
League of Women Voters of Newton

Newsletter

Volume 17, Issue 3

visit us online at www.lwvnewton.org

August 2011

September Topic Meeting: What is Economic Development?

The term "Economic Development" has been used in discussions of schools, funding municipal services, and the kinds of building we want to occur in the City. But what do we mean by Economic Development anyway? And how do all of these issues come together into a policy which encourages responsible development in balance with other community goals?

Join us on Thursday, September 15th from 7:30 pm to 9 pm in Room 222 at City Hall for *Economic Development 101*, a primer on the important elements that make up

the term "economic development." Learn what this means to the community, in terms of both financial opportunities and quality of life in Newton.

Our speaker will be Chris Steele, a Newton resident and occasional visiting professor at UMass Boston and UMass Dartmouth on Regional Economic Development. Chris also runs a consulting firm which specializes in corporate site selection and economic development.

Top 10 Reasons to Get Involved with the League Again



1. Fill up all the space in your email inbox.
2. Attend meetings day and night!
3. Test your meeting length endurance. See how long you can last sitting in a single place—perhaps a CPC meeting, a School Committee meeting or a Board of Aldermen meeting.
4. Hurry up and wait for things to go through the Board of Aldermen.

OK, seriously, there really ARE some great reasons to become active. Here are six:

1. Be involved and engaged in your community, by becoming knowledgeable and developing informed opinions.
2. Revive old friendships and make new ones.
3. Work with other people committed to making Newton an even better place to live.
4. Feel a sense of accomplishment in your efforts at voter education and/or advocacy.
5. Be a part of an organization with a long history of service to the community and to voters.
6. Contribute in areas where you are passionate. The League has committees on the environment, education, housing, land use, voter services and is reviving its municipal finance committee as well.

We have lots of ideas on moving the League forward but need your help to do it. There are lots of ways to volunteer, depending on your interests and availability. You really don't need to attend lots of meetings—there are ways to help from home or in other capacities. Please join us!

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DIRECTORS
2011-2012**

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For an **audio version** of this newsletter, call Anne Borg at 617-244-6366.

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.

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Education Study Committee

Jo Corro
Lynn Scheller

Elections Committee

Nancy Criscitiello
Ellen Glusman

Environmental Issues

Alison Leary Mooradian

Environmental Issues

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Newsletter & Website

Lisa Mirabile & Tami Roberts

Topic Meetings

Jo Corro

Voters Service/Citizen Education

Bonnie Carter
Sharyn Roberts

**Local Transportation Review
Committee: Volunteers Needed!**

LWVN is beginning an exciting two-year study of Newton's transportation system to develop local position statements that will help guide LWVN's future advocacy. The study will include all modes of transportation available in Newton, and address issues of sustainability, safety, efficiency and coordination.

Volunteers are needed every step of the way, to help with research and education, meeting and forum planning, writing and publicity, evaluation, and so much more. If you would like to help, please contact Alison Leary Mooradian at transportationstudy@lwvnewton.org.

75 Years of LWVN at Jackson Homestead

Seventy-five years of LWVN history will be on display at the Jackson Homestead on Washington Street from September 15 to January 15! As part of its Newton Salutes program, Historic Newton will display photos and memorabilia from the LWVN archives. Be sure to stop by for a glimpse into the incredibly productive and important work League members have accomplished over the years. Jackson Homestead hours are from 11 am to 5 pm Tuesday through Friday, or 12 noon to 5 pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

Letter from the Presidents

We hope that everyone is staying cool this summer – it has been a scorcher!

First, thank you to everyone who attended the annual meeting. Your new League officers and board members for 2011-2012 are:

Anne Borg and Sue Flicop - *Co-Presidents*

Bonnie Carter – *Clerk*

Andrea Kozinetz – *Treasurer*

Leslie Burg – *Housing*

Jo Corro – *Topic Meetings and LWVUS Ed Study*

Gail Glick – *Legislative Roundtable*

Ellen Glusman – *Elections Committee*

Ann Grantham – *Membership*

Alison Leary – *Environmental Issues*

Sharyn Roberts – *Voters Service*

Tami Roberts* – *Communications, Newsletter*

Lynn Scheller – *LWVUS Ed Study*

(*Tami was appointed to the board at our July 6 meeting)

Please feel free to contact us with your ideas, questions, and/or concerns at info@lwvnewton.org.

