Important! April 3, 2014, Membership Meeting on Local Transportation Policy

by Andreae Downs and Lucia Dolan, Environmental Issues Committee

Join us for a membership meeting on Thursday, April 3rd at 7 pm in the Waban Library to discuss a proposed addition to our positions. **We need 25 members to make a quorum** to add the Transportation Concurrence (below) to our program. The final program vote will be at the Annual Meeting May 22.

This April meeting is a follow up to the November forums held at NewTV and is to discuss the new LWVMA transportation positions and as well as present proposed concurrence positions.

After much discussion at the forums and a revision by the Board, our proposed concurrence position are:

********** Concurrence Proposal for a Transportation Position **********

LWVN supports citywide transportation decisions that emphasize safety and consistency.

- **Safety First**: Safe travel should be the first priority in transportation policies. City investments and enforcement strategies should be based on the principle of safety first so that everyone feels safe and so that all road users practice safe travel behavior.

- **Consistency**: Newton transportation practices, policies, investments, and decisions, will be consistent with and support the City of Newton’s public plans, goals and the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

The Massachusetts State LWV Transportation Positions are adopted by concurrence:
Support a transportation system to move people and goods which:
⦁ includes a variety of transportation modes, with emphasis on increased public transportation services and other viable alternatives to reduce vehicle miles traveled;
⦁ is efficient, convenient, and cost effective;
⦁ is safe and secure;
⦁ serves all segments of the population and diverse geographic needs;
⦁ minimizes harmful effects on the environment;
⦁ is integrated with land use; and
⦁ is supported by extensive public education.

For more information on these proposed positions please visit the LWVN website, Action and Advocacy section: http://lwvnewton.org/action/committees/transportation-study-documents/ or contact Lucia Dolan at 617-332-1893.

LWVN CALENDAR

Click here to visit the LWVN’s Calendar Page for details.

Monday, March 24, 12:00pm
   Remember the Ladies: Women in U.S. History, Literature and Schooling

Monday, March 24, 7:00pm
   Senator Creem, Representative Balser and Representative Khan will speak on the "State of our environment in MA" and Newton's Director of Sustainability, Rob Garrity, will speak on the "state of our Environment in Newton"

Wednesday, March 26: LWVMA Day on the Hill

Thursday, April 3, 7:00pm
   Membership Meeting and vote on Local Transportation Policy
   We need 25 votes for a quorum

Thursday, April 17, 7:30pm
   LWVN Board Meeting

Saturday, May 10, 10:00am
   LWVMA Council

Thursday, May 15, 7:30pm
   LWVN Board Meeting

Sunday, May 18
   LWVMA Day at Fenway Park

Thursday, May 22, 6:00pm
   LWVN Annual Meeting

Friday, June 6 – Tuesday, June 10
   LWVUS National Convention, Dallas, TX

Don’t forget to check our online calendar for any late-breaking changes!
http://www.lwvnewton.org/calendar/

Find us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/lwvnewton

Keep up with the workings of the Board of Aldermen!
Read the LWVN Docket Digest, available each week at www.lwvnewton.org
Dear LWVN Members:

We’re nearing the end of hibernation, and you’ll see that we haven’t been asleep! The LWVN Board and membership have been busy planning activities for the spring, as well as staying on top of issues and commenting when appropriate.

In January, we planned a welcome dinner to welcome the newly elected Mayor, Board of Aldermen, and School Committee on the evening of the Mayor’s State of the City address. Unfortunately, we were snowed out at the very last minute, but the Aldermen were able to enjoy the light supper the following evening.

In February, Linda Morrison and Ann Grantham completed their multi-year project to sort and organize the LWVN archives. Soon, the LWVN archives will move to the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. There they will be catalogued and made available to researchers. The Schlesinger Library already houses the LWVMA’s archives. We can’t thank Linda and Ann enough for their dedication and the people at the Schlesinger Library for valuing our archives enough to care for them!

Also in February, LWVN sent two letters to our elected officials and to the TAB. The first was in support of continuing the Austin Street development process, and reaffirming our commitment to an open and transparent process, but one that is also productive and forward-moving. The second letter expressed LWVN’s concern about rezoning a segment of a Newton Centre neighborhood to keep out certain types of development. While we empathized with the residents who want to keep their neighborhood culture, we also feel that the real solution is to continue the review and update of our zoning rules and procedures.

