newton League of Women Voters

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS 2008-2009

OFFICERS

President	
Terry Yoffie	617-965-1796
Vice President Operations	
Anne Borg	617- 244-6366
Vice President Communications	
Lisa Mirabile	617- 332-5374
Vice President Outreach/Voter Service	
Sharyn Roberts	617-969-9588
Treasurer	
Andrea Kozinetz	617-964-6490
Clerk	
Gail Glick	617- 964-5252

DIRECTORS

Pat Acton	617-965-5572
Leslie Burg	617- 244-7597
Bonnie Carter	617- 969-0686
George Foord	617-332-1654
Ellen Gibson	617-527-2856
Ann Grantham	617-964-0333
Priscilla Leith	617-969-6837
Sue Rosenbaum	617-332-0306
Sharon Stout	781-856-0004

COMMITTEES

Education

Gail Glick

Election Commission

Nancy Criscitiello

Environment

Lucia Dolan & Beth Lowd

Housing

Myra Tattenbaum

Local Action

Priscilla Leith & Leslie Burg

Municipal Finance

George Foord & Terry Yoffie

Nominating Committee

Robin Maltz, Andrea Kelley, and
Barbara Sydney

Topic Meetings

Carol Ann Shea & Jodi Klein

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Lisa Mirabile, 617-332-5374.

To receive an **audio version** of this Newsletter, call Terry Yoffie at 617-965-1796.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization open to all citizens of voting age. For more information about the League of Women Voters, call 617-964-0014 or visit www.lwvnewton.org.

ARCHIVES PROJECT

“We’re hoping to preserve a record of just how the League works,” says Linda Morrison, co-chair of the LWVN Archive project committee. The group has met for six mornings in October and will continue to schedule work sessions throughout the year.

LWVN Handbooks, Bulletins/Newsletters, Minutes of Annual Meetings and Annual Meeting Workbooks, Minutes of Board Meetings and copies of the publications generated by LWVN are being gathered and placed in an accessible order. In addition, materials from the different study committees and records of functions we have presented are also being gathered and made accessible.

While we have paper copies of these materials, with minutes dating back to 1944, there is concern about a record of all the work we have done electronically. Please think about what you have that is a picture of how we work, put a date on it and make a paper copy for our collection.

If you have any folders, files or boxes in your possession that belong in our collection, or if you are able to help with the project, contact Ann Grantham Agrant46@gmail.com or 617-964-0333.



Priscilla Leith, Linda Morrison and Sharie Arntz helping in the initial “weeding” of our materials.

Contribute to NewTV's first Annual Live Auction

Donate Goods or Services!

Volunteer to help answer phones!



**November 17th, 18th, and 19th
6pm – 10pm**

The NewTV Auction will be one of the most popular and anticipated events in Newton, resulting in highly spirited bidding and audience participation. Your donation is a great way to show your support, as well as advertise your business or service.

NewTV is committed to supporting the community, through community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, and school programs. In addition, the Lipof Fellowship in Broadcast Journalism provides paid internships to junior and senior college students in news reporting.

Since 1991, the Newton community has depended on NewTV for local, public, educational and government access programming. Our three channels are viewed by over 80% of the households in Newton.

For more information contact Bob Kelly at 617-965-7200 x117 or email auktion@newtv.org.

REMINDER

All League memberships now run from September to August. If you haven't already, please pay your bill for 2008/09!

Housing Action Plan Initiative (HAPI)

The Newton League of Women Voters has joined the Housing Action Plan Initiative (HAPI) to move forward with the action plan developed in the Newton Comprehensive Plan to increase the supply of affordable housing in Newton. To begin this process, HAPI held a meeting on October 30 at the Scandinavian Living Center. Since this meeting will occur after our bulletin deadline, we will submit a summary for the upcoming bulletin. Stay tuned.

HAPI intends to focus on municipal policies and procedures which discourage development of affordable housing. A plan of action will be established and occasional meetings will be held throughout 2009 to note progress.

We look forward to our League taking an active part in this process. If you wish to get involved, contact Myra Tattenbaum at 617-527-2830 or Tattenbaum@verizon.net.

LWVN is holding a special

Open Member Meeting

In the second of two meetings required to make changes to our annual program, we will vote on the proposal to amend the League's 2008/09 Program to include a study of the City Charter

November 13, 2008

7:00-pm

**Terry Yoffie's House
363 Waverley Ave.**

November Topic Meeting

**Community Preservation Committee
Projects: Past, Present and Future!**

**Wednesday November 12 2008
11:30am – 1:30 pm**

Presented by the LWVN Local Action Committee

What priorities do you think the Community Preservation Committee should set for future funding as the amount of state matching funds continues to shrink? Join us as we review Newton's CPC-funded projects and share your thoughts about the future.