We will be piloting something new this fall: LWVN Co-Presidents' "Office Hours." Starting in September, we will meet early on a regularly scheduled morning at a convenient, public place in Newton (e.g., Baker's Best, Panera, etc.). We will be available for members to join us to talk about current and ongoing issues, ideas you may have, or to just have some "League Talk." We will have more details in the September newsletter.

Despite the hot summer days, the League board and committees have been busy. We made a statement to the Massachusetts Legislature about the "Safer Alternatives" bill and LWVN members attended the July 20 rally and testimony at the State House about the expanded Bottle Bill. We have been reviewing the plans for the proposed Riverside Station development, and the restoration of the Riverside Park footbridge.

Environmental Issues Committee members are busy planning a transportation forum for this fall. LWVN is also partnering with Historic Newton this fall; starting in September, LWVN will be the featured organization in their "Newton Salutes" series. We are also exploring ways that the two organizations can collaborate on civic engagement. Look for more information about these events in the next several weeks.

In August, LWVN members will be participating in a weekend training workshop sponsored by LWVUS.

Newton is one of several local Massachusetts Leagues chosen for LWVUS' *Membership and Leadership Development Program*. We will have more information about this exciting program in future newsletters.

This year, there are two LWVUS consensus studies. The first one is entitled "The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education." Please see the article in this newsletter for more information about this important and timely study. Later in the year, there will be a consensus study on privatization.

LWVN has several active committees (Education, Environment, Elections, Housing, Voters Service) that are always looking for volunteers. Our Municipal Finance committee has been dormant in recent years. We are planning to revitalize it this year. One of the priority action items at the June Annual Meeting was to have the Municipal Finance committee lead the collaboration of other LWVN committees regarding the Newton City budget. If you are interested in helping with this important work, please let us know.

The LWVUS Clean Air ads presented a difficult situation for Massachusetts Leagues, including Newton. Newton League members have been divided about the content and tone of the ads, but we all felt blindsided by the process that LWVUS used when making their decision to run these ads. At the request of annual meeting attendees, the LWVN board is writing a letter to the LWVUS board; we will vote on it at our next meeting and publish it in the September newsletter.

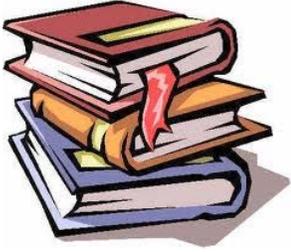
Unfortunately, the LWVUS ads have complicated the publication of this year's Municipal Election Voters Guide. The *Newton TAB* has declined to publish our Voters Guide as editorial content in the printed TAB or on their *Wicked Local* website. We are exploring all options to reach as many Newton voters as we can. In the meantime, we are looking for the issues that League members think are most important for us to address in our Voters Guide questions. Please email Sharyn Roberts at voterservice@lwvnewton.org with your suggestions.

Be sure to look for the LWVN voter registration table at the Farmers' Markets at both Cold Spring Park and Nonantum. (Volunteers are always appreciated – please email Sharyn at sharyn@neovana.com if you can help!).

In League,

Sue and Anne
presidents@lwvnewton.org

Studying Education This Summer



By Jo Corro

Make the LWVUS Education Consensus Study your beach reading this summer. As you know we are conducting a study on the question of the “Role of the Federal Government in Public Education”. For more information about the study please see the [Education Study](#) page on the [www.lwv.org](#) website.

