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LWVN CALENDAR to 15 Apr 2016

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

Tuesday, January 12, 2016, 7:00pm:  
   LWVN Board Meeting
Thursday, January 14, 2016, 11:30am:  
   LWVN Topic Meeting
Friday, January 22, 2016, 7:00pm:  
   LWVN Book Group
Wednesday, February 3, 2016, 11:30am:  
   LWVN Topic Meeting
Tuesday, February 9, 2016, 7:00pm:  
   LWVN Board Meeting

Tuesday, March 8, 7:00pm  
   LWVN Board Meeting
Wednesday, March 9, 11:30am  
   LWVN Topic Meeting
Tuesday, April 12, 7:00pm  
   LWVN Board Meeting
Wednesday, April 13, 11:30am  
   LWVN Topic Meeting

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 Newton City Council!  
Read the LWVN Docket Digest, available each week at www.lwvnewton.org
Dear LWVN Members:

It’s the time of year when we look back at all our accomplishments in 2015—and what a year it’s been! LWVN has had some major successes this year, including:

Establishment of a Charter Commission to Review the City Charter: After several years focused on collecting signatures, LWVN submitted enough signatures in July to put the question on the ballot. To help us advocate for a “yes” vote, we distributed yard signs showing the LWVN’s support of electing a Charter Commission. Now that this effort was successful and looking forward to 2016, LWVN will focus on observing the Charter Commission Meetings and on advocating for the changes outlined in our 2010 study. Many thanks to Rhanna Kidwell for her leadership and perseverance over the years to make this happen, as well as to Lisa Mirabile who took over once Rhanna began her campaign for Charter Commission.

Voter Service in the 2015 Municipal Election: To help voters understand their choices in a very busy election year, LWVN held a number of Candidates' Forums in partnership with NewTV. We also produced two Voters Guides (municipal office and charter commission), with financial support from The Village Bank. LWVN held two “Don’t Just Stand There….Run!” events for candidates, potential candidates, and their supporters. The first (in April) was focused on why and how candidates can run for office; the second (in September) was on how candidates can work successfully with the media to present themselves to the voters. Finally, we held one information meeting about Charter Commissions and three Charter Commission Candidates’ Open Houses for voters to meet candidates directly.

Looking forward to 2016, LWVN will provide a light “welcome” supper to the newly elected officials in January. Throughout the year, we will of course be monitoring their work and continuing to comment on issues important to LWVN and its members.

Many thanks to Lisa Mirabile, Sharyn Roberts, Bonnie Carter and numerous volunteers who made this all happen, as well as to all the candidates and our wonderful media partners.

- and Voter Registration and CPC Application Review: These ongoing responsibilities are core functions of LWVN, and will continue into 2016. Through 2015, we continued to register voters at the Newton Farmers Markets, Village Days, city-wide events, and two stints at Roxbury Community College. Thanks to Sharyn Roberts and her team of volunteers who register voters throughout the year, and to Andreae Downs her volunteers who carefully review all the applications before the CPC, and draft comments for the LWVN Board.

Environment and Transportation: This has been a year of transition for the Environmental Issues Committee (EIC) and the newly formed Transportation Commission. With new water and sewer rates for residents in 2015 and new rates for commercial properties being proposed in 2016, Priscilla Leith, Lucia Dolan and Alison Leary are leading the EIC in their analysis. Alicia Bowman and Lois Levin are leading and organizing the Transportation Committee, setting out goals and a vision for this new group. Thanks to everyone for their continued efforts.

Other Ongoing Work: Thanks to our Newsletter Team (Douglas Leith, Linda Morrison, and Lisa Mirabile), the Election Commission Committee (Ellen Glusman and Nancy Criscitiello) and the Education Committee (led by Linda Green) working on holding a Civics Bee in the spring.

A wrap-up of 2015 would not be complete without a mention of the work and advocacy on the Austin Street proposal. LWVN joined the Friends of Austin Street (FAS) to support the project, and presented two state-
ments before the Board of Aldermen on the topic. LWVN also alerted you, our members, as to how you could also individually show your support. FAS was successful due in great part to the drive and dedication of its leadership, and LWVN was proud to be a member of the coalition.

Finally, LWVN lost one of its most dedicated and delightful Board members this year. Ann Grantham, who has held just about every office and worked on almost every committee in her many years of membership and leadership, passed away in the fall. This has been an immeasurable loss to LWVN, both in terms of the responsibilities that Ann took on, and in terms of Ann’s friendship. She was so easy to work with: funny, thoughtful, thorough, and caring. Ann brought her experience and a “can do” attitude with her everywhere she went, and we truly miss her.

