

Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 5

May 2003

Watching Community Preservation in Action

by Deb Crossley

League members have been observing closely the deliberations of the Community Preservation Committee as well as the aldermanic "Ad Hoc Committee on Community Preservation" and Board of Aldermen discussions relative to the CPC recommendations. All recommendations go through the Ad Hoc and Finance committees before they are taken up by the BOA. In the first round of recommendations, two open space and three affordable housing projects were approved by the BOA in two early April sessions. Several other projects recommended by the CPC are currently in aldermanic committee and will be taken up by the BOA during April and May.

The CPC has learned a great deal through this first round of applications, and intends to review its guidelines and application requirements in light of this experience. The two statements published in this newsletter are representative of League interest and input into this process to date.

Meanwhile, the city issued a Request For Information to developers who may wish to partner with the city in acquisition and development of the 43 acre parcel known as Kessler Woods, and

Continued on page 5

The Honorable Board of Aldermen
Brooke K. Lipsitt, President

April 7, 2003



The League of Women Voters of Newton is pleased to see the first round of recommendations before the Board of Aldermen to fund Community Preservation projects, and commends the Community Preservation Committee for its hard work and dedication that has advanced the program to this stage. There are many worthy projects before you, which would not have had a chance at funding without Newton voters' support of the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

We think it is important to remember that the long term success of the CPA program depends on the continued support of the voters, which hinges on both our ability to award funds that produce positive results, as well as allocate the fund with clear and consistent discretion.

The League has reviewed all of the proposals to date, and, as an advocate for the passage of the CPA in Newton, will share our evaluation of each set of projects as they come before you. Although we have concerns about a number of the projects, we feel that the five before you now are good examples of exactly what the CPA was designed to enable Newton to accomplish.

We believe that the voters expected that the CPA fund would be used to acquire and preserve open space and to expand and encourage passive recreation. Acquisition of the Elgin Street parcel meets several goals of the CPC including providing protection for land listed in the "Open Space and Recreation Plan" and expanding existing open space. The Flowed Meadow Improvement Project fits very well with the guidelines described in the City of Newton "Community Preservation Plan". It is watershed land, contains fields, forest, wetland, abuts the Charles River, and is a corridor linking city-owned recreational lands and beyond to parkland in Waltham. The improvements will increase access for passive recreation.

The voters also understood that the CPA fund would be used in part to fund affordable housing. In fact, the vote turned in part on the understanding that the CPA could specifically target households earning up to 100% of median income, and provide city employees opportunities to live in Newton. It is important to show our ability to make good on this promise.

Homeownership subsidies for three units in the Christina Street Project would facilitate the first project providing moderately priced units for Newton employees and their families, and serve as a pilot for future projects. Providing CP funds for the Cambria Road Rental Project in West Newton would help supply two needed affordable family rental units.

Finally, CASCAP Nonantum Village Place is precisely the kind of project deserving CPA funding. It is fully worked out, well supported and documented, by a reputable company with a solid track record.

We urge the Board of Aldermen to swiftly approve these valuable projects in time to meet the funding requirements to ensure their successful implementation.

Respectfully,

Amelia S. Koch
President

Deborah Crossley
Local Action Chair

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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 617-964-0014.

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www.newtoncitizens.com/lwv

It's All About the People...

Ok, ok I admit it, it's the people. I mean I love what we do, don't get me wrong, but when push comes to shove it's the caliber of people I get to work with that really keeps me in the League. Where else do you find women who do more for their community under difficult circumstances? Working full-time, losing a job, raising children, and sending them off to college, losing loved ones – all these things and more I've seen my friends in the League go through and still they find time. Time to make a difference in our community.

It's a great place to learn new skills and hone existing ones. Do you want to feel more connected in the community? Do you want to improve your public speaking? Do you want to learn more about the issues, state, local and national? And do you want to meet other women (and men) like yourself who care about Newton and want to make a difference?

