

MINUTES

November 3, 2021 Board Meeting

Via Zoom

ATTENDING (11): Carole Beyer, Elizabeth Bond, Barbara Chaudhery, Peggy Dellinger, Marianne Kligman, Evelyn Murphy, Susan Sferas, Sharon Steinhorn, Anne Torre, Louise Usechak, Sherri West.

Standing business

- MINUTES OF THE SEPT. MEETING: Approved.
 - TREASURER'S REPORT: Paid state license fee, plus a single-month second Zoom license fee to accommodate election webinars in a fully booked candidate forum schedule. Webinar upgrade bill from Peggy for 3 months is pending. Susan will apply to LWVNJ for reimbursement for these Zoom expenses. The Treasurer's Report is posted in the ILO Room on the "Members Only" page of lwvsmc.org.
 - PROBLEM OF AUTHORIZING LOCAL LEAGUE TREASURERS WITH BANKS: The state League is not working on the problem of Leagues who are having problems getting banks to authorize new treasurers. The problem for LWVSMC is that we do not have valid tax ID number because it has not been filing IRS 990. LWVSMC's bank is asking for business account.
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Forum Debrief (Evelyn and Marianne)

- Summary statistics
 - Held 12 Forums (*Monmouth County Commissioner and Surrogate, Ocean Twp BoE, Red Bank Regional, Little Silver Rep BoE, Neptune BoE, Brick BoE, LD-13 State Senate and Assembly, Highlands Borough Council, Toms River BoE, Middletown BoE, Manalapan/ Englishtown BoE, Belmar Borough Council, Tinton Falls Mayor and Councilmembers*). Worked on two others that were cancelled at the last minute.
 - A total of 1361 people registered; 858 viewed live and another 1170 watched the recording on LWVSMC. (Do not yet have the number of viewers who watched the recordings via LWVGRBA, and may have only estimates for viewers on the various cable outlets.)
 - 29 active volunteers, 4 with Zoom platform expertise. Our 5 active moderators moderated 15 forums—11 for our Leagues and 4 for Leagues outside Monmouth County.
 - Lessons learned
 - Evelyn held a Zoom debrief session 10/29 attended by 16 of the 29 League members who worked on this election cycle's forums. Marianne took notes. Evelyn will prepare a written report and amend our process based on the feedback.
 - Evelyn intends to solicit additional feedback from volunteers in specific roles, including question screeners.
 - Soliciting feedback from question screeners
 - Going to have focused feedback sessions with each forum volunteer role
 - Public Relations
 - Looking at ways to promote the forum through online media. Print media too slow for current pace of scheduling.
 - Marianne will work on a press release highlighting the value the candidate forums held by the League, with references to the election webinar and VOTE411.
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- Challenges/Surprises with implications to communication with candidates:
 - Two nights in row had surprise candidates (failed to respond to any LWV correspondence) and showed up on the night of the forum
 - At one forum, received communication two hours before the forum, demanding the forum be postponed until candidates who had declined would be available.
 - Needed improvements to process:
 - Use online sign-up process for volunteers
 - Need more volunteers in various roles
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Citizen Guides

- We have leftover 2021 Citizen Guides that will be outdated in January. Decision was made to leave the extra supply in libraries and township offices.
 - Recommended not buying Guides for ILO next year (LWV NJ has leftovers available that we will be able to use).
 - Agreed not to give out 2021 to Commissioners since it will be out of date in two months.
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VOTE411

- Elizabeth urged that we do more to promote VOTE411, even now, after the election
 - Anne suggested buying adds on local online news outlets and including a promotion of VOTE411 in the registration emails for forum attendees.
 - Statistics:
 - Covered 94 races (47 municipal and 43 Board of Ed)
 - Invited 345 candidates; 97 responded (28% response rate)
 - Posted recordings of 11 candidate forums
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Bookkeeping expenses and income from forums

- Evelyn is managing the income/expenses of the ILO related to the election cycle. She reported that the income due the three Leagues is roughly even. The Board suggested that any donations to the Ed Funds for Monmouth County voter service go to the state and be split among the three Leagues.
 - The \$250 income from Religious Action Center (who were signed up to sponsor four LD forums and in the end supported the one that came to pass) will be split among the 3 Leagues.
 - As Treasurer, Susan will handle the expense for the upgraded (to webinar) Zoom license and other voter service expenses and request reimbursement from LWV NJ.
 - LWV WM will pay LWV SMC for its share of the expenses for the new-voting-machine flyers.
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Non-Partisan Policy (Susan)

