

MINUTES

Board Meeting

Thursday, November 11, 2021, 5:00 – 6:15 pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Attending (13): Marie Curtis, Peggy Dellinger, Dallas Grove, Lois Kiely, Evelyn Murphy, Wilma Pfeffer, Nancy Sabino, Annette Scott, Susan Sferas, Pat Supplee, Anne Ugrovics. Guest: New member Eleanor Novek and member Cordelia Golden.

Opening – Welcome and Introductions

DEI Policy Pledge-Read by Eleanor Novek

Announcements

- Evelyn made the very sad announcement that Sol Hara passed away this week.
- Evelyn explained that we are beginning the process for program planning at the national level, which provides an opportunity to introduce newer members to LWVUS positions. She has ordered several copies of “Impact on Issues” which offers an overview of national positions and will invite small groups to meet to discuss specific positions in advance of our input to LWVUS, due in March. She also explained that the president of the LWV NJ has asked local League presidents to share inform from state with members, and she will be doing so.
- Lois announced that there will be a DEI tab on the homepage of lwvsmc.org.

Standing business (*Distributed in Advance*)

- Minutes of September Meeting were accepted.
- Susan reviewed the Treasurer’s Report, which is posted on lwvsmc.org, Members Only page. She highlighted several anticipated payments we are expecting or received after the close of the October report : \$200 instalment from LWVUS grant, some income from the ILO, and a reimbursement for election materials from LWV Western Monmouth. The Treasurer’s Report was accepted and will be kept for audit.
- Team Activity Reports – Board members sent several corrections to Evelyn, who will make the changes and send a revised version to the Board. The Team Activity Reports will be posted with meeting documentation on lwvsmc.org. Evelyn encouraged Board members to reach out to team leaders for follow-up or to join in team activities.

LWVSMC Member Experience

Evelyn moderated a brainstorming session to capture the Board’s thoughts on how well LWVSMC is doing engaging and providing value to its members. The notes that follow capture the Board input.

- Successes this election season (July to November)
 - We involved many members in election-related initiatives (forums, VOTE411, voter registration/education, etc.), giving them specific, manageable ways to contribute and feel a sense of accomplishment.
 - Results from 2021 election show that nationwide, young voters had the greatest increase in voter turnout of any age group. NJ had the biggest increase. We like to think our Energizing Young Voters work made a contribution to this success.
 - Our Reenter-Register-Vote initiative led several returning citizens and some on probation to work as poll workers for the General Election.
 - We gave members early information and training on the changes to the 2021 election process (early voting, new machines), equipping them to serve as resources for their own networks. This advance information delivered a specific, clear benefit from their League membership.

- Feedback on Election Day from Seabrook Village indicated that our “Election 2021: What’s New? What’s Different?”, recorded and played on the Seabrook television channel, was viewed and found valuable by residents.
- We took full advantage of Zoom to train and involve our members.
- We reached new levels of collaborating with the other LWV in Monmouth County (forums, VOTE411, webinars, etc.) to leverage the value we were able to provide to voters and to raise our profile in the County.
- Marie shared the hosting of Facts & Issues and extended opportunity to guest host to other members.
- We provided emotional support for each other during the demands of the election season.
- Challenges this season
 - We took on a lot and it was difficult to manage the amount of activity we were handling. The solution is to develop more leaders to handle specific areas.
 - We do not have enough volunteers to cover in-person training programs for Reenter-Register-Vote. Looking for LWV volunteers in other counties.
 - Struggled to get print media to publish our releases in a timely fashion. Virtual media were more responsive—but we are not sure of their reach.

Focused Strategic Discussion: How We Organize our Activity

Evelyn moderated a brainstorming session to capture the Board’s ideas for strengthening how we manage our projects, engage our members, and develop new leaders. The notes that follow capture the Board input.