There are still lots of activities coming up in the League year. Janet Stearns has been working very hard on an Affordable Housing Forum that will focus on the state and local regulatory techniques available to encourage affordable housing development. State Convention, May 16th and 17th, is a great opportunity to learn more about the league and meet other leaguers from around the state. And then I hope to see many of you at annual meeting on Wednesday, June 11th.

As this is the last newsletter before annual meeting I want to thank the board and the members for the opportunity to serve as president. I want to thank the members of the board and those of you off board who make this organization work. Thank you all!

Amelia S Koch

Save the Date
Wednesday, June 11th, 6 P.M.
DINNER AND ANNUAL MEETING
Newton Senior Center

Welcome New Member

Cindy Spittel
74 Fenno Road
Newton, MA 02459
spittel@attbi.com
617 244-2013
617 965-1242



All Members

Please check your listing in the handbook. If there are corrections or e-mail address additions, send them to robinm@attbi.com

National Housing Trust Fund Legislation on Shaky Funding Foundation

by Deb Crossley

Uniting Citizens for Housing Affordability in Newton (UChAN)* learned that Congressman Frank, although in favor of a housing production program, is not supporting the Housing Trust Fund legislation funded by the FHA surplus because he does not think it will pass. (also see Jan 2003 issue, pg 1) UChAN wanted to know more, so I followed up with Kay Gibbs in Barney Frank's Washington office, who filled in the blanks.

The Housing Trust Fund was conceived as having a dedicated revenue stream, by earmarking surplus monies from the FHA insurance fund. This is money you and I and millions of others pay to insure our mortgages, which is used of course only in the case of default.

Gibbs's understanding is, the FHA fund was running a deficit when Clinton took office on the heels of a tough economy, but recovered during his eight years and built up to its current condition generating about 2-3 billion in surpluses each year, even after the required set aside is kept in the fund.

About two years ago, housing advocates identified this pot of money as one that might be earmarked to create affordable housing. However, this surplus goes back into the general fund, and has been used to 'balance' (or keep the deficit 2 billion less) the federal budget. So in a way, the money doesn't exist. Also, as foreclosures are on the rise in a tighter economy, it is not a surplus that can be counted on.

Gibbs says Republicans (with one exception - Shays) have been clear that under no conditions will they agree to earmark this fund, and that if it is not to be returned to the general fund, that it should go back to the consumer in reduced rates because this indicates that "they are paying too much".

The bottom line is Congressman Frank sees this particular bill as "not winnable", and that an alternate funding mechanism needs to be identified and attached to a housing program. Gibbs suggested that some kind of alternate funding plan is in the works, but was not specific.

It left me wondering - if we are deficit spending to stimulate the economy, and the economy is dependent on a reliable workforce who need affordable housing, then why not pass the bill and simply make it part of the federal budget?

* UChAN meets monthly at 8:30am at the Eliot Church in Newton Corner, usually the third week of the month. Call Josephine McNeil 617/527-5071 and become involved.■

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

Committees - in - Action

E d u c a t i o n

Focus	Renovations, increasing high school enrollments, school financing, testing & standards	
Members	Ann Grantham Susie Heyman Jody Klein Anne Larner	Robin Maltz Fran Osten Beverly Spencer Beth Wilkinson
Contact	Andrea Kelley Andrea Kozinetz Co-Chairs	⁶¹⁷ 964-4609 ⁶¹⁷ 964-6490

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	Sharon Balfour Jody Klein	Susie Heyman Linda Morrison
Contact	Holly Gunner, Chair ⁶¹⁷ 964-0767	

L o c a l A c t i o n

Contact	Deb Crossley Chair	⁶¹⁷ 244-7597
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OBSERVER CORPS

<i>Community Preservation Committee</i>	AnnaMaria Abernathy Deb Crossley Jody Klein Priscilla Leith
---	--

<i>Election Commission</i>	Bonnie Carter Nancy Criscitiello
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<i>Finance Committee</i>	Ruby Ajanee Amelia Koch Ben Weisbuch
--------------------------	--

<i>Energy Commission</i>	Deb Crossley, LWV Member
--------------------------	-----------------------------