NewTV Conference Room
23 Needham Street, Newton Highlands
(Go up Easy Street, next to National Lumber)
Handicapped accessible. Bring your lunch!

CASH IN THE TRASH

**Thursday, November 20
7:00 – 9:00pm**

**Druker Auditorium,
Newton Free Library**

Newton residents throw away \$5 million per year! Come learn how Newton citizens can reduce the production of solid waste and save the city money. Speakers will be Brooke Nash of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and Tom Daley, Newton's new Commissioner of the Department of Public Works. *This event was organized by the Environmental Issues Committee of the League of Women Voters of Newton and is sponsored in addition by the Newton Solid Waste Commission, the Green Decade Coalition, Newton for Fiscal Responsibility, the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce, the Newton TAB, and the Newton Free Library.*

October Topic Meeting: A Conversation about the Citizen Advisory Group

By Lisa Mirabile

On Wednesday, October 22, the LWVN welcomed Mal Salter, Ruthanne Fuller and George Foord to talk about their work on the Citizen Advisory Group (CAG). Mal Salter, the chair of the CAG, began with a general introduction to the Group's work, explaining that it follows on the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission, of which all three were also members. The CAG's charge was twofold, Salter said: first, to ask "What are our choices?" and second, to make suggestions for improvements to current operations.

The meeting was then turned over to Ruthanne Fuller, the primary author of the CAG's Benchmark Study, which set out to compare Newton to other communities -- not to find answers, but to discover the right questions to ask. The study's aim was "to collect data that would help us identify and frame the most important questions related to (1) the choices facing Newton with respect to municipal and educational service levels and their long-term funding and (2) innovative ways of increasing the operational efficiency and effectiveness and developing new or enhanced sources of funding for City services."

Both Salter and Fuller emphasized that the report is still very much a draft, and further, that it must be read with several caveats in mind: first, every city and town categorizes its activities and reports its data slightly differently, making precise comparisons difficult; and second, Newton is demographically quite an unusual city. Newton residents have higher incomes on average than other Massachusetts cities of comparable size, and the city has a relatively small commercial tax base. It also has a long-standing commitment to educational excellence, but a relatively small number of households with children in the schools.

Due to these difficulties, the benchmarking study group eventually chose several different sets of communities to benchmark against, including a core set; a set that adds two towns to better measure public safety expenditures; and a set that adds towns with similar commitments to educational excellence (all of which are significantly smaller than Newton) to better judge educational expenditures.

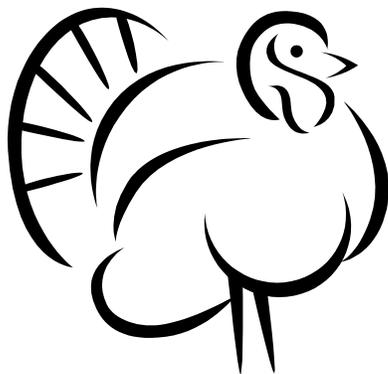
Among the Benchmarking Study's discoveries were the facts that Newton spends relatively less on its Fire Department and general administration, but relatively more on Human Services. Public Works is also relatively high, but as an example of the importance of understanding the background of any given statistic, Salter reminded the audience that Newton offers curbside trash and recycling pickup, which many of the other communities in the comparison group don't. One of the most significant differences the study found was that Newton's per capita debt load is significantly lower than other communities.

The meeting concluded with a number of thoughtful and interesting questions from the audience and a general agreement that there is much difficult work ahead. We must use the questions that these numbers raise to establish the city's real priorities so that the decisions that lie ahead can be made as wisely as possible.

Organization Promoting “Aging in Place” Seeks Input from Seniors

A new organization called Newton at Home has recently formed to help seniors stay in their homes as they age. The organization’s mission is “to enable Newton residents to age at home comfortably, safely, independently, and with peace of mind through a membership-based organization that offers access to comprehensive practical service and fosters social support and a sense of community.” Part of a national movement that is likely to appeal particularly to today’s aging baby boomers, Newton at Home is one of dozens of such “aging in place” communities now springing up all across the country. All of the existing aging-in-place “villages” have been inspired and influenced by Boston’s Beacon Hill Village, which was the first in the nation to construct a viable formula to answer the needs of an aging population with a strong desire to remain at home.

In order to assess the potential for the venture, Newton at Home has partnered with the Newton Department of Senior Services to launch a survey of older Newton residents to determine their level of interest in belonging to an organization that would help people remain in their Newton homes as they grow older. Older Newton residents are invited to fill out the survey, which can be accessed online at www.newtonathome.org. Hard copies will also be available at several locations throughout the city, including the library, City Hall, and the Newton Senior Center. Survey responses will help tailor the particular services Newton at Home will offer to its members. The survey can be completed in about 10 minutes, and all responses will remain completely anonymous. For further information about Newton at Home, email or call Tamara Bliss at 617-244-6495, tjbliss@verizon.net.



signatures and is confident that it will be able to collect the required number by June 2009 to put the question on the November 2009 municipal ballot.