- “Assigning” Project Leadership
 - Ask early—well in advance of the job to be done.
 - Provide a coach/consultant as a resource to new leaders—a LWV veteran who can guide the new leader and ensure they feel supported.
- Recruiting Volunteers
 - Create well-documented, discrete “jobs” that give volunteers manageable opportunities that provide a sense of accomplishment. Marie is working on this as she resurrects the Observer Corps.
- Letting Members Know
 - Publish an electronic newsletter highlighting all we are up to and accomplishing (Peggy volunteered).
 - Expand our use of “Sign-Up”—a free platform to send out notice of volunteering opportunities where members can sign up. Pat is currently using “Sign-Up” to staff delivery of Energizing Young Voters. (Susan raised the concern that a political ad appeared when she was signing up. She will look into a possible alternative platform.)
 - Wilma’s phone calls to new members is working well. She connects new member interests with appropriate Board members.
- Tracking and Measuring
 - The Google document we set up to track what we’re doing is underused. Let’s have a workshop on how to work with Google Drive (and other electronic tools) during the winter.
- Celebrating
 - Virtual events can be made to work. Last year’s LWVNJ gala was very celebratory and successful.
 - Possible in-person event at Deans—holiday luncheon perhaps.
 - More small events to celebrate specific successes.

Focused Strategic Discussion: What if we merged the three Monmouth County Leagues?

As a first step in investigating the possibilities, Evelyn asked the Board to offer their thoughts on the potential gains and losses of merging with LWV Greater Red Bank and LWV Western Monmouth. She clarified that we are at the research—not debate—stage of exploration and requested the Board avoid challenging or defending points of view. The notes that follow capture the Board input.

- What might we gain?
 - The ability to continue to operate, given our legal status challenges. We've lost our Tax ID number (as apparently has LWVWM). We need to figure out how re-establish our legal entity status and merger is one possible solution.
 - Opportunities to move people into different (more productive) leadership positions. Right now we are required to fill four different boards (president, treasurers, etc.). With a more streamlined structure, the talented people who currently fill these positions would be available to take on sorely needed leadership of mission-supporting projects, initiatives, etc.
 - Greater capability. The success of our collaborations demonstrates that working together leverages resources and expands our reach and visibility.
 - Impact and efficiencies.
 - Opportunity to leverage new technologies, including Zoom.
 - More opportunities for members. We could re-establish "units" (the League's tradition meeting format at which issues were discussed and consensus reached). We could re-imagine how we cover and act at the municipal level, creating municipal-level teams to staff the Observer Corps and study local issues. With some creative thinking, there is no reason to constrain our ability to act locally, even if we are one county-wide League.
 - Greater access to subject matter experts.
 - Working together has enriched us all.
- What might we lose?
 - Possible loss of membership. Pattern has proven true in Monmouth County, which used to have five Leagues and has lost membership since consolidation. We started out with large membership, but membership dropped and we lost involvement in local issues (which attracts members). The LWVSMC has lost the local focus on Ocean Township.
 - Opportunities to train new leaders, since we would need fewer officers.
 - Personal connections and opportunity to meet in person. Geography is important.
 - Ease of consensus that's possible with a smaller group. We are able to agree and move forward and might lose that in a bigger group.
 - Attention to Ocean County members. Fear that greater emphasis on "Monmouth County" would leave members in Ocean County feeling even more 'orphaned' than they do now.

Following the brainstorm, Evelyn explained the status of the issue and asked for input on next steps:

- The ILO is establishing a Merger Exploration Team, led by Anne Torre of the LWVGRBA, to research the possibilities.
- The Board agreed that Evelyn send an email to our members letting them know about the merger exploration and inviting them to join the team.
- Susan raised a concern that our Tax ID problem may jeopardize our fiscal viability. Evelyn explained that the current risk is limited to our access to Paypal, which we will lose access to in January.
- Evelyn followed up on Anne's concern about losing Ocean County focus. She explained that we are supporting member in Ocean County in hope that they will be able to form an Ocean County League.

Adjourned at 6:15.

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, December 9, 5:00 – 6:15