As we begin 2016, LWVN will continue these projects, and hope that you will be inspired to volunteer on one (or more) of these activities. We would all welcome more sets of eyes and ears on our elected and appointed officials as we observe and comment on proposals and issues of importance in our community, and as we continue to do outreach to voters (and potential voters).

Wishing you a happy and healthy 2016,

Sue Flicop

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**Voter’s service report**

We had a very busy election season, and LWVN did its best to educate and inform voters, as well as to provide candidates with opportunities to connect with the voters. Specifically, LWVN held the following events:

**September:**

- **All About Charter Commissions:** This event featured John Hanlon, a member of the Everett Charter Commission, David Flood, an observer from Everett, and Marilyn Contreas, an expert on charter commissions. They spoke about the process that a charter commission follows, as well as possible results.
- **Candidates’ Forum for Ward 2 Preliminary Election:** In collaboration with NewTV, LWVN produced this Candidates’ Forum featuring all 5 candidates in time for the September 17th preliminary election.
- **Don’t Just Stand There...Run:** Candidates and the Media: This was an informative and practical workshop on how campaigns can work with various media, featuring panelists Barbara Brilliant (Brilliant Communications), Andy Levin (The Newton TAB), Lisa Mirabile (Tech-Tamer), and Greg Reibman (Newton-Needham Chamber and Village14.com). It was held at the Auburndale Community Library in Auburndale.

**October:**

- **Candidates’ Forums for the following races in the general election:** Ward 2 Aldermen-at-Large, Ward 3 Aldermen-at-Large, Ward 5 Aldermen-at-Large, Ward 8 Aldermen-at-Large, and Ward 5 School Committee: In continued collaboration with NewTV, LWVN produced these forums. Two forums (for Ward 1 Ward Alderman and Ward 2 School Committee) were not held due to the refusal of two candidates to participate—LWV policy is that we do not hold “empty chair” debates with only one candidate.
- **Voters Guides:** With support from The Village Bank, LWVN published an online guide to the Aldermen and School Committee candidates, as well as a separate online guide to Charter Commission candidates. Copies were available at Newton City Hall, the Newton Free Library, the Newton Senior Center, and other locations around the city. It was also available on the LWVN website.
- **Charter Commission Candidates’ Open Houses:** LWVN offered three opportunities for voters to meet and talk directly with all the candidates for Charter Commission. Two were held at the high schools and one was held with the support of the West Suburban YMCA.
Overall, it was a very successful season, and we have many people to thank for their support and their time. First, we must thank all the candidates who made the effort to run for office. Thanks as well to all our media partners, including Stephen Kessinger, Jenn Adams, and the fantastic crew at NewTV, Andy Levin at the Newton TAB, Greg Reibman at the Newton-Needham Chamber and Village14.com, Barbara Brilliant at Brilliant Communications, and Ellen Ishakian at the Boston Globe. We also want to thank the local businesses and organizations that helped us in various ways: The Village Bank, the Newton-Needham Chamber, NewTV, the West Suburban YMCA, and The Auburndale Community Library.

Last, but certainly not least, we have all our LWVN volunteers, without whom we could never have organized and held so many informative events. HUGE thanks go to Sharyn Roberts, Bonnie Carter, Rhanna Kidwell, Lisa Mirabile, AnnaMaria Abernathy, Pia Bertelli, Lucia Dolan, Bev Droz, Ann Grantham, Linda Green, Andrea Kelley, Susan Mirsky, Linda Morrison, Tami Roberts, Sue Rosenbaum, and Greer Tan Swiston.

An Appreciation of Ann Grantham

Linda Morrison

Long time and loyal LWV Newton leader Ann Grantham died on Nov 9. Her family held a lovely service for her at the First Unitarian Society in Newton on Nov 14 with many LWV N friends attending.

Ann Grantham was always one of the kind, gentle people who accomplished much of the LWV N work while not in the spotlight. She was my personal introduction to the LWV Newton; I attended a Pizza ‘n Politics event and signed up for the Hazardous Waste study that Ann was chairing. What a long time ago!

Ann served as president of the LWV Newton in the mid 1980s. One of the memories I have of her as president is how she would guide Board of Directors meetings with the phrase, “moving right along…”

Ann was our contact with the First Baptist Church, where we held many annual meetings, had for some years a small office, and stored old files/archives. I remember sitting around the table in that office and collating the Bulletin in the days when we used the mimeograph machine to run off copies and then walked around the table putting them together before labeling and sorting. She was also the chief instigator of the archives project, arranging space for us to work at First Baptist, and encouraging members to drop by for our “archives mornings.”

