



Amherst League of Women Voters

A Voice for Citizens, a Force for Change

Annual Meeting Packet

DRAFT AGENDA
NOMINATING COMMITTEE
HIGHLIGHTS
COMMITTEE REPORTS

ANNUAL MEETING PACKET

Please bring this to the meeting at the Jones Library's Woodbury Room on Thursday May 30. Social time from 6:30, meeting begins promptly at 7 p.m.

Please also bring your Program Booklet and the Proposed Budget you received by U.S.Mail.

If you have friends who don't receive the e-bulletin, please encourage them to contact [Phyllis Lehrer](#) for a paper version.

DRAFT AGENDA

LWV of Amherst Annual Business Meeting
Thursday, May 30, 2019, 6:30 PM
Jones Library, Woodbury Room

AGENDA

6:30 PM - Refreshments

7:00 PM - Call to Order

· Approve Minutes of the May 2018 Annual Meeting

· Treasurer's & Accountant Reports

- Proposed 2020 Budget
 - Highlights of 2019
 - State Program Planning & Action Priorities 2019-2021
 - Local Government Position: Action Priorities
 - Bylaws
 - Re-adoption of Local Program Positions
 - Report of the Nominating Committee
 - Recognition of Retiring SC Members
 - Preview of 2019-2020 LWVA Events
 - Directions to the SC
- 8:30 PM - Adjourn

Highlights of 2018-2019

1. **New organization**

In June we began an experiment with a steering committee of 9, replacing elected officers. Most of the nine steering committee members have their own portfolio(s) others are at-large members; in addition, they share the chairing of the meeting and oversight of activities, which rotate every month.

2. **Election activities**

* In the spring of 2018 the Town of Amherst voted to change from a representative town meeting to a town council of 13. Therefore, the Amherst League held events for candidates for the new council, both for the ten seats of district councilors and separately, for the three at-large seats. This was a two-stage election; the preliminary election held with the Democratic primary (no Republicans were running) and the November election.

* In addition, there were important state elections: to replace a Representative choosing not to run again after one term, and to replace our longtime state Senator. LWVA joined area media outlets as a panel member for a Candidates' Forum between the primary candidates for Third Hampshire District.

* Held a Brown Bag presentation and discussion on the Ballot Questions, October 25.

3. **Voter registration** was active throughout the spring, summer, and fall in over 10 locations, including all three of the Colleges and the University.

4. **Regional Participation:**

- LWV Amherst took the lead in creating an Inter-League Connecticut River study/action committee.
- Three members of the Steering Committee represented the Amherst LWV at the Field Service (Regional) Meeting in Southampton on January 12; two members attended the spring Field Service Meeting in Florence on May 5.
- Three members of the Steering Committee attended a regional reception for the new LWVMA Executive Director, Michelle Kweder, in Haydenville on April 14.

5. **Participation in State Activities:**

- LWV Amherst was represented at the Fall Leader Lunch in Harvard, MA on October 20.
- The Ballot Question Process Study committee prepared for and then held consensus meetings on January 24 and 26.
- Annual Program Planning Meeting, this year for LWVMA and LWVA, February 25.

6. Local leadership/activity:

- a) "1,2,3: Girls Lead," an LWVA-organized program encouraging high school women students who hadn't previously been leaders to learn leadership skills. It was extremely well-received: more students applied than could be accepted, and the participants gave positive reviews. October 4
- b) Reinstitution of Observer Corps, which on Dec. 10, 2018 observed the first meeting of the new form of town government. Town Council meetings are being covered, with the intention of covering other areas e.g. Schools, Libraries, and committees.
- c) LWVA Steering Committee voted in favor of joining the Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Coalition in January 2019, a newly formed group advocating for affordable housing initiatives. In 2017-2018, we had co-sponsored two forums on Affordable Housing.
- d) The annual February LWV Birthday Luncheon featured a keynote address by newly elected Rep. Mindy Domb (Hampshire 3rd District). Rep. Domb is a member of LWV Amherst.
- e) Brown Bag Lunch/ Presentation and Discussion with Peter Demling on regionalizing the Amherst and Pelham elementary schools, February 27.
- f) The Steering Committee voted to participate in the Western Massachusetts Pollinator Network, now beginning its campaign in Amherst; Nancy DiMattio agreed to be the liaison between the Network and the Steering Committee.
- g) Amherst LWV 80th Anniversary Open House at the Amherst Woman's Club, March 21 included the revision and publication of a 2019 Edition of our LWV of Amherst Program Book as well as our History Book 1939-2019.