<i>Parks and Recreation Commission</i>	Priscilla Leith
--	-----------------

<i>School Committee</i>	Andrea Kelley Andrea Kozinetz
-------------------------	----------------------------------

<i>Zoning and Planning Committee</i>	Judy Jaffe
--------------------------------------	------------

N o m i n a t i n g C o m m i t t e e

Members	Deb Hirsch Elaine Reisman	Fran Seasholes Janet Stearns
Contact	Sandy Butzel Chair	⁶¹⁷ 332 8021

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

O b s e r v e r C o r p s

Election Commission

By Nancy Criscitiello

At a meeting of the Program & Services committee on April 9, Peter Karg, Executive Secretary, presented the proposal for the new electronic scanner voting machines at a cost of \$285,000. All communities using levered machines are federally mandated to update them by the next General Election in 2004. The original amount of money from the Federal Government has been reduced from \$4000 to \$3,354 per precinct. He expects that there will be considerable savings having to do with moving the machines from storage (\$12,000), maintenance of the machines (\$10,000-12,000), programming them (\$9500) and poll workers' reduced hours (\$3100)...the counting will be done instantaneously. Karg and the Mayor are anxious to have these in place by our 2003 fall municipal election so that training of poll workers (to be written into the contract) by the company as well as reeducation of voters can be accomplished in plenty of time to work out the bugs. The Committee asked to see a mockup of the ballot when it became available. The item passed 6-0 (Ald. Lipsett absented self for another meeting) and will be taken up by the Board of Aldermen on April 22.

Also taken up was the renomination of Fran Shaer for another 4 year term as Republican member of the Election Commission. Amy Sangiolo asked Karg if the Commission was considering placing someone on the commission to represent the Unenrolled Voter, of which there are many in Newton. Karg said not at the moment, but he would bring it up.

Editor's note: The Newton League supports the purchase of new voting scan systems and sent a letter to the Finance Committee and Programs and Service Committee urging the BOA to approve this item in this year's capital improvement budget. The item passed the BOA on April 22. ■

Education Committee Update

Andrea Kelley and Andrea Kozinetz

The LWVN Education Committee continued to observe the Newton School Committee and the Newton North High School task force throughout the spring. The Newton North Task Force will make a recommendation to the Mayor and the School Committee in May. We anticipate a building project for Newton North, which will cost more than the original amount earmarked for the renovation project.

The state budget has not yet been finalized. It is uncertain if there will be additional local aid cuts and what impact this will have on Newton and Newton's budget. We will alert you to any concerns.

We would like to thank Education Committee member Beth Wilkinson for hosting a recent NewTV program with our legislators focusing on education issues.

The Education Committee is planning to host a meeting open to all members early in the fall of 2003 to discuss the state budget; Newton's school budget the Newton North Task Force resolution; MCAS testing follow-up; the federal act, No Child Left Behind.

We hope that you will be in touch with one of us if there are issues you would be interested in discussing or hearing more about. ■

April 9, 2003

City of Newton
Community Preservation Committee
cc: Ad Hoc CP committee, BOA
Jeffrey Sachs, Chair
Brooke Lipsitt, president

Re: Oppose use of CP funds for Crystal Lakes Docks replacement

Dear CPC members,

The League of Women Voters of Newton thanks the CPC for its continued work, long hours and careful consideration given to establishing priorities and policy to guide its recommendations for use of the Community Preservation (CP) fund. As we have witnessed during the first round of requests, the CP fund is a much needed resource for our city.

We wish to reiterate our objection to using this important resource to fund projects that rightly belong in the Capital Improvement Plan, such as the Crystal Lakes Dock Replacement request. Such expenditures were not envisioned by the legislature, and stray far from the intent of the Community Preservation Act.

Even as we face increasingly tight economic constraints, as local taxes are limited and the state cuts aid to communities, we must not be lured into abusing the privilege afforded by this new tax for purposes other than those which garnered its support by the voters. The purpose of CPA is to establish a mechanism and incentive that enables communities to better manage and control land use. The law is quite clear that the monies are to be used to acquire and protect new lands, create new affordable housing, and develop new recreational facilities. The CPA also permits restoration - but of the newly acquired properties. Only historic preservation monies may be spent on existing facilities, and this does not apply to the docks.