You have a couple of options for the study. The League is providing several background articles in their original form as well as in two-page summary form, so you can choose to read either version. If you are receiving this newsletter by mail, the short versions are enclosed; online readers can download the articles and/or summaries directly from the [Education Study](#) page (to navigate there, visit [www.lwv.org](#), click “For Members,” then “Projects and Programs” and from the “Taskforces & Studies” section, click the Education Study link.) The articles are:

- Common Core Standards
- The History Of Federal Government In Public Education
- The Role Of The Federal Government In Public Education:
 - Where Are We Now and The Impact Upon Early Childhood Education
 - Equity And Funding
 - Legislation And Funding For The Education of Children With Special Needs

If you want to go further, the Newton League has purchased a few copies of two books that provide more in-depth information on this important question. The books are *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* by Diane Ravitch and *The Flat World and Education*, by Linda Darling-Hammond. If you wish to borrow either of these books please e-mail: info@lwvnewton.org.

The study must be completed for review by the Board in early November.

SAVE THE DATE: Thurs., October 13 – Consensus Day

Two consensus sessions will be held on October 13. We are scheduling two sessions to allow for enough time to address the consensus questions. There will be a meeting from 11:30 – 1:30 pm on Common Core Standards at NewTV Conference Room, Needham Street, Newton Highlands and an evening meeting at City Hall, room 222 from 7:00 – 9:00 pm on Equity and Funding. More information on these meetings will be coming out in the fall.

In preparation for reaching consensus there will be an informal opportunity for members to get together to discuss the issues and questions on Monday, October 3 from 7:00-9:30 pm at City Hall in room 222. This meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the consensus questions for both Common Core Standards and Equity and Funding. Since there may be interest beyond the League, please invite interested friends and family, especially potential League members. A PowerPoint presentation with the consensus questions can be found at the Newton League’s website, [www.lwvnewton.org](#).

Recycle Styrofoam, Reuse and Donate at Rumford Avenue

As convenient as it is, not everything can be recycled at curbside. Some materials, including clean, white Styrofoam, are accepted at Rumford Avenue. They also accept cell phones and chargers, mercury containing devices, florescent bulbs, paint, printer cartridges, and vehicle batteries. For a complete list go to: [www.newtonma.gov/dpw/recycling](#). The city also has a recycle, reuse and donate list. You can post your items to sell, swap or give away on [2good2waste.com/Newton](#).

Please follow these Guidelines when visiting the Rumford Avenue Depot:

- Proof of Residency required; please be prepared to show ID.
- If you are not sure where something goes or if it is accepted at the Depot, please check with the Attendant. You can also check our website before going, to see what is accepted:
[www.newtonma.gov/DPW/recycling/depot/accepted_depot.htm](#)

- Do not leave materials loose or on the ground: all materials must be placed in the appropriate container.

The Styrofoam recycling project only accepts clean, white Styrofoam pieces. Any large pieces MUST be broken up and placed completely inside the designated container. If you need assistance, please check with the Attendant. Do not leave Styrofoam loose on the ground. The Recycling Depot is for recycling **ONLY** and does not accept trash.

Hazardous Waste Collections are only on Wednesdays from 7:30am-12:30pm. Collections continue through October 13th, with one final Saturday collection on Saturday, October 16th. For more information on accepted materials, please see [www.newtonma.gov/DPW/recycling/hazardous_waste/HHW_days.htm](#)

2011 Jane Leighton Awardee: Terry Yoffie



- Whereas Jane Leighton has for many years given generously of herself as a volunteer to the League of Women Voters, and
- Whereas, she has contributed her wisdom and strength to further the goals of the League, and
- Whereas, she has always willingly served in whatever capacity she has been called upon to fulfill, and
- Whereas, she has consistently brought humor and goodwill to all who worked with her,
- Now therefore we, the League of Women Voters of Newton, create in her honor “The Jane Leighton Volunteer-of-the-Year-Award” to be given each year to that member who exemplifies some of those qualities that we treasure in Jane.

by Lisa Mirabile

I am particularly pleased to be presenting this year’s Jane Leighton award, because I have worked alongside this year’s recipient for a long time and consider her both a mentor and a friend.

She is a woman of steely, but very cheerful, determination. Her zeal for the mission of the League can, in fact, sometimes be almost daunting – particularly to those who are on the receiving end of a plea from her to contribute something of themselves to the cause, whether by joining the League, participating in a committee or a study, or otherwise serving as a resource. She has a genuine talent for not taking “No” for an answer: in the most sincere and least guileful way, she simply does not appear to register that possibility! Her ability to bring new members on board, and her attention to making sure that they find their footing once aboard, has led to a distinct increase both in membership numbers and in the diversity of our members’ interests and backgrounds.