In March, Jo Corro, Bonnie Carter, and Shelia Shulman organized a wonderfully informative meeting on agricultural issues facing Massachusetts and the country. This meeting prepared members for the agricultural consensus meeting that followed a week later. While we originally thought the study would focus on food labeling and GMO foods, we found that it was far more expansive, and included issues of animal husbandry and other issues. Thanks to our panelists, Greg Maslow of Newton Community Farm, and Steve Goodwin, Dean of the College of Natural Resources at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Thanks as well to Jo, Bonnie and Sheila, for all their hard work!

On March 26th, LWV of Massachusetts holds its annual Day on the Hill. In an exciting addition, over 40 Newton South High School students will also watch the proceedings, tour the State House, and enjoy lunch and discussion with our state delegation and League members. Special thanks to Jo Corro and Lynn Scheller for organizing this wonderful opportunity, as well as Representatives Ruth Balser, Kay Khan, and John Lawn and Senator Cindy Creem, for their help and flexibility!

On April 3, at the Waban Library at 7 p.m., we will be holding a membership meeting to discuss proposed concurrence statements regarding local transportation policies. We need a quorum of at least 25 LWVN members to review and discuss the statements, and to then vote to include the statements in our program for the current year. The entire membership will then vote on the positions at our Annual Meeting on May 22, 2014. More information about the statements are included in this newsletter.
We are currently working on updating our membership directory and organizing all the material for the Annual Meeting in May. Look for more information on these and other activities in the next month or so. I look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting!

In League,

Sue Flicop

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**Board Members needed – you or someone you know!**

by Linda Morrison

**Seeking challenges?**

Are you looking for a new challenge? Do you know someone whose leadership skills and interests would mesh with the Newton LWV?

The 2014 Nominating Committee will start meeting soon. If you would like to be considered for a slot on next year’s Board of Directors, or know someone you would like to recommend, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee:

- Emily Prenner, chair, premily@yahoo.com
- Robin Maltz, robinm@comcast.net
- Linda Morrison, lcmorrison@mindspring.com

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**On Jan. 22, LWVN Members Thanked our Elected Officials**

The LWVN members gathered in the hallway outside the Aldermanic Chambers on Wednesday, January 22, 2014, to share a light supper with Mayor Setti Warren, the Board of Aldermen and the School Committee, thanking our elected officials for their time and commitment to making Newton a better place to live and work. We may not always agree, but we do appreciate the dedication and effort these individuals give to our City.

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**LWVN Membership Notes**

For more info about the League of Women Voters of Newton, please visit [http://lwvnewton.org](http://lwvnewton.org) or contact by email: info@lwvnewton.org.

**Members! Don't forget to renew your membership!**

You can renew your membership online at Renew LWVN, or send your dues to LWVN, PO Box 610207, Newton MA 02461

**Needed by Archives Committee:** another set of 1995 LWVN Newsletters! Who has some tucked away in a storage area? Please contact Linda Morrison lcmorrison@mindspring.com

LWVN welcomes new member Douglas Leith! Douglas not only joined LWVN last fall, he immediately agreed to edit our newsletter. Thanks so much, Douglas, not only for joining but also for all your hard work so far. His email: jdleith@verizon.net Please put LWVN in your Subject line.
LWV members from Newton and Needham gathered at the Boys and Girls Club on March 12 to
learn background information for the current LWV US Agriculture study. The study’s motto is “If you
eat, you are involved with agriculture,” and we quickly realized that we had a lot to learn. Speakers were
Steve Goodwin, Dean of College of Natural Sciences at UMass/Amherst, and Greg Maslowe, Farm Ma-
ager at Newton Community Farm. Local Leagues in Wisconsin and the Midwest have been pushing for
an agriculture study to enable LWV US to lobby on issues associated with the Farm Bills and other food
related issues. In order to narrow the scope of the study to a do-able size, we are focusing on current
technology issues in agriculture, finance issues, including consolidation in agriculture industries, crop
subsidies and the federal regulatory process, and food safety and labeling issues.