- Did not have the information available on individual contribution cap in state. Louise will research and report to the Board in January.
 - Susan moved: "Adopt Nonpartisan policy as presented at the September meeting omitting Rule #5 (regarding contributions) until such time as we want to make a change." Unanimously approved.
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Natural Resources (Louise and Barbara)

- Monmouth County municipalities are addressing affordable housing obligations mandated by Mount Laurel II's NJ Supreme Court decision and subsequent refinements/requirements. A pending affordable housing application in Colts Neck with a package sewage treatment plant represents a potential threat to the Swimming River reservoir, source of much of Monmouth County's water supply. This is an "in-line" reservoir and serves as a large detention basin for all streams flowing into it, so whatever happens with upstream development impacts our drinking water. Previously, Colts Neck was able to fulfill its Mt. Laurel obligation by paying for the
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upgrade of housing stock in Long Branch. Recent regulation has eliminated this option and required that affordable housing be provided within the municipality.

- NJ Supreme Court mandated affordable housing commitments be met by a deadline (within the next two weeks), irrespective of environmental impact. Colts Neck can put conditions on approvals, but only the DEP can hold up development. The proposed development includes a sewage treatment plant under the parking lot that would potentially affect Monmouth County drinking water. The ILO is working with the Sierra Club to raise concerns.
- Barbara made a motion: "To draft a letter to the editors of local newspapers stating the League's concerns about the proposed impact of development in Colts Neck on the quality of Monmouth County's drinking water from the Swimming River Reservoir." Letter would point out the need to balance affordable housing with environmental issues. LWVGRBA will take the lead. Passed with one abstention.

Hot Topic

- ILO Webinar license is in effect through November 20. Board agreed to drop the webinar Zoom upgrade purchased to support our candidate forums, effective November 20. We will resubscribe to the upgrade when if needed for Hot Topics, for example.
- Agreed to postpone Hot Topic until February.

Insurance for Board member

- Anne pointed out the vulnerability of directors on League boards in this contentious political environment.
- The LWVWVNJ has insurance for its Board, but nothing that local Leagues can take advantage of.
- The insurance is expensive (~\$900/year). Anne will investigate the costs and protections.

Merging three Monmouth County Leagues

- Logic for the change:
 - *Current legal status complications*

Susan pointed out the IRS changed its rules in 2003, prohibiting local leagues from filing under the LWVWVNJ. Many local Leagues, including LWVSMC and LWVWVW failed to file the appropriate papers and do not have tax ID numbers. This compromises their status as legal entities and is complicating transferring authorities on bank accounts. Solving this problem at the local League level is complicated. If the three Monmouth County Leagues merge, we can file as a single League and the problem goes away. We would merge and incorporate under a current valid ID number (possibly LWVWVGRAs).
 - *Efficiencies (including Board insurance)*

If we determine legal insurance protection for Board members is desirable/needed, the expense would likely be prohibitive for the three county Leagues individually. A merger would streamline both functions and structure.
 - *Trend toward cross-county collaboration*

In recent years, the 3 Leagues have become increasingly collaborative and today carry out critical functions like voter education, VOTE411, Hot Topics, and forums as county teams.
 - *Enabling technology*

Zoom has addressed many the challenges of a wider geographic footprint. Experience shows that virtual meetings are as effective and well-attended as in-person sessions and make it easy to members from anywhere in the county to meet.
- Merger Exploration Team:

Sharon proposed forming a small team (6 to 8) to research and report to the Board. Anne [Chair], Barbara, Evelyn, Peggy, and Sharon agreed to serve and Sharon will find at least one other member from LWVWVW.
- Process:

We are a membership organization, so this decision would have to go through membership and the state and national Leagues. Evelyn suggested raising the idea with local boards, and then from the membership as input to the Exploratory Committee.

Election webinars

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- We delivered (at least) 9 election voter educational sessions on “Election 2021: What’s New? What’s Different?” (*LWV Monmouth County members, NJ State Library, Congregation Torat-El, Applewood Estates, Seabrook, Shrewsbury Ave. Zion Church, Unitarian Congregation of Lincroft, Neptune MURC., Twp. of Ocean Historical Museum.*)
 - We reached at least 200 people who attended live (2 sessions) or on Zoom (7 sessions)—plus those who watched the recording posted on lwvsmc.org and the websites of some host organizations. We encouraged participants to spread the word on the new Monmouth County voting machines and the early voting process.

Close-

- Adjourned at 3:00
 - Next Meeting 1 p.m., Wednesday, January 5 (LWVSMC lead)
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