The words people most used to describe Ann are gentle, kind, calm, and patient. She was open and easygoing, and especially good at welcoming new members; she was often the Membership chair. Ann was steadfastly loyal to the LWV, and she also worked hard to maintain the LWV’s future as a member–driven organization, serving as a coach for some other local Massachusetts LWVs, on behalf of the LWV MA. Ann was our “Jane Leighton Volunteer of the Year” in 2003, but contributed just as much every year.

An intelligent and well-informed woman, Ann worked with several other progressive groups. Some LWV N people also remember her from long-ago baby-sitting coops, and quite recently, from book groups. Her English
Language Learner colleagues at Countryside School remember her with especial gratitude for her guidance, and her above and beyond contributions to the lives of her students.

In her quiet and calm manner, Ann spoke with confidence, often hitting the nail on the head with a brief remark.

We will miss Ann’s gracious manner, her thoughtfulness, and her many contributions to the Newton LWV, and to the community at large.

Linda Morrison
November 2015

**LWVN Welcomes New Members**

Recent new members include:
- Gloria Gavris
- Susan and Jan Huffman
- Julie Irish
- Megan Campbell-Risen Meirav
- David Svendsen
- Janet Wineman

**Community Preservation Committee notes**

Andreae Downs

Four proposals, some of them huge, have kept the Newton LWV’s ad-hoc group of reader/evaluators of Community Preservation Act proposals busy this fall. *(These are: AnnaMaria Abernathy, Pia Bertelli, Andreae Downs, Andrea Kelley, Chris Steele)*

The Newton Community Preservation Committee continues to have substantive discussions about each proposal, which must fall under one or more of the following to be funded with CPA funds—created by a 1% surcharge on local property taxes plus a state match: Historic preservation, Open Space/Recreation, or Community housing.

Below is a short summary of each and the League’s comments:

1. **New Art Center**: Planning for preservation of the former church at 61 Washington Park, Newtonville, in which it is housed (Historic preservation: $72,654). Building on two previous studies, this plan would create designs for a more comprehensive rehabilitation of the church. ADA access and a preservation restriction would be added.

   Our reviewers felt the plan was sound, but worried that New Arts would come back to the CPC for construction funds, which cannot be guaranteed in a time when demand for them is increasing. We recommended planning for the fundraising for construction, including hiring a specialist in arts capital campaigns.
2. **Newton Public Schools**: Restore 1930s murals created for the original Newton High School (Historic Preservation $114,000).

   Our reviewers were impressed with this proposal, and agreed that this important part of Newton history should be preserved and placed in the new high school as planned. They worried about their protection from sunlight and other deterioration. They suggested that NNHS was uniquely placed to raise matching funds to secure this resource, and recommended that the NPS do so rather than relying on the CPA for the entire amount.

3. **CAN-DO**: Renovation of two units of existing housing at 10-12 Cambria Road, West Newton (Community Housing $471,117). Close to a bus line, convenience store, schools and a laundromat, these units would be permanently affordable, rented to low and extremely low income/homeless families, one of the top priorities of the FY15-20 Consolidated Plan.

   The proponent is leveraging outside funding, all grants and no loans. Our readers felt it met all of Newton’s plans and goals, and met a critical need at very low cost. CAN-DO has a steady track record in Newton, and has already successfully completed many housing projects on time and on budget.

   We again recommended that the developer’s fee be raised to support CAN-DO’s ongoing operations, but supported the proposal without other caveat.

4. **Newton Parks & Recreation**: Construction of Newton Highlands Playground (Open space/Recreation $3.3 million).

   This 13-acre park is terribly run-down and in need of serious rehabilitation. CPA funded a master plan for the park in 2008, and the resulting proposal includes drainage and storm water, ADA compliance, fields, lighting, irrigation, a support building with restrooms, a playground, tennis and basketball courts, a 27-space parking lot, benches, bubblers, trash cans, bike racks, cafe tables, paved pathways, loop pathway, wooded area, invasive plant control, tree planting, new park entrances.

   Separately, the city plans to pave Upland Ave. extension (runs along the south side of the park from Dedham St.) and upgrade 20-30 nose-in parking spaces there, currently filled with junked cars.

   Our readers encouraged the department to think about using parks around the city for stormwater control and storage, and thanked it for its comprehensive look at this park. They asked for a plan for maintenance, so that the deterioration now seen in this park does not get repeated.

   The main worry on this proposal was the amount of funds requested, and the fact that the CPA was being asked to fund 99% of the budget. The CPC policy, which LWVN supports, is to ask that all requests leverage matching funds to the extent possible. Disturbing about this proposal is that it comes without any City funding support outside of CPA.