Dean Goodwin talked about the role of top research universities in agricultural and economic re-
search as they attempt to be honest brokers of information and research among all the competing interests
in the industry: Big agriculture, corporations such as General Mills and Pepsi, chemical industries, con-
sumer safety and security advocates are among the many players.

The term “organic” for food products came up for discussion first, with Dean Goodwin pointing
out that the basic meaning of the word “organic” is really “having a lot of carbon molecules”—which
makes DDT pesticide a very organic product. He believes the term is the worst possible for negotiating
issues among farmers, consumers, retailers and researchers. In some ways it is a “catch all” term used to
mark best agricultural practices, including low pesticide use, responsible use of chemical fertilizers, Inte-
grated Pest Management, and sustainable farming techniques. Dean Goodwin pointed out that agricu-
lture is the industry with the largest “carbon footprint,” and that much of that is due to trucking and the
global distribution of food products.

Greg Maslowe, on the other hand, encourages the use of the term “organic” and pointed out that
information on what the term means in food labeling is available on the USDA website. However, there
are different standards in different locations, and among different certifying groups. Small independent
farmers generally don’t use the term because it requires some practices that are unpractical for small scale
operations. Consumers frequently have mistaken ideas about what “organic” labeled produce really is…. Mr Maslowe believes our entire food supply system is broken; for instance we are on a treadmill of using antibiotics in animal feed, which increases the rate of microorganism resistance to antibiotics. Pesticide
development requires continual upgrading to keep up with resistance that builds up naturally in organisms
treated with any synthetic or toxic substances. We have sorely depleted the soil in our most productive
agricultural areas. We have not solved the problem of overuse of aquifer water in the west, which threat-
en water supplies for all uses in the not very distant future. Mr Maslowe recommended getting to know
nearby producers and keeping as much of your purchasing as local as possible as the most practical steps
to take.

Discussion included reminders that the USA has a long history of subsidizing agriculture in order
to keep food prices low. The systems of that subsidy are open to increased debate: crop insurance as op-
posed to farm subsidy payments is part of the current Farm bill. Many well-established American agricu-
tural practices, are, when looked at squarely, open to a great deal of question. Consumers were urged for
many years to look for “corn fed beef,” but since cattle digestive systems have evolved for pasture gra-
zing, and not the digestion of corn, the use of antibiotics has become standard because it enables cattle to
digest feed corn, and that practice allows farm producers to meet consumer demand. Does this make sense? Perhaps we may want to pay higher prices for meat that is not “corn fed”?

Major commodity farming of feed corn, soy, wheat and so forth has been very successful in the USA, but we are heading to disaster if we continue current practices. How can we provide food security by having a reasonable amount of most people’s diets from local food? Dean Goodwin thought that a manageable goal for New England is to produce one third of the food we need within the region.

With climate change we can expect more variation in the weather, with seasons of too much rain and too little rain becoming more common, which will have major impacts on our food production.

Other topics mentioned included: Wisconsin’s lead over Massachusetts in cranberry production with widespread construction of artificial cranberry bogs; meat production has such a high carbon footprint that reducing meat consumption is really necessary for environmental reasons, never mind health issues. No solution has been developed for dealing with the animal manure by-product of large and intensive scale cattle, pig, chicken farming.

Neither speaker thought there is any inherent harm in genetically modified crops, but issues around testing of new technologies for food production—premarket? post market? by whom? and using what standards? are all problems we have not reached resolution on.

Issues of sustainability for natural resources and food labeling and safety were also discussed.

2014 LWVN Handbook Sponsorships

The LWVN’s bi-annual handbook will be coming this spring, so now is the time to ask friends, family and favorite businesses to support the League. Sponsorships start at $50 for a quarter page. Please invite your favorite florist / tailor / fill-in-the-blank to support the League by purchasing a spot! Download and print the letter and form below, or direct them to this year’s new, easy online form.

The deadline is April 7, so don’t delay.

Submit a sponsorship directly online
Download the letter and form

Please visit our web site at www.lwvnewton.org for information about the LWV of Newton, Massachusetts, including officers, leaders, latest news and much more