

League of Women Voters of Newton Newsletter

Volume 7 Issue 4

April/May 2001

Martha Coakley, D.A. to Speak to League

*Middlesex District Attorney
speaker at Champagne and Chocolate*

by Amelia Koch

On Sunday April 29th the Newton League will hold our biannual fundraising event, Champagne and Chocolate. Our speaker, Middlesex District Attorney Martha Coakley, is proving to be an excellent choice. She will be speaking about violence prevention in the schools, an area in which she has made Massachusetts a recognized leader. Following are some specifics about Ms. Coakley's many achievements.

Martha Coakley has been an attorney since 1979, an Assistant District Attorney from 1986-87 in the Lowell District Court, Public Protection Bureau and Superior Court, and from 1989-1997 worked in the DA's central office. She also served as a Special Attorney for the Justice Department's Boston Organized Crime Strike Force from 1987-89. She resigned her position in December 1997 to campaign in the 54 cities and towns of Middlesex.

From 1991-1996 Martha Coakley distinguished herself as Chief of the Child Abuse Prosecution Unit, which has been recognized as a national model. The Unit screens in approximately 800 reported cases of child abuse per year. Many of the thousands of criminal cases Coakley has investigated and prosecuted have been widely noted including Commonwealth v. Louise Woodward (child killing) 1997; Commonwealth v. Corby Adkinson and Nancy Adkinson (sexual/physical abuse of their children) 1997; and Commonwealth v. Dennis E. King (murder) 1990.

Coakley has been on the forefront of statewide public policy discussions and initiatives to improve the criminal justice system. As Middlesex District Attorney, Coakley is recognized as an advocate for prevention programs. Continuing with concrete programs including Project Alliance, Community-Based Justice, Juvenile Firesetters Awareness, and Domestic Violence Roundtables, she leads the direction for the Crossroads program, a mentoring prevention program for youth, the SECURE (Safe, Effective Community Understanding for Response to Emergencies) Task Force, and has formulated a specialized Elder Abuse Unit.

Coakley serves as an active volunteer in "Neighbors in Deed", a parish-based program that reaches out to elderly and infirm neighbors. She created and chaired a countywide multidisciplinary Physical Child Abuse Task Force. She has served on the Children's Justice Act Task Force and has spearheaded legislative efforts with the Department of Social Services, the Department of Public Health, and concerned pediatricians to create a Child Fatality Review Board in the Commonwealth. Coakley has testified before the legislature on behalf of an anti-stalking bill and has consulted with the Department of Public Health and the Governor's Office on the Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiner's (SANE) program, and on alternatives to the current statutory rape laws.

Local Education Report *by Beverly Spencer*

The School Department budget for FY02 has occupied center stage for the past several months as the School Committee and Superintendent Young worked to reduce a budget which was already almost \$2 million less than the School Department's projected needs. Initially directed by the School Committee to come in with a \$7.5 million increase over the current budget, Young was asked soon after his budget presentation to propose another \$1 to 1.5 million in additional cuts.

In explaining the crunch the schools find themselves in, it was pointed out that we must fund new collective bargaining agreements, absorb at least \$2 million in additional special education costs, and set aside \$1.4 million to cover items under-funded this year. This \$1.4 million addition addresses a recurring problem in recent budgets which this year necessitated a freeze in December.

Some of the larger items included in this "budget realignment" are Medicare, substitute teaching and custodial overtime costs. While the above mentioned costs rise, the formula for the distribution of local aid from the state is heading toward a radical change if anything similar to Governor Cellucci's new proposed formula is adopted by the Legislature. It is very likely that rather than the \$2 million in state funds Newton had anticipated, our allocation may be more in the neighborhood of \$300,000.

The difficult decisions regarding cuts were made based on several stated choices and adjustments.

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Liz Lieberman	244-4402
Linda Morrison	332-6539

The LWVN Newsletter is published nine times per year. 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 964-0014.

PO Box 610207
Newton, MA 02461

State League Convention

LWVMA State Convention is taking shape, and will be held May 18 and 19 at the Radisson Hotel in Milford.

The Newton League is entitled to send eight delegates to vote on program priorities for the upcoming biennium, and an unlimited number of observers.

We'd like to encourage you to participate. A delegate spot may be shared for those who may be able to attend only one session.

The convention workbook is published and the following are recommended as priority action issues: affordable housing, Health Care Trust Bill, Special Education, Clean Elections, Self Sufficiency Standard, Gun Control. Two studies are recommended: to continue the study evaluating the effectiveness of the Education Reform Act of 1993, and a new study to evaluate voting procedures and practices to insure fair and accurate elections in Massachusetts. A long list of non-recommended program items emanate from local leagues, which may be brought to the floor of convention, and/or be heard at caucus sessions Friday night. Our league contributed to this list an action item to analyze the state budget to

ensure adequate funding to cities and towns, and proposed a study on regional transportation planning.