First as a board member, then later as president for two years, this year’s recipient has often made numbers her cause, applying her skills and background in business and accounting to everything from Newton’s municipal finances to the LWVN’s own, rather smaller, budget. Most significantly, she was the driving force behind last year’s extremely successful series of forums focusing on the work of the Citizen Advisory Group, as it sought to bring clarity and focus to the budget woes facing Newton. But she’s not JUST about numbers: she has also been passionately committed to engaging younger people in the political process, lending her considerable organizational and persuasive skills to efforts to engage high school as well as college students in civics and the “making of democracy.”

Despite all these worthy abilities and accomplishments, what I personally have admired and learned most from her in the many years I have had the pleasure of working with her, both in the League and in other organizations, is her leadership skills, and particularly one skill that very few leaders ever man-

Continued on next page

Leighton Award, continued

age to master: the ability to make the most of feedback from those around her. Whether receiving the occasional gentle – or not so gentle – dose of criticism, or just absorbing and collating a lot of differing – well, it’s Newton, so to be honest it’s usually conflicting – opinions, she has a remarkable ability to process the information in front of her, extract the best approach, whether it is hers or not, and proceed to efficient and decisive action.

In the past year, the Newton League has been a little the poorer for our recipient’s latest mission. Once she agreed to join the board of the Massachusetts League, she committed her energies wholeheartedly to helping that organization regain its footing in a difficult and changing landscape. But of course, as mayor Warren has been noting frequently of late, Newton has benefited, and will continue to benefit, greatly from her contributions at the state level, and we are extremely proud to have loaned her – we hope only temporarily -- to the state.

Will Terry Yoffie please come up to accept this year’s Jane Leighton award!

Welcome New Members!

- Susan Albright – Newton Centre
- Anne Alvarado – Auburndale
- Richard Beard – Chestnut Hill
- Matthew Cuddy – Newton Corner
- John DiMiceli – Newton Upper Falls
- Diana Fisher Gomberg - Auburndale
- David Kalis – Newton Highlands
- Greg Schwartz – Newton Highlands



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEWTON

July 9, 2011

Representative Anne M. Gobi, Chair
Senator Marc R. Pacheco, Chair
Joint Cmte on Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture
The State House, Room 473F
Boston, MA 02133

Testimony in support of H-1136 & S-397, An Act for a Competitive Economy through Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals

Dear Representative Gobi, Senator Pacheco and members of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture:

The League of Women Voters of Newton strongly supports H-1136 and S-397, An Act for a Competitive Economy through Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals (sponsored by Representative Jay Kaufman & Senator Steven Tolman), and we urge your committee to give this bill a favorable report. The proposed legislation takes a pragmatic approach to the reduction of toxic chemicals used in Massachusetts by creating a program to replace them with safer alternatives when feasible. This bill will help our families and communities by reducing toxic chemical exposure and its associated emotional and financial costs due to illnesses and the hospitalizations, medications and lost workdays they require.

This legislation will allow Massachusetts to be a leader in ensuring the health and safety of its citizens, protecting the environment, and reducing costs to businesses, while at the same time promoting globally competitive innovation. Therefore, the bill ought to be a very high priority for our government leaders. Again, we ask you to grant the proposed legislation a favorable report and provide leadership among your colleagues to pass H-1136 and S-397 this session.

Sincerely,

Anne Borg and Sue Flicop

Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Newton

Topic Meetings in Review

April 2011: Maureen Lemieux

On April 27, Maureen Lemieux, Newton's Chief Financial Officer, presented an overview of the city's FY12 budget of \$302 million to a group of 15 League members. Overall, the City's structural deficit has worsened, as the growth in debt service and operating expenses has continued to outpace the increase in revenues. This picture is expected to continue for the next few years as City staff address new areas for efficiencies and find a way to control health care costs.

