

# Newsletter

Volume 7 Issue 5

June 2001

## Awards Grant to Newton LWV

*by Deb Crossley*

Based on a proposal submitted to the LWVUS Education Fund by Florence Rubin, The LWVEF has awarded a \$3000 grant to the LWV Newton to participate in their 'judicial independence project'. About twelve leagues around the country will participate in this project.

Florence Rubin will chair the steering committee. League members Deb Crossley, Ann Hartner, Susie Heyman, Diane Juliar and Linda Morrison will serve on the committee. Student representatives from both Newton North and South High Schools have been selected to participate in the project. In addition, representatives from local Bar Associations will be invited to join the steering committee.

The first part of the project is to assess the status of judicial independence in Massachusetts. A survey has been provided by the national League. Students will conduct interviews with court personnel as determined by the steering committee and gather other pertinent information from judges, attorneys and the public. Armed with the results of their research, the steering committee will assess the results and design citizen education vehicles. Citizen education is the second component. Citizen education events may include bringing the information back to a history class, and/or group of interested students, as well as holding a public forum for interested citizens. All the participants will work as volunteers. The funding will be used largely to cover printing costs, educational materials and other project related expenses.

Our League will provide written acknowledgement of student work.

Congratulations Florence! ■

## Local Motion

*by Deb Crossley*

Should the LWVMA League position on transportation be reconsidered and developed to allow the LWV to lobby for a comprehensive intermodal transportation plan? The current position is strong in support of statewide public transportation systems, but does not discuss connections with other forms of transportation, nor what factors would comprise a sound comprehensive planning process or plan for Massachusetts. Massachusetts does not have such a plan.

Local Leagues are frustrated by their inability to act on a range of transportation-related issues that are driven by forces largely outside community influence. Numerous local leagues present at LWVMA convention in late May joined the Newton LWV to lobby for a state transportation study. The item was moved for consideration and garnered much spirited support (including a lively poem read by the Boston League) but did not receive the 2/3 vote necessary to adopt a nonrecommended study.

However, there is enough interest from a large number of local leagues, and a generous commitment from state transportation specialist Sandy Finder, to convene a committee, coordinate and proceed with an investigation. The goal is to achieve consensus among participating local leagues on a position that would be brought before the 2003 LWVMA convention for adoption by concurrence.

At the convention, a motion to approve the nonrecommended study of intermodal transportation in Massachusetts was made by Newton delegate Deb Crossley, who presented a scope of work and reasons why the league should move forward to build on its current position. The scope of work proposed to survey and assess:

- 1 current demographics, population trends, transportation patterns and needs;
- 2 intermodal (air, bus, rail, boat, vehicular) connections between public and private forms of transportation;
- 3 public and private entities (agencies, boards and commissions) that exist to contribute to public policy and practices re: public transportation;
- 4 legislative tools that exist and which may be needed to provide communities a voice in shaping public policy.

### **WHY should we adopt this study?**

Because our position is 26 years old;

Because our position is not fully developed to lay the groundwork for the creation of a comprehensive intermodal transportation plan;

Because this study is **TIMELY** - the MA census just completed provides the current database reflecting concentrations of population and solid economic indices;

Because we want to prepare ourselves to ACT;

Because we have numerous area Leagues already committed to this effort: Newton, Boston, Brookline, Concord, Framingham, Lexington, Waltham, Walpole and Westwood to begin with;

Because our state LWV transportation specialist, Sandy Finder, supports this

*Continued on page 2*

## LWVN Officers and Directors 2001-2002

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Editor	Andrea Kelley	964-4609

### Committee Members

Deborah Hirsch	965-1475
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

## Transition Time

Welcome to the new year of the League of Women Voters of Newton. I would like to begin by acknowledging Deb Crossley. When Deb assumed the Presidency it was not at the best time for her: two children at home plus work. Many of us volunteer under those circumstances but being President is volunteering with a capital V! Deb has way of bringing people into the League. Typical of the things I hear about Deb is the feedback I received when making my calls to get the count for annual meeting. I spoke with a woman who said "I can't come because I am involved with events at Oak Hill but call me in the fall. Deb Crossley has been telling me about the League and she's so wonderful I can never say no to her." I'd heard that tale before! It was the same as my own.