Special Highlight: LWVA's *Byline* with Stan Rosenberg



Since December 28, 2018, the LWV Amherst has co-sponsored *Byline with Stan Rosenberg*. Since then, we've taped 22 episodes, with more scheduled. *Byline* is a way to keep the community informed and updated about our local government as it transitions under the new Charter with its councilors and committees.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

STEERING COMMITTEE SLATE for 2019 - 2020

2 year term:

Spokesperson - Adrienne Terrizzi

Treasurer - Janice Ratner

Meeting Organization - Deanna Pearlstein

1 year term:

Membership - Phyllis Lehrer

Voter Service - Bonnie Isman

Publicity - Trish Farrington

Recorder - Nancy DiMattio

E-Bulletin - Susan Millinger

Elayne Berger - At Large

NOMINATING COMMITTEE for 2019 - 2020

Cynthia Brubaker, Chair
Andrea Battle
Leslie Nyman
and two members from the Steering Committee

Respectively submitted,
Adele Gladstone-Gilbert, Chair
Trish Farrington
Barbara Ford
Deanna Pearlstein
Alice Swift

COMMITTEE REPORTS

League of Women Voters of Amherst 80th Anniversary Celebration Report

The LWVA 80th Anniversary Committee composed of Janice Ratner, Chair, Nancy DiMattio, Phyllis Lehrer, and Deanna Pearlstein started planning in January for this celebration. It would include an Open House to be held on the League's actual anniversary date, March 21. An invitation to the Open House was mailed to members, local officials and some other friends of the League in early March.

The Open House was held at the Amherst Women's Club from 4-6 p.m. There was a sheet cake with the 80th logo in addition to desserts and hors d'oeuvres brought by members. Trifolds containing many documents and historical photos were set up on tables. There was a seven minute slide show of photographs collected over the years, with which Jerry Brubaker helped.

An updated edition of the LWVA Program Book and an 80 year history book were published, samples of which were available at the Open House. Both were later mailed to members so that all would be sure to receive copies. Janet Chevan (Program Book) and Maija Lillya (History Book) helped with these publications.

A program began shortly after 4:30 p.m., during which guests were welcomed by Adrienne Terrizzi and presentations were made by Janice Ratner. Elena Cohen, assistant to State Senator Jo Comerford, State Representative Mindy Domb, and Town Councilor Andy Steinberg presented citations to the League. The League presented gifts to the Jones Library and to the W. E. B. DuBois Library at the University of Massachusetts. Tammy Ely, Library Trustee, accepted a check for \$500 and two civics related books for the Jones Library, given in appreciation for letting the League use rooms for meetings and programs over the years. Kyle Boyd accepted a check for \$200 for the W. E. B. DuBois Library which holds the League archives. At the end of the school year, a scholarship will be presented to an Amherst Regional High School senior who fits criteria for doing civics work in the community. The program lasted about 20 minutes. Guests continued to enjoy the food, exhibits and socializing until close to 6 p.m.

Connecticut River Inter-League Study/Action Committee Report

The reactivation of the Connecticut River Inter-League Study/Action Committee was approved at Annual Meeting last year. In 1965-66, the western Massachusetts Leagues did a Connecticut River study, a study that produced an excellent statement of League positions. These positions include support for: protection of regional natural resources; water quality suitable for swimming, water sports and fishing; appropriate land use controls; development of recreational facilities where suitable.

The committee's first action last fall was to meet with the Connecticut River Conservancy at their office in Greenfield to discuss potential state legislation affecting the Connecticut River. We then made contact with the LWVMA environmental steering committee and learned this winter of state League support for the two most important pieces of legislation affecting the Connecticut River that had Conservancy support.

Chair, Elizabeth Davis

Health Care Committee Report

The LWVA Health Care Committee (HCC) under chair, Barbara Pearson, continues the tradition established by longtime chair and super-advocate for health care reform, Jackie Wolf, who moved away from Amherst last year.