   Other concerns were the need for parking within the park when nearly 30 spaces would be available on the newly-cleared extension. If shown to be necessary, our readers asked the Department to consider permeable pavers, as this is a wet area.

   Finally, the LWVN saw no evidence of neighborhood engagement in the proposal. No letters of support, no minutes from community meetings, no copies of flyers distributed. This is normally a requirement of the CPC, also. As such, the proposal was incomplete.

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**We endorse Newton Conservators Letter re- Mishkan Tefila property**

(Editor’s summary)

The LWVN supports and endorses their comments and request for action. As described in their letter, the land was given to the State in 1916 by Edwin Webster, which sold it to Mishkan Tefila in 1954 for $1 with some restrictions, but it is not adequately protected from development. Further options for protection are given in the letter.

**Book discussion Jan 22 at Waban Library**

Come join the LWVN for an interesting and lively discussion of Colin Woodard’s, *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*, (2011) an award-winning book chronicling the settling of North America and the ways early immigrants shaped the political culture still affecting us today. Woodard makes an interesting case for the historic reasons the red and blue states are at an impasse.

We will meet **Friday, Jan 22, 2016 at the Waban Library Center** [at intersection of Beacon St and Woodward St in Waban Square], 7-9 pm. Prospective members especially welcome!

The book discussion aims to promote the LWV goals of studying key political issues to enable citizens to seek positive solutions to public policy questions. *American Nations* is now available in a Penguin paperback edition.

**Transportation Committee news**

Lois Levin <loisalevin@gmail.com> and Andreae Downs

In 2015-16, LWVN Transportation Committee will **advocate for:**

1. Changes to street infrastructure and city policy that advance safety for all users, while encouraging active transportation, specifically by supporting and promoting:
   ○ implementation of the Bicycle Network Plan, now far behind schedule
   ○ tested innovations such as roundabouts and "advisory lane" striping
   ○ *Safe Routes to School’s* efforts to promote walking & biking to school and expansion of Newton Public Schools’ safety curriculum
2. Creating more off road connections for pedestrians and cyclists, specifically
   ○ promote permitting the Sudbury Aqueduct walking trail
   ○ creating walking connections though parks, especially to schools, with year-round maintenance

The Committee has been meeting monthly, and is focusing on **one main goal:**

The Transportation Committee has one goal for the remainder of 2016—to research how to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled in Newton, particularly by reducing the number of trips taken by one person/one car (Single Occupancy Vehicle trips). In particular, the committee is interested in ways to encourage more walking, biking and bus use for getting children to our neighborhood schools.

Starting with meetings in September, and continuing on the second Thursday of each month at 4 pm, the Committee has two lines of action in its sights right now: a **letter to the School Committee** on why the LWVN feels the schools should more actively support walking, biking and busing for school children, and **planning for a forum** in the fall looking at successful efforts in other communities to reduce vehicle miles traveled, including useful policies and tools.

**You can join us!** Contact Lois Levin or Alison Leary to be included on the Transportation Committee's meeting announcements. For more info:  617-283-5077

**Out with the Board of Aldermen: In with the City Council!**

(It is their new name as of 1 January 2016!)
OFFICERS & DIRECTORS
2015-2016

President:
Sue Flicop
Treasurer:
Andrea Kozinetz
Clerk:
Theresa Fitzpatrick

DIRECTORS:

Pia Bertelli
Bonnie Carter
Linda Green
Ellen Grody
Lois Levin
Lisa Mirabile
Linda Morrison
Sharyn Roberts
Greer Tan Swiston

Newsletter & Website:
Sue Flicop
Linda Morrison
Doug Leith, ed.

The LWVN Board of Directors meets monthly. All members are welcome. Meeting times will be posted in both the Newsletter and the calendar section of the Web site. Attending board meetings is a great way for new members to learn League process and for more seasoned members to stay connected. We hope to see you there!

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. And find us at: www.facebook.com/lwvnewton

LWVN Committees
(Contact LWVN to learn more)

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LWVN needs (more than) a few good League members for both long-term and short-term commitments - have fun while you help your LWVN!

- Observer at the City Council’s Finance Committee
- Events planning
- Photographer to record events for our Facebook page
- Membership Team
- “Ambassadors” to greet and sign in people at events
- Publicity
- Fundraising
- Print and web communications: newsletter, monthly postcard, email blasts, website, LWVN Facebook (training provided)
- Edit or help edit the Newsletter!
- Committees: Archives, Environmental Issues, Education, Elections, Housing, Municipal Finance, etc.

Contact Sue Flicop at info@lwvnewton.org if you are interested or have questions! YOU are the League!