Five workshops are scheduled Friday from 1:30 to 3:30pm: "The Model Election System for the World?", "Clean Elections and Legislative Reform: Working Together for Accountability", "Maximizing Opportunities to Build Your League", "How to Run for Office", "Local League Presidents are Special". The first plenary session will be Friday from 3:15 to 5:15, followed by a reception and banquet Friday evening.

The Saturday workshops will be held in the morning from 9 to noon, and include: "Education Reform", "Citizen education: Nuts and Bolts", "Health care problems and reform Efforts in MA", "Leading the League in the Community of the Future". The second plenary is scheduled between 1:30 and 5pm Saturday afternoon.

Thus far, Amy Koch, Bonnie Carter, Beth Wilkinson, Andrea Kozinetz and I plan to attend one or two days of this convention. Let me know soon if you would like to join us!



Housing Affordability in Newton

Yes, it IS an Issue

by Mary Benner, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization

May 7, 2001 7:00 pm-9:00 pm Newton Free Library

Affordable housing will be an issue in the upcoming city elections, and it is a local crisis. This forum will define the meaning of affordable housing; define the crisis facing Newton; define solutions to the problem; create ways for attendees to become involved; make it personally attendees.

Mayor David Cohen will be introducing Barney Frank. Rep. Frank will speak on the issue as an advocate for affordable housing.

Questions from the audience will follow, as will a Local Affordable Housing Video. This will set the stage for a Panel Discussion by Newton residents who are housing experts. ■

membership news

We are pleased to announce and welcome the following new member:

Susan Rosenbaum
121 Winslow Road
Waban, MA 02468
617-332-0306
rosenbaum@newdruginc.com

Local Education Report

(continued) from page 1

When presenting his initial budget, Superintendent Young indicated that in terms of education at the elementary level, it was decided that maintaining favorable class size was the most important criteria. To that end the cuts at that level came as reductions or eliminations of programming. For example, the time devoted to art and music would be reduced and the World Language program eliminated. Although it was initially proposed that the understanding Our Differences (UOD) program be eliminated, that funding was restored for next year with the Superintendent pledging to personally work with staff and community members (including the UOD Board) to lead a discussion to determine how this material can best be taught at the elementary level.

In the middle schools the focus is on maintaining reasonable class and team sizes and continuing to offer as many options in the curriculum as possible. There would be a reduction of 10.9 in the teaching staff. A similar emphasis on programming guides reductions at the high school level where class sizes will rise in some areas - as 11.75 positions are slated for elimination - but the breadth of elective courses will be maintained in so far as possible. The budget for athletics at both the middle and high school levels will be reduced. Young mentioned the possible increase in class size for high schools.

The School Committee voted their final approval of the budget on April 9th, and on April 17th the Mayor will make his budget address to the Board of Aldermen.

Considerable discussion has taken place regarding the high school renovations. Representatives from the architectural firm have met with faculty and other groups from the high schools for their inputs before plans are finalized. The Board of Aldermen's Public Facilities Committee meeting on Feb. 28th included the architect and received public input. The Board's Finance Committee

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Election Commission Letter

April 6, 2001

James P.D. Waters, Chair
Newton Election Commission
61 Stearns Street
Newton Centre, MA 02459

cc: Mayor David B. Cohen
Alan Licarie, Executive Secretary
Members of the Election Commission



Dear Commissioner Waters:

We have received your letter of February 28. Rather than answering our questions, this communication raises further concerns about how the public is being served.

The League of Women Voters of Newton has made repeated requests for public information from your office which have thus far been ignored. We have three times requested minutes of the November 28 meeting of the Election Commission. This reiterated request was not acknowledged in your response to us. Requests for materials used to train poll workers were similarly ignored. Are we to assume that such materials do not exist?

The failure to keep minutes is not only a violation of the Open Meeting Law, it denies citizens a public record and prevents the commission from doing its own best work. Without such a record, it is particularly difficult for new commissioners to orient themselves and understand their responsibilities.

The lack of training materials explains in part why there have been problems at the polls. If we, or anyone else, are to effectively support your need for more pollworkers, this material needs to be developed. If it exists, it needs to be reviewed.

Whether one uses the term 'mismanagement' or something else, thousands lost their opportunity to vote on Question 9, and dozens were denied their votes entirely, due to mishandling of absentee ballots. At the November meeting, commissioners agreed this is a serious matter, and cited needs to "improve training, quality control and oversight" in the administration of elections.