Susan Rosenbaum suggested that the LWVN might be willing to consider a charter review study, but that the League could not adhere to the ad hoc group’s planned schedule. Leslie Burg agreed that there should be a study to review the Charter, but also said that the LWVN would not be able to conduct a study in time for the 2009 ballot. The goal of such a study, Burg said, should be to educate Newton’s citizens about the existing charter and the charter review process; achieving that goal would take time. Janet Sterman asked why 2009 was the target and Tom Sheff responded that there is momentum now.

Pat Acton, who had served on a Charter Commission for a town of 68,000 people a number of years ago, said that the work was daunting and took two years. Terry Yoffie indicated that the League would insist on a level of excellence and need to identify who will chair the study. Myra Tattenbaum proposed that LWVN put a study of Newton’s City Charter into next year’s program. This would allow sufficient time to put together a thoughtful proposal which would be presented at annual meeting in May of 2009.

The consensus of the meeting was that the current program should not be changed at this time, but that a study of the charter should be presented as part of the 2009-2010 program. According to the LWVN’s bylaws, a second member meeting is required to vote on the original proposal; that meeting is scheduled for November 13 at 7:00 pm, at Terry Yoffie’s house, 363 Waverley Ave.

What do you think?

Do you believe that undertaking a charter study is a relevant and appropriate mission for the LWVN? If so, are there enough members sufficiently interested in and able to commit the time to such an undertaking? Would you volunteer to work on such an effort? Contact any board member to share your thoughts, or email board@lwvnewton.org.

Welcome new members!

Judi Bartek, 32 Ferncroft St, Newton 02468, judibartek@yahoo.com

Emily Prenner, 189 Carlton Rd, Newton 02468, premy@yahoo.com

Maurya Sullivan, 19 Brentwood Ave, Newton 02459, mauryas@verizon.net

JOIN US!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEWTON

Membership in the LWVN offers the chance to gain knowledge and experience about vital issues in Newton as well as in Massachusetts and in the nation at large; to make a valuable contribution to your community; to discover new interests, develop new skills, make new contacts and develop lasting friendships.

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. You will receive regular publications from all three organizations, as well as a chance to be active, informed and heard.

Name(s)		Home Phone	
Address		Other Phone	
City/State/Zip		Email Address	

Please CIRCLE preferred method of contact: Phone / Email

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual - \$55.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Household (2 members) - \$75.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Membership - \$75.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Membership - \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Membership - \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution \$ _____ |

Please return your completed form with your check, payable to LWVN (or pay online by credit card at www.lwvnewton.org). Membership dues and contributions to the LWV Newton are not deductible for tax purposes. Tax-deductible contributions to LWV US Educational Fund may be made by check and sent to the LWVN Treasurer. Assistance is available if membership dues present a financial hardship. If you prefer, you can call us at 617-964-0014 or email info@lwvnewton.org to request a membership packet.

Please send checks to: Andrea Kozinetz, LWVN Treasurer, 8 Stony Brae Road, Newton Highlands, MA 02461.

LWVN CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

- 12th Wed., 11:30 am, **Topic Meeting: Community Preservation Committee**, NewTV conference room, 23 Needham St.
- 13th Thurs., 7:00 pm, **Special Member Meeting** at Terry Yoffie's, 363 Waverley Ave.
- 14th Fri., morning, **Local Action Comm.** at Anne Borg's, 155 Winchester St, check online calendar for exact time
- 16th Sun., 11:00 am, **Brunch with Madeline M. Kunin**, Newton JCC, 333 Nahanton Street.
- 20th Thurs., 7:00 pm, **Solid Waste Forum**, Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library
- 21st Fri., 9:30 a.m., **Environmental Comm. meeting** at Lucia Dolan's.20 Devon Rd.

DECEMBER

- 4th Thurs., 7:00 pm, **LWVN Board Meeting**, location to be announced.
- 12th Fri., morning, **Local Action Comm.**, location and exact time to be announced.
- 18th Thurs., 7:00 pm, **LWVN Board Meeting**, location to be announced.

League of Women Voters of Newton

P O Box 610207
Newton, MA 02461
617-964-0014
www.lwvnewton.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

Would you join a study of the city charter?	1
From the President	2
Archives Project.....	3
NewTV's first Annual Live Auction	4
Housing Action Plan Initiative (HAPI).....	4
A Conversation about the CAG	5
Cash in the Trash	5
Newton at Home: Aging in Place	5
Welcome New Members!	7