Deb's accomplishments are many; she has seen the League through two challenging and busy years: starting a television show and losing a newsletter editor; ed reform and reforming the election commission; wrestling with issues on the frameworks commission and dealing with complaints from Ken Bressler. Through all this she has been warm and funny and interested in every aspect of the League large and small. She has been a mentor to new members, while reaching out to all members. She is careful and thorough,

and has structured a League I am proud to be a member of. I am grateful that she will remain on the Board.

In addition to Deb, we have many Board members returning for next year and even a few returning from longer absences. I feel privileged to welcome, and look forward to working with, a terrific and talented incoming board. Please call or write to any of us if you have concerns or questions.

The new board met for the first time one week after annual meeting and plans for the coming year are beginning. I would love to see any of you at a board meeting so watch the Newsletter for dates. This year will include continued work with the Election Commission, a major Voters' Service effort in the fall, keeping track of the high school renovation and expansion, and the city and school budgets among many things. We will be working on offering daytime as well as evening program meetings and we will continue collaborating with other organizations such as the Green Decade and the Coalition supporting the Community Preservation Act.

Please consider how you want to be included!

*Amelia Koch*

## Local Motion

*Continued from page one*

effort, wants the LWV to have the tools to enable more effective lobbying on this issue at the state level, and will coordinate the work of local leagues.

Sandy Finder has scheduled a first meeting of the "Transportation Action Committee" for June 28 in the MA League office, at 10:30 am to noon.

There are many LWVNewton members interested in this issue. If you would like to participate, call Anita Capeless at 969-9483. ■

### corrections

The following spelling corrections are made to the observer report of the Aldermanic Finance Committee of April 9, 2001 printed in the April/May Newsletter:

Board of Aldermen

Coletti

Brooke (Lipsitt)

The vote on Item #268-00(B), was 5-0-1-2.

## Community Preservation Act

by Amelia Koch

The room was full of citizens attending a joint session of the Programs and Services and the Zoning and Planning committees of the Board of Aldermen on May 31, 2001. The Alliance (many citizen's organizations, including the Newton Conservators, Citizens United for Housing Affordability (U-ChAN), the Green Decade Coalition, LWV Newton, various Historic Commissions and the Trust for Public Land) in support of the Community Preservation Act, gave cogent and well reasoned arguments in support of putting the Community Preservation Act (CPA) on the ballot in November. The Alliance distributed a packet of materials which we would be happy to make available to interested League members. Contact Deb Crossley or Amelia Koch if you are interested.

In addition to members of the two committees, many other aldermen were present including President of the Board, Brooke Lipsitt. There was also a brief response by Len Mead of the Newton Taxpayers Association.

The Honorable Ruth Balser, State Representative from the 11th Middlesex District, was on hand to speak of her support of the measure. She described her pride in voting for the CPA in the House, calling it one of the top achievements by the legislature this year. There were excellent questions by the aldermen regarding the specifics of the CPA, many of which will be answered at a working session of the joint committees to be held on Wednesday June 6th. Also at the meeting on June 6th, the committees will vote on whether or not to recommend putting the CPA on the November ballot. ■

Following is the statement read at the hearing by Amelia Koch, LWVN President, and Deb Crossley, Local Action Chair.

*Testimony before the joint aldermanic committees:*



### **Programs & Services and Zoning & Planning, at a Public Hearing May 31, 2001**

The League of Women Voters of Newton supports putting the question on the November ballot asking voters to implement the Community Preservation Act. The League has joined the Community Preservation Alliance and believes that implementation of this law represents an opportunity that Newton citizens should not miss.

#### **This is an investment in the FUTURE GOOD HEALTH OF OUR CITY.**

It has been decades since Newton has been able to budget money to preserve open space, purchase historic properties, or assist with the development of affordable housing. This fund would give us dedicated capital to take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

#### **The window of opportunity is NOW.**

By effecting a surcharge for a limited period, we would make Newton the recipient of a state matching grant of up to 100%. State monies began to accrue when the law passed last fall. If we are able to PASS the question this year, the size of the state match will be larger than if we wait. It is important to get on board early.

#### **The surcharge is TEMPORARY.**

The commitment is for five years but even within the five-year commitment to the program, citizens and aldermen can vote to modify the surcharge.