We were dismayed at the tone of your response to our inquiry. In addition, publicly berating citizens who raised concerns over the conduct of the most recent election was inappropriate. The citizens of Newton need to know what steps the Commission plans to take to serve them better. We look forward to hearing from the commission.

Sincerely,

Deborah Crossley, President

New Election Commissioners Appointed

by Andrea Kelley

Two new election commissioners have been nominated for the Newton Election Commission, and await approval by the Board of Aldermen. The new democratic appointee is Fay Cohen, who replaces James Waters, former Chair, and Steven R. Smith is to replace Aaron Spencer as a republican appointee. Immediately following the aldermanic appointment scheduled for later in April, the Newton League will send both new commissioners a letter of welcome.

Along with the letter, copies of all correspondence regarding difficulties with the November 2000 election between the League and the Election Commission were enclosed. A copy of "Guide to the Open Meeting Law" will also be sent to them. The League looks forward to working with the newly formed Election Commission to help citizens with information and voting opportunities in the future. ■

Committees - in - Action

E d u c a t i o n

Focus	Increasing high school enrollments, school financing, testing & standards	
Members	Nancy Crowley Deborah Hirsch Andrea Kelley Andrea Kozinetz	Anne Larner Robin Maltz Beth Wilkinson
Contact	Beverly Spencer Board Liaison	965-6365

H u m a n R i g h t s

Focus	League outreach, relevance and support for the human rights of Newton's diverse populations	
Members	Joan Bates Marion Cowan Holly Gunner Lilly Jefferson Anne Larner	Ruth Nemzoff Wand Persimmon Dorothy Reece Jeanne White
Contact	Holly Gunner, Chair (964-0767)	

L a n d U s e / T r a n s p o r t a t i o n

Focus	Interrelationship between land use and transportation and its effects on Newton & surrounding communities	
Members	AnnaMaria Abernathy Anita Capeless Carol Ann Shea Susie Heyman	
Contact	Anita Capeless	969-9483

L o c a l A c t i o n

Focus	Reducing the size of the Board of Aldermen	
Members	in formation - all welcome	
Contact	Carol Ann Shea	969-2121

N e w s l e t t e r

Members	Jane Leighton Deb Hirsch	Liz Lieberman Linda Morrison
Contact	Andrea Kelley	964-4609

E d u c a t i o n R e f o r m

Focus	LWVMA study on ED Reform	
Members	Deborah Hirsch Andrea Kelley Anne Larner Leslie Lockhart Robin Maltz	
Contact	Leslie Lockhart	527-5046

You may call committee contact or a Board officer or director to learn more about current committee work. All are welcome to participate.

How to Run for Office

by Bonnie Carter

The League is offering a workshop as a resource to candidates, their Campaign managers, and treasurers. "Don't Stand There, Run!" is the title for the workshop to be held Thursday, May 3 from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. at the Newton Senior Center. This is an opportunity to learn about running for elective office. The focus is on the Newton municipal election to be held in the fall.

Each of the panelists will speak for 5 or 10 minutes, then respond to questions from the attendees. We will open up for general discussion after all the panelists have done their segments. We are grateful to the following panelists for sharing their expertise.

- **Ruth Balser** will talk about serving on the Newton Board of Aldermen.
- **Andy Vizulis** will talk about serving on the Newton School Committee.
- **Dottie Reichard** will talk about filing nomination papers, what it takes to run, some of the things you need to do for fundraising, identifying your voters.
- **Lois Pines** will talk about how you get people to commit to your campaign, how to mobilize your supporters, how to distinguish yourself from other candidates, campaign techniques at the local level, how to get out the vote.
- **Florence Rubin** will talk about the City Charter and how it delineates the responsibilities of Newton's elected officials.
- **David Mofenson** will talk briefly about the Newton Election Commission. He will also explain the requirements for reporting and filing under the Campaign and Political Finance Law.

The Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance has published a 20-page booklet called "Campaign Finance Guide, Candidates for Municipal Office." Copies will be available at the workshop. Or interested parties can contact the Office of Campaign and Political Finance directly at 617-727-8352, 800-462-OCPF, E-mail: OCPF@cpr.state.ma.us or visit the website: www.state.ma.us/ocpf/.

The LWV of Arkansas has published a 160-page book entitled "Steps to a Winning Campaign." A sample copy will be available at the workshop. To order a copy, contact the LWV of Arkansas at 501-376-7760. The book was edited and written by the following:

Mary F. Dillard, trained as a biologist, owns and runs a consulting firm in Little Rock, Arkansas. For the past fifteen years, she has provided general consulting services to political candidates and campaigns as well as to government, nonprofit and business organizations. Prior to establishing her consulting practice, she was a nonprofit administrator.