Activities 2018-2019

- Collected signatures to place non-binding question on ballot in 3rd Hampshire representative district (Amherst and Pelham).
- Campaigned for votes in support of the ballot question on November ballot. (Celebrated 88% vote in favor.)
- Keeping up contacts with local and federal legislators about state and national Single Payer bills. 3 members attended Lobby Day in Boston, January 2019.
- Pursuing advocacy and education activities-tableting and other campaigning at town events (Farmers Market, Town Block Party, Daffodil Run etc.)
 - o Created posters, flyers, bookmarks etc.
 - o Planning an internal education campaign for Amherst and State.
- (Chair) attended LWV 2018 Convention in Chicago, participated in organization and presentation of Health Care Caucus; participating in national LWV HCR4US (HealthCare Reform 4 US) ongoing group, with monthly conference calls.
- Working on update of Amherst Town Meeting resolutions in support of Single Payer in 2000 and 2006, with a new resolution for the new Town Council.

Current members are: Trish Farrington, Ann Kieser, Rosemary Kofler, Leslie Nyman, Anita Page, Barbara Pearson, Joan Rabin, Diana Stein, Alice Swift, We have added three new members from the League roster and two student members. We would welcome more members.

For more information, comments and suggestions, please contact [Barbara Pearson](#).

Legislative Envoy Report

Last year the state League established the legislative envoy program. Each local League was encouraged to have one or more persons designated to be contacts with our state legislators on state legislation. The envoy's job is to establish contacts with our state legislators in order to advise them of League positions on issues coming before the state legislature. For example, in May the envoys are asked to contact their League's legislators about the Election Day Registration (EDR), legislation that the state League supports. This bill would allow voters who have moved, have errors in their registration, or have never been registered, to do so on election day and be allowed to vote after registering.

Elizabeth Davis, Legislative Envoy

Membership Report

Membership stands at 190 members, including 8 students.

All members are encouraged to recruit new members to help meet our mission to encourage active informed citizen participation in government.

Contact [Phyllis Lehrer](#) for Membership questions or information.

Observer Corps Report

With the change in government because of the charter vote, the Observer Corps was reinstated to monitor the new Town Council's actions. Its reports are printed in the ebulletin and are available at our [website](#).

We are seeking volunteers to observe the Amherst School Committee, Jones Library Board of Trustees and Planning Board, whose decisions will impact all residents.

To volunteer, or with any questions, contact [Phyllis Lehrer](#).

Local Action for Social Justice Committee (LASJ) Report

Committee Members: Sudha Setty, Marcie Sclove, Rebecca Fricke, Kathy Campbell, Elisa Campbell and Susan Millinger

The Committee had its origin in early 2017, as a way to provide LWVA members opportunities to further inform themselves and act on local social issues, either by sponsoring or cosponsoring events, and whenever possible giving members opportunities to act on their concerns (by writing postcards to legislators, for example, or by bringing women's hygiene items to the Survival Center.) Immigration and the problems immigrants face, environmental issues, and issues like the social safety net and affordable housing were all subjects of programs in 2017-2018. In 2018-2019, affordable housing has been a major focus, as has turning potential students voters into actual ones.

The LWVA Local Action for Social Justice Committee met twice during 2019.

1) The LASJ committee recommended a speaker to the Steering Committee: [Stuart Naifeh](#) from Demos. (Stuart Naifeh is a voting rights lawyer working to reduce barriers to political participation in the United States, particularly among people whose voices have traditionally been marginalized.)

2) Amherst Voter Participation Stakeholders' Roundtable

Shortly after the November 2019 elections, Margaret Nartowicz, the Amherst Town Clerk, invited all organizations and groups involved in voter education and outreach to attend a brainstorming meeting on December 7. As LWVA spokesperson, Adrienne Terrizzi attended the first meeting to make certain we were involved in the Town's discussions and plans in the run up to the November 2020 election. The University and Colleges were well represented by staff and campus organizations. This first meeting explored systems to increase student voter awareness, especially early voting, potential for on-campus voting sites, and more diverse ways to inform students voting in Town.

On March 28th Marcie Sclove attended the next meeting. The specific goals are to get more students registered, ensure voters who have moved update their registration, educate students about the upcoming elections and get them to the polls. Members of UMass Democrats, UMass Republicans, and MASSPIRG attended as well as Sarah Barr, who has organized similar efforts at Amherst College.

The Roundtable discussed early voting polls on Campus; using voting software such as TurboVote to communicate with students; exploring other ways to reach students via social media; encouraging all student clubs to participate in a campus-wide registration campaign; and encouraging students both to vote early and/or get to the polling place on Election Day.

The Social Justice Committee will continue to explore ways the League can be helpful in these efforts.

3) **Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Coalition:** Some Affordable Housing for Amherst

The cost of housing in Amherst has concerned residents and officials for years. Increasing the number of housing units for people with incomes at or below the median income