#### **The surcharge is FAIR.**

The CPA allows for exemptions for those who may have difficulty paying. Under the proposal that is before you, (according to state and federal standards) low-income residents and low and moderate-income seniors would be exempt as would the first \$100,000 of assessed value on all properties.

Today we ask only that our Board of Aldermen vote to provide citizens the opportunity this November to decide whether or not to establish this much needed fund. Tomorrow we will urge you and Newton citizens to take advantage of this healthy, timely, temporary and fair opportunity that would benefit everyone in this city.

Amelia Koch, President

Deb Crossley, Local Action Chair

## **We Ran "Don't Stand There, Run!"**

By Bonnie Carter

I would like to thank all those who participated in the workshop for local candidates that we held on May 3 at the Senior Center. Our moderator, Deb Crossley, did a great job. We are grateful to the following panelists who presented lots of useful information: Florence Rubin, Andy Vizulis, Dottie Reichard, Lois Pines, and David Mofenson. (Ruth Balser was unable to attend due to budget deliberations at the State House.) Along with the information, we served up cookies donated by Baker's Best. Thank you, Michael!

Also, thanks to members of the committee who contributed their time and talents: Pat Acton, Anita Capeless, Amy Koch, Barbara Lietzke, Susan O'Connell, Carol Ann Shea, Elaine Reisman, and Beth Wilkinson. And thanks to Pat Facey of the LWVMass for providing advice and materials.

There were 24 candidates and potential candidates who attended the workshop. By the attendance and interest, it seems to me that this was an idea whose time had come. ■

## Committees - in - Action

### *E d u c a t i o n*

Focus Increasing high school enrollments, school financing, testing & standards

Members Nancy Crowley Anne Larner  
Deborah Hirsch Robin Maltz  
Andrea Kelley Beth Wilkinson  
Andrea Kozinetz

Contact Beverly Spencer 965-6365  
Board Liaison

### *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 Ruth Nemzoff  
Marion Cowan Wand Persimmon  
Holly Gunner Dorothy Reece  
Lilly Jefferson Jeanne White  
Anne Larner

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 Liz Lieberman  
Deb Hirsch Linda Morrison

Contact Andrea Kelley 964-4609

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

## *Observations and Notes from our Delegates* **LWVMass State Convention Workshops, May 18 - 19, 2001**

### **The Model Election System for the World?**

Led by Carma Forgie, LWVM Specialist

*By Bonnie Carter*

There was a lot of interest among the participants which resulted in a lively discussion. After the mistakes of the November 2000 election, there have been proposals to have a uniform system nationwide. This would take money and political will. It is interesting to note that currently elections are paid for by the locality—county, city, or town. This is unlike the highway system which has various types of highways funded by various levels of government. What if local government had all responsibility for all roads as they do for elections?

There is a bill in Congress which would allocate \$2.5 billion over five years to counties, cities, and towns to upgrade their voting equipment, provided it is approved by a bipartisan commission and provided they train election workers. It is hoped that this will pass and improve the situation in some localities.

There are some people who advocate touch screen balloting, which would be like using an ATM. However, there would be no way to do a re-count—you would have to count on the machine to be right. How to guarantee a secret ballot, security for the system, and bug-free computers are problems yet to be solved.

Another proposal for election reform is to have instant run-off elections, or "instant runoff voting" (IRV). (See page 6 of the March issue of the Massachusetts Voter for an explanation.) It allows the voter to rank the candidates as first choice, second choice, third choice. This is currently the practice in other countries—Australia, New Zealand, and France, for example. It could be done with a scan system, but not punch cards. If such a system had been in place last fall, Nader's votes would have gone to Gore.

There was some discussion of the Electoral College and the winner-take-all system. The LWVUS has a position in favor of eliminating the Electoral College, but it won't happen because the small states are not going to give it up. There could be movement toward the proportional Electoral College vote which Maine and Nebraska have now, but, in order to succeed, it would need a lot of candidates willing to change the system. It can be changed by each state legislature.

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.