We worry that interpreting the law in a way that attempts to justify its use for such expenditures may anger voters, and defeat the CPA at the polls when it comes up for renewal. The CP fund is limited, and cannot and must not be used to repair or replace aging city structures.

We urge the Community Preservation Committee to vote against recommending funding for replacement of the Docks at Crystal Lake.

Respectfully,
Amelia S. Koch
President

Deborah Crossley
Local Action Chair



Continued from page 1

Watching Community Preservation in Action

responses were due mid April. Both the RFI and the Sasaki site analyses (commissioned using community preservation funds) are available to all (pdf file) on the city's website. If such a partnership is formed, and a bid can be put forward to NSTAR by its June deadline, then it is most likely that a large application for funding would come before the CPC, that they would need to act on, bring before the BOA in a very short time frame.

The League intends to continue monitoring the CP program, which we see not only as a very important resource for the city, but also one that is of great community interest. If you would like to participate, contact Deb Crossley. ■

Affordable
Housing and
Anti-Snob
Zoning:

ARE THE LAWS
WORKING?

Thursday, May 15, 2003

7:00 pm to 9:00 pm
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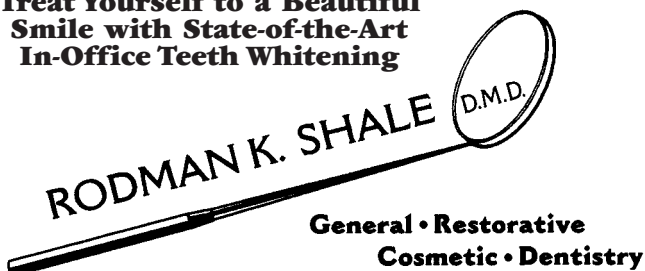


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Author, Author!

The Wisconsin Women's Law Journal (Fall 2002, just available) has published an article by our very own Linda Morrison on "The National Association of Women Judges: Agent of Change." The article is drawn from two chapters in Linda's thesis history of the NAWJ, including one of the two chapters on the gender bias task force studies. It also traces the history of women in the professions; law and the judiciary, and considers future needs for women's organizations such as the LWV and the NAWJ.

There is a copy available at the Newton Library, at the circulation desk, for in-library reading.

Congratulations, Linda!

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LWVN CALENDAR

May

- 7 Wednesday, 7:30, Board Meeting/
Annual Report Deadline at Pat Acton's,
48 Miller Rd., Newton Centre,
617-965-5572
- 15 Thursday, 7-9 P.M., Housing Forum,
Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library
- 16-17 Friday and Saturday, LWVMA
Convention, Wyndham, Westborough,
For information go to www.lwvma.org

June

- 3 Tuesday, 7:30 P.M., Don't Stand
There...Run! Workshop, Co-Sponsored
with the Newton Election Commission,
Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library
- 11 Wednesday, 6:00 P.M. LWVN Dinner and
Annual Meeting, Newton Senior Center,
Elaine Reisman, 617-244-6439

See you June 11th!
Watch for your
Annual Meeting
Workbook
in the mail.

Considering Public Office?

Don't Stand There - Run!

The League of Women Voters of Newton
and the Newton Election Commission Invite
Candidates, Campaign Managers,
Campaign Treasurers, and Interested Citizens

To a Practical Workshop
How to Run a Campaign for Local Public Office

Tuesday, June 3

7:00 to 9:00 pm

Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library

The following presentations are planned:

DENIS KENNEDY, Director of Public Information,
Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance,
will give an overview of the Campaign and Political Finance Law,
including reporting requirements

PETER KARG, Executive Secretary of the Election Commission
will describe the new voting machines to be
used in the 2003 Municipal Election

OTHERS TO BE ANNOUNCED

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NEWTON ELECTION COMMISSION 617-796-1350

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