

## MINUTES

**Board Meeting: Thursday, April 21, 2022, 7:00 – 8:15 pm**

*Virtual Meeting via Zoom*

*ATTENDING (13 participants)—Board members: Marie Curtis, Peggy Dellinger, Dallas Grove, Lois Kiely, Evelyn Murphy, Susan Sferas, Nancy Sabino, Annette Scott, Pat Supplee. Nominating Committee Chair: Jayne Mackta. Member guests: Harriet Bernstein, Cordelia Golden, Luisa Paster*

### **Opening – Welcome, Introductions, and DEI Policy Pledge** (read by Luisa Paster)

#### **Announcements**

- LWVNJ Making Democracy Work Award Program and Reception, May 23, Boathouse at Mercer Lake, West Windsor. All members invited. Susan and Evelyn are going.
- LWVSMC is taking out an ad to honor Sol Hara in the Making Democracy Work journal at a cost of \$250, as budgeted.
- Annette has been asked to register returning citizens at a parole facility in Trenton. She is looking for volunteers.

#### **Standing business** (*Documents distributed in Advance*)

- **Minutes** of March Meeting—Approved to be posted on lwvsmc.org, “Members Only” page.
- **Treasurer’s Report**—Took in a total of \$460.16 including \$133.05 in unrestricted revenue from membership dues and contributions and \$226.95 in restricted income from grants, voter service reimbursement from LWVNJ, a LWVUS Voter Engagement grant payment, and gifts from LWVSMC members for ad in Central Jersey Club to honor Annette Scott. (Surplus from ad gifts will be donated to Central Jersey Club.) Paid out a total of \$1,068.76 including a \$648 Q3 PMP to LWVUS. Book balance: \$7280.35. Decided to write off unpaid Candidate Forum fees due to us from 2021 General Election (Ocean Grove Homeowners--\$25 shortfall, and a candidate in Toms River Board of Education). Harriet will follow up with OG Homeowners. Treasurer’s Report will be posted on lwvsmc.org, Members Only Page.
- **Team Activity Reports** – Peggy pointed out correction needed to dates for LD30 legislative interviews and will send changes to Evelyn. Pat expanded on what is involved in the Smithsonian exhibit. Lois suggested inviting the new president of Monmouth University to the Energizing Young Voters display opening at Brookdale in August.

#### **LWVUS Convention 2022 – June 23 - 26**

- Pat Supplee is going to LWVUS convention in Denver in person (Friday 6/24, 10 a.m.)
- Susan is attending representing the ILO. Evelyn is a delegate from LWVSMC.
- The Board unanimously authorized Pat and Evelyn serve as delegates representing LWVSMC. We are allowed three; one position remains open and members are invited to consider filling the vacancy.

#### **Legislative Interviews Discussion**

- Peggy reported that LWVSMC conducted interviews with legislators from LD 30 and LD11 on behalf the LWVNJ for the purpose of learning their legislative priorities and their thoughts on the League’s legislative agenda. Peggy Dellinger coordinated and oversaw the effort for LD30; Marie Curtis, for LD11.

- Purpose: 1) Learn legislator’s legislative priorities; 2) Hear their thoughts on LWVNJ legislative priorities; 3) Introduce LWV and build a relationship.
- Interview questions:



- **Report on CD30 Legislator Views**

- Assemblyman Sean Kean:
  - **PRIORITIES:** 1) Affordability (look at tax structure). *“There is an exodus of people with means who are being replaced by people with lesser means, burdening the state.”* 2) Reform of the affordable housing mandate—effect on environment and community—wants LWV to speak up.
  - **VOTING:** 1) Focused on voter fraud and putting safeguards in place to build public confidence. Supports requiring IDS at polls and prohibiting political operatives from going into nursing homes. Believes vote-by mail is *“very susceptible to fraud”*—says he knows personally of people who submitted VBM ballots and voted in person. 2) Opposes 17-year-olds who will turn 18 by the General Election voting in. 3) Upset about delayed election results—erodes confidence.
  - **REDISTRICTING:** Believes it works *“fairly well”* in NJ. Concerned that the appointment of the supposed neutral 11<sup>th</sup> Commissioner is a partisan process.
  - **ETHICS:** 1) Federal court rulings make it harder for states to regulate—particularly in set-up of dark PACs. But agrees that *“campaign contributions are free speech.”* 2) No objection to extending one-year cooling off period for lobbyists to two years. Spoke of the value lobbyists offer with their informed perspectives. Needs to look at specific legislation before taking a position. 3) Doesn't support expanding OPRA requirements to other classes of documents. Thinks it is working well. Cited abuses by political operatives. 4) Supports strengthening public notice requirements.
- Senator Robert Singer
  - **PRIORITIES:** 1) Fixing the funding formulas for education—Mon. Co. districts have lost state money. 2) Healthcare—improve quality of county health agencies. [Ranking member on Health Committee.] 3) School Transportation—address the shortage of bus drivers by easing up on special licensing and allowing in-district training
  - **VOTING:** 1) Opposes same-day registration, 17-year-old voting in Primaries, ban on police at polling places, and enfranchisement of incarcerated citizens (okay with restoring after release). 2) Opposes sending vote-by-mail ballots to citizens who have not requested them. *“Not thrilled about drop boxes”* and overall wants to encourage people to go to the polls—need to ensure we have enough polling places. 3) Supports requiring voter ID. 4) Supports early voting—concerned about information that comes out close to Election Day. 5) Disturbed about low voter turnout and supports doing more in schools, public events, libraries. **GENERAL COMMENT:** *“I get disturbed when we consistently want to change things.”*