Jim Lynch is a Senior Research Specialist at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He has extensive experience in local government and has been active in organizing neighborhood groups and grassroots campaigns.

C. Dennis Schick has been Executive Director of the Arkansas Press Association since 1979. Schick came to the APA from full-time college teaching. Schick holds a Ph.D. in Mass Communication from Southern Illinois University. He conducts seminars and workshops on advertising throughout the United States and Canada.

Sherry Walker is President of her own consulting firm in Little Rock which specializes in statewide initiative campaigns. Walker, a former teacher, librarian and association manager, provides governmental relations and lobbying support to business and nonprofit groups.

Continued on page 5

How to Run for Office*Continued from page four*

To learn more about elections in Massachusetts you can visit the web site of the Secretary of State, Elections Division t www.state.ma.us/sec/ele

For any interested league members, LWVMass will offer a workshop on running for office at the state convention in Milford on Friday May18 at 1:30 pm.

Nomination papers for candidates for local office will be available at the office of the Election Commission in Newton City Hall starting May 1. They are due to be filed there as well on July 5.

If you wish to attend the workshop on May 3, please leave a message on the LWVNewton answering machine at 617-964-0014. ■

Martha Coakley, D.A. to Speak to League*Continued from page one*

She is a Board Member of the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, a Board Member of Partnerships for Youth and the Middlesex Law Libraries Foundation. Coakley has served as Board Member and President of the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts. She has participated in the Mass. Bar Association Law-Related Education Lawyer – Teacher Partnership, as well as a moot court judge for Boston University Law School. In addition, Coakley served as visiting faculty for the MCLE-NELI Trial Advocacy Program, and as Chair of a Program on the Trial of a Child Abuse Case.

Martha Coakley earned a BA. Degree cum laude from Williams College in 1975 and a JD degree in 1979 from Boston University School of Law, where she has served as an instructor to first year law students. Coakley practiced at Parker, Coulter, Daley & White and Goodwin, Procter & Hoar, both in Boston from 1979-1986 before joining the Middlesex District Attorney's Office.

Hearing her and talking with her at Champagne and Chocolate is destined to be provocative. Hope to see you there! ■

Meeting of the Finance Committee of the Board of Alderman April 9, 2001*by Amelia Koch*

Room 222 City Hall Members of the Finance Committee present at the beginning of the meeting were Alderman Bullwinkle, Gerst, Ciccone, Schnipper, Colletti, President of the Board Brook Lipsitt and Alderman Salvucci from Programs and Services Committee were also present. 8:50 Alderman Ken Parker arrived.

The meeting was well attended by citizens due to the issue of the high school bond authorization which was taken up last.

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE ADDRESSED AT THE MEETING:

Item # 104-01 Interview + appointment of Re: Cappoli as Chief Procurement Officer, approved 5-0-0-3 (5 in favor, no opposed, no abstentions, 3 absent)

Item # 105-01 To create a campership fund from donations for the purpose of funding very low income residents to attend summer camps in Newton, approved 5-0-0-3.

Item # 107-01 Repair salt shed damaged by a trucking co. Check has been received in the amount of \$33,621.39 approved 5-0-0-3.

Item # 106-01 approval of a new contract with local 3092 that provides for 3% salary increases per year over the three year contract.

Item # 268-00 (3) \$175,000 for modular classrooms for Newton South, Design Review Committee has reviewed siting, one year lease, approved 5-0-0-3.

Item # 268-00(B) \$89,220,407 expenditure for North and South renovations, Nick Parnell and Sandy Pooler present for discussion. A presentation was made of the cost structure and timing of the bonds.

Once these issues were understood by all. Chairman Colletti asking for more oversight of ongoing project by the Alderman and particularly the Finance Chair. The city's standing with the SBA School Building Assistance Program was discussed and appears to be on track. The City is prepared to deliver this project to the state by May 1, a month ahead of the June 1 deadline. Usually 40 - 50 projects are taken off the SBA list each year. There are currently 150 projects on the list so it is very likely to be more than three years before reimbursement begins. The high school bond passed 5-0-0-1 with Bullwinkle abstaining. ■

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

- ☐ I would like to join the League of Women voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for \$50 payable to LWVN.
- ☐ **Lifetime membership \$1000**
- ☐ I would like to receive materials about the League.
- ☐ I would like to be contacted by a League member to talk about LWVN.

Mail this form (and your check, if joining) to:
Judy Jaffe at 158 Moffat Road, Waban 02468

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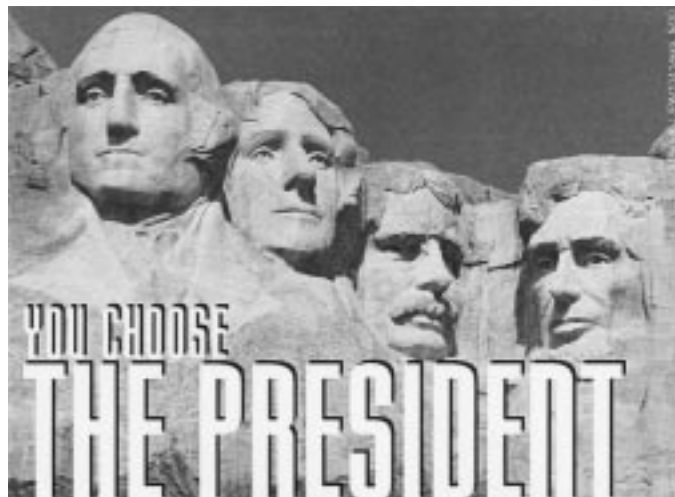
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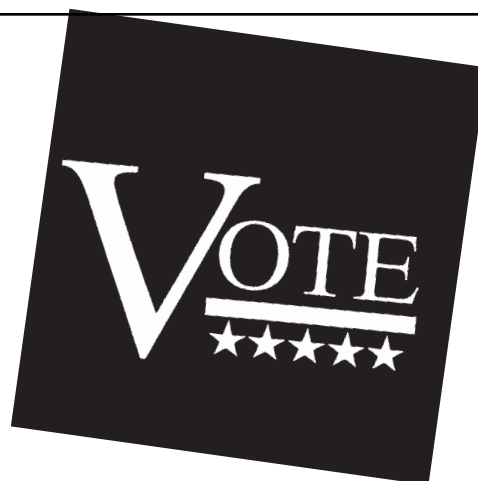
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LWVN CALENDAR

April

- 3 Legislative Roundtable taping at NewTV*
- 4 LWVN Board meeting Wednesday, @ home of Deb Hirsch, 49 Olde Field Road, Newton Centre
- 11 Wednesday, Day on the Hill, Statehouse, 8-9 am coffee, 9 to noon program, members only, call Beth Wilkinson 969-4443
- 11 Wed 7pm, Community Preservation Act, at Newton Free Library, Citywide focus group open to the public
- 25 Wednesday, 11:30-1:30 LWVN Open Discussion on the Newton Frameworks Plan, 28 Putnam Street, W. Newton, brown bag lunch, all LWVN members invited, call Deb 244-7597 for info
- 26 Thurs. LWVN Environmental Assessment Committee meeting, 18 Linder Terrace, N. Corner, call DeDe Vittori for info 964-8190
- 29 Sun. 3-5 pm Champagne & Chocolate Fundraiser with Martha Coakley, Middlesex County D.A., see cover story, call Amy Koch @ 244-2647

May

- 3 "Don't Stand There - Run!" Thursday, 6:30 to 9:30 pm at the Newton Senior Center 'How -To' Workshop for local candidates & campaign managers, see page 4, call 964-0014
- 7 Monday 7-9pm Affordable Housing Forum at Newton Free Library, Barney Frank, key note speaker, co-sponsored by LWVN, call Joan Bates 527-1858
- 15 Tuesday, 6 pm LWVN Annual Meeting, Newton Senior Center Members and invited guests
- 18, 19 Fri and Sat, State League Convention, Radisson Hotel, Milford
- 22 Tuesday, 7:30 pm New Board Orientation, at the home of Sally Flynn, 33 Whitney Road, Newtonville

* Newton Legislative Roundtable airs on Channel 10 (the blue channel) on AT&T Broadband on: Mon 1:30 pm, 5:30 pm, 10:30 pm/Tues 3 am, 5:30 am, 9 am, 1:30 pm, 5:30 pm, 10:30 pm/ Wed 3 am, 5:30 am, 9 am

Local Education Report

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took up the issue on April 9th and will decide whether the matter should be forwarded to the full Board for it to vote April 17th on approval of the final allocation for the renovation project. The final Board approval is necessary if the project is to remain on schedule.

The Redistricting Task Force continues to meet and will be submitting its report on proposed options to the Superintendent before the April 23rd School committee meeting. At that meeting the options will be presented to the School committee. On May 7th the School committee will hold a public hearing on the options. On May 14th they are scheduled to discuss the options and select options for their final consideration. On May 29th the School Committee will vote to choose one option. ■

League of Women Voters of Newton

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