Newton's revenue is expected to increase in FY12 by 2.6%. This consists of a 2.5% increase in property taxes, a 1% increase in new revenue, and approximately \$50 million in other revenues. "Other revenues" include excise taxes, State aid, licensing and permitting fees, and interest income, and has decreased overall by \$9 to \$10 million over the past five years. This change has meant that property taxes, which accounted for 73% of revenue in 2001, now contribute 85% of the revenue for the city, increasing Newton's reliance on this type of tax.

The FY12 budget will fund 97% of both city and school needs for \$300 million, with the extra \$2 million going to the public schools. The \$302 million includes \$7 million from the capital stabilization fund, which was created to help Newton cover the increased debt service from Newton North High School in the first few years. These payments will peak in FY13, and by FY14 the stabilization fund will be depleted.

Ms. Lemieux outlined the changes in other major municipal expenses, including:

- Reduction of \$1.8 million in federal stimulus money for the public schools;
- Increase of 3.3% in step increases for all city employees;
- Increase of \$4 million in health expenses over last year;
- Increase of \$1 million in pension expenses over last year.

Additionally, the City is increasing the budgeted amount for snow and ice clearing to a more realistic amount, and accounting for increases in public safety overtime and increases in the costs of special education. In terms of employees, the public schools will see a reduction of 32 positions this year, while the municipal side will see a reduction in 13.3 positions.

Areas that Ms. Lemieux identified as issues for the future include the establishment of an "inclement weather fund," as well as a "rainy day" fund that would equal 10% of the City's operating budget to help to maintain the City's AAA bond rating. Pension benefits represent a \$450 million unfunded future liability for Newton, while water and sewer fees do not cover the costs of current maintenance, let alone allow for improvements to the system. A switch to a "pay-as-you-throw" system for trash pick-up is not in the FY12 budget, and hasn't been discussed for FY13.

May 2011: David Fleishman

One year in to his tenure as Newton Superintendent of Schools, David Fleishman spoke at the May 11 topic meeting about the strengths and challenges of the Newton public schools.

The Superintendent sees schools that reflect a dynamic, intellectual community committed to learning and quality teaching, as well as good and committed leaders. On the other hand, Newton Public Schools need to do more educationally with fewer resources while enrollment is increasing. In addition, finding funds for today's necessary educational technology is extremely challenging.

This year's budget priorities were to preserve and improve as much as possible with very limited resources and a \$4.1 million deficit. The result is that user fees for art and sport programs have gone up \$1 million, while cuts have been made to programs. The budget outlook for the next few years still looks challenging, and enrollment is expected to keep growing.

Other areas discussed include:

- The federal role in education: the focus on testing is not going away and the key is finding a balance for accountability and consistency without sacrificing creativity;
- The role of curriculum coordinators: these staff members provide support and make sure that teaching and learning is consistent across the school system;
- Facilities needs: adding a new school would not be efficient in terms of costs. A "swing space" where kids could attend school while their home school is being renovated would be the cheapest and best option. The elementary schools need to add space, starting with a new school at Angier;
- The math curriculum: Differentiation has helped students at the elementary level. There is no program that is perfect, that would balance math facts against problem solving. Teacher training in the classroom is essential.

LWVN CALENDAR

AUGUST

- 10th Thurs., 9:45-noon, **LWVN Archives Morning**, First Baptist Church Basement, Newton Centre.*
- 12th Fri., 9:00 am. **Environmental Issues Committee** meeting. Andreae Downs' house.
- 18th Thurs., 9:45-noon, **LWVN Archives Morning**, First Baptist Church Basement, Newton Centre.*

SEPTEMBER

- 7th Wed., 7:00pm, **LWVN Board meeting**. Location to be announced.
- 15th **75 Years of LWVN at the Jackson Homestead**, exhibit open through Jan. 15.
- 15th Thu., 7:00 pm. **Sept. Topic Meeting: Economic Development 101**, Room 222 at City Hall.

**Archives Mornings: Please call Linda Morrison at 617-332-6539 if you are planning to attend.*

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

Keep up with the workings of the Board of Aldermen!

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

League of Women Voters of Newton

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