- REDISTRICTING: *“Better but still partisan.”* Like Kean, upset by partisanship of judge in selecting the 11<sup>th</sup> Commissioner. (Didn’t know whether electing judges might be a better system.
- ETHICS: 1) Thinks the biggest problem with lobbyists is the power of the unions. No problem extending the cooling-off period. Thinks the real answer is a fulltime legislature. 2) Feels the problem with campaign financing is out-of-state and union money. Would support expanding public financing. 3) Doesn't support expanding OPRA coverage—concerned about privacy of calls coming into his office. Also cited misuse by people overburdening local government for political reasons. 3) No problem with 72-hour notification for voting on bills.
- GENERAL COMMENTS: Respect for LWV. Loss of civil discourse.
- Assemblyman Thomson
  - Less ready to jump on the party line. He’s an insurance professional and is very concerned about finances.
  - Only concern with same-day registration is burden on county election officials. Okay with 17-year-olds voting in Primaries. Doesn’t like vote-by-mail automatically going out and is convinced there is vote fraud. No problem extending the cooling-off period for lobbyists. Came across as someone open to new legislation. Felt that the redistricting should have more input from the public.
- **Report on LD11 Interviews**
  - Assembly woman Eulner, interviewed by Dallas Hlatky. Harriot served as recorder.
    - PRIORITY: School funding. More support for the police.
    - VOTING: Supports making Election Day a national holiday and early voting. Does not support same-day voter registration. (Afraid of double registration.)
    - REDISTRICTING: Not too much to offer—new to the job. Felt there was no need for an “independent decider” on the Redistricting Commission.
    - ETHICS: Not in favor of extending public notice on bills. The Legislature has reduced the number of bills that can be voted on in a given day. No comment on OPRA.
  - Senator Vin Gopal, interviewed by Dallas Grove with Nancy Sabino. Wilma was recorder. Senator was sick and interview was done via Zoom. Told him about LWVSMC programs Reenter-Register-Vote and Energizing Young Voters (set up an opportunity for Pat Supplee to make an appointment to meet with him).
    - VOTING: In accord with all LWV priorities, except for anything that would delay election results. He’s in favor of processing VBM ballots in advance without tallying. Criticized the County Clerk—even though he knows she doesn’t have responsibility to count votes; he is disturbed that she is a Republican Party leader and the Republican Party (party in power) appoints the Board of Elections. Said that the county election officials “couldn’t do the job” in the last election with the current system and he’s not in favor of changes—saying that the county not up to the task. Upset about his wait for election results.
    - REDISTRICTING: Concerned about partisanship in the appointing the Redistricting Commission.
    - ETHICS: Strongly in favor of more transparency and Governor’s ethics bill.
  - Assemblywoman Piperno. Interviewed by Marie with Dallas Grove. Harriot served as recorder.
    - PRIORITIES: 1) School funding. 2) Concerned about progressive ideas that exclude parents from information/decisions about children. 3) Complimented support of small businesses in county.
    - VOTING: 1) Opposes same-day registration. 2) Supports making Election Day holiday. 3) Strongly supports 17-year-olds voting in the Primary. 3) Supports early voting. 4)

Wants voter ID. 5) Concerned about delay in election results. 6) Thinks poll workers should work in shifts.

- REDISTRICTING: Turned to her aide to respond. Unsure where she would come out.
- ETHICS: 1) Supported a bill prohibiting candidates to take bribes. 2) Feels that extending cooling-off period for lobbyists would put an undue burden on lobbyists. 3) Agreed more time is needed to review bills before a vote is taken.
- LWNJ is holding a legislative interview process debrief on May 5. They will report on findings and take feedback on the process.

### **Merger Discussion**

- Evelyn asked if there were any questions. Lois asked how “meetings like this one” will work. Evelyn explained that the boards of the three local Monmouth County League will be replaced by a new LWV Monmouth County Board and that the make-up of that board and the schedule of its meetings will be determined by the teams designing the new entity, subject to ratification at the July 26 organizational meeting at which the members of the three local Leagues vote on the bylaws, slate, etc. of the new entity.

### **General Discussion—Concern about candidate forums going forward**

- Luisa brought up the concern that the Republican Party at the national level has announced that its candidates will not participate in candidate forums. Our Board suggested that LWV examine its policy to design a way to hold public forums, even if one political party declines to participate. The question of “empty chair debates” was discussed at the last state Board meeting. The LWNJ Board did not resolve the issue and is leaving much up to local Leagues.
- The LWVSMC Board expressed interest in finding alternative solutions when a party or candidates pull out, leaving only one party represented: having a sponsoring organization take over at the last minute, including using our Zoom platform anonymously, for example. Discussed the option of issuing a press release when a party pulls out of a forum or refuses to debate. Marie emphasized that holding a forum with only one party would compromise the perception of our non-partisanship.
- Agreed to put the issue on next month’s Board agenda.

### **Close –**

- **Adjourned: 8:45**
- **Next Board Meeting: *Thursday, May 19, 7:00 – 8:15***