### **Maximizing Opportunities to Build Your League**

Led by Cheryl Graeve, LWVUS Field Support Director

*by Bonnie Carter & Andrea Kozinetz*

How do we build our League for the next century? The group brainstormed new strategies and ideas for increasing membership and membership development. We came away with many familiar goals. We need to attract young people. We need to build a foundation. We need to be visible within our communities.

National promises to support us. National is planning more national publicity as well as building for the future with enhancements to website and web tools. Discussion centered around attracting membership from college campuses where we could create opportunities for leadership development as well as new members!

*Continued on page 5*



*Observations and Notes from our Delegates***LWVMass State Convention Workshops, May 18 - 19, 2001****Education Reform Workshop**

Led by: Norma Shapiro,  
ACLU lobbyist on education issues,

Irwin Blumer,  
former Newton Superintendent,

Debra Blumer, State Representative

Hal Lane, Advisory Member MA  
Ed Reform Commission,

Carolyn Lumenello, Chair of the  
LWVM Education Reform Study.

What have Leagues learned and accomplished during the Education Reform Study? What should the League tackle in the next biennium?

The speakers at the workshop talked about the serious issue of financing education reform as well as the strategies for high stakes testing. Finances: No school system is spending an adequate amount of money on education! In Massachusetts, the state funds approximately 40% of the cost of public education. The local communities are responsible for the rest. The national average of state support is 50%. The speakers suggested that "growing the state pie" ought to be a goal to consider.

The state's tax policy has a very serious impact on education. Testing: Tests and standards vary from state to state. High stakes tests are those with important consequences for individual students, such as graduation, promotion, placement or awards. Former Superintendent Blumer spoke about agreeing with high standards testing, but considering alternative forms of testing for students; and phasing in the consequences as the school systems realign their curricula.

To learn more about elections in Massachusetts you can visit the web site of the Secretary of State, Elections Division at [www.state.ma.us/sec/ele](http://www.state.ma.us/sec/ele) ■

by Sandy Butzel

## *Susie Heyman Receives Jane Leighton Volunteer of the Year Award*

Susie Heyman joined the Newton League in the early 1980s. Her interest in women's justice issues prompted her immediate involvement in a state study on corrections. Then she chaired the U.S. League study on Meeting Basic Human Needs.

As Bulletin Editor from 1987 to 1988, Susie first revealed her talent as a proofreader (still valued today by many) and her skill at editing and creating prose reveals her command of the English language. She has worked tirelessly on Voters' Service and is a fundraiser extraordinaire. This year's Champagne and Chocolate success owes a great deal to her enthusiastic attitude and exquisite flair in organizing the food and ambiance for the day.

Susie is best known for her dedication to issues surrounding public education. She had an uncanny grasp of the issues and both informed Board Members and urged League action statements at School Committee hearings, often writing or fine tuning statements herself. She chaired Local Education from 1989 to 1991.

Susie's zeal for school issues ultimately led to a run for the School Committee where she has served admirably for the last eight years. She has carried with her the league principle of listening to both sides in the public arena. Never forgetting the League, she actively looked for ways to contribute "behind the scenes" without creating a conflict of interest in her position as a public official.

Her kindness to others has been evident over many years, from driving a fellow leaguer to radiation treatments to delivering flowers or organizing a dinner for a friend in need. She is forthright, energetic, and determined...witty with a clever sense of humor yet soft, forgiving, and has never held a grudge. She has a certain elan with an elegant sense of taste and style. As her School Committee term ends this fall, we can only hope that she will turn up the volume in her involvement in the Newton League. ■

## 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:  
Andrea Kozinetz Holtz at 8 Stoney Brae Road,  
Newton Highlands, MA 02461

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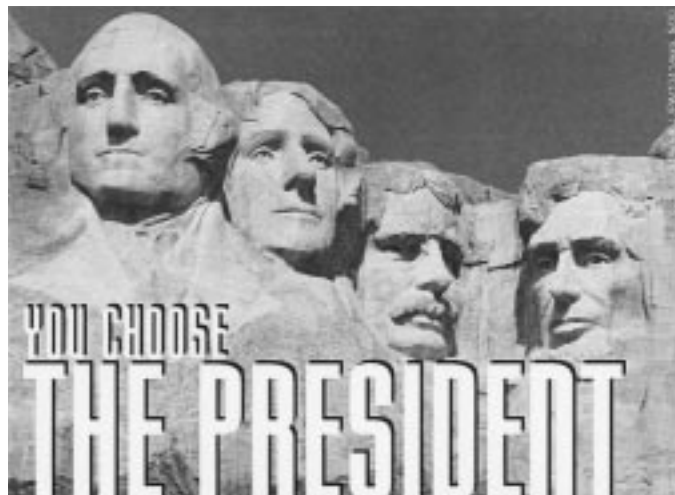
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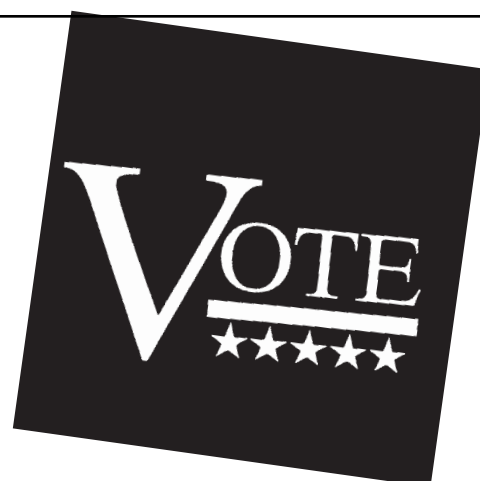
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*Our politics may lean to the left,  
but our work... NEVER!*



## Champagne and Chocolate

by Deb Crossley

Our fundraiser was beautiful, well-orchestrated and so profitable - thanks to you - and many generous souls. We had a perfect spring Sunday, the last one of April, in an extraordinary restoration of a Victorian mansion, gracious hosts, great food, great company and a compelling speaker. About 60-70 people attended; dozens more contributed in advance.

Special thanks to Amy Koch, Nancy Crowley, Anne Larner, Mary Adelstein, Susie Heyman, Carol Ann Shea, and Helen Jordan for chairing tasks from pledging to mailings to food, and to all of you who worked with them.

Weighing on all of our minds and

hearts was the sudden and tragic deaths of four Oak Hill Middle school students, in the terrible bus accident in Canada. Many of you who would have joined us were helping out at the middle school and attending the first funeral, that sadly coincided with our event. We remembered them, observing a moment of silence. Although we can look back and resolve to do better - lobby for safer vehicles perhaps - all we can do now is mourn a great loss.

Martha Coakley spoke of things that can be done to protect our youth against violence in the schools. I was struck by her steel core but compassionate commitment to programs and methods of

administering justice designed to help people. Speaking without notes, she drew a clear picture of the difficulties inherent in the administration of justice, while telling how she loves the work. She sees her role not so much as that of achieving convictions, but as one that takes each case individually and works to solve the deeper issues behind a crime. She spends much time supporting prevention and intervention programs, and to trying to speak for those with no voice, citing victims of child abuse and prostitutes as such people.

It was a terrific event, and I think one which showed the League at its best. Thanks everyone!

### LWVN CALENDAR

#### June

- 6 Wed. 5:30 pm. Board meeting and potluck at Acton, 48 Miller Rd. Newton Center
- 20 6:30 pm. Working Board and potluck dinner, all welcome, at Koch rsvp to Koch

#### July

- 5 5 pm, Last hour and day for submitting Nomination Papers for fall election
- 10 Tues. LWVN Board meeting, 7:15 pm. at Deb Hirsch, 49 Olde Field Road, Newton Centre

#### August

- 1 Wed. LWVN Board Meeting, 7:15 pm. at Crossley, 16 Circuit Ave. Newton Highlands
- 15 Working Board, 6:30 pm, location TBA
- 22 8 pm., last hour and day to register to vote for Sept. 11 City Preliminary Election

#### September

- 5 Wed. 7:15 pm, LWVN Board Meeting at Leith, 192 Islington Rd. Auburndale
- 10 12 noon, last hour and day to apply for Absentee Ballot for September 11 election

- 11 City Preliminary Election, polls open 7 am. to 8 pm
- 19 Working Board, 6:30 pm, location TBA

#### NEWTON LEGISLATIVE ROUNDTABLE

airs on Channel 10 (the blue channel) on AT&T Broadband on:

- Mondays 1:30 pm, 5:30 pm, 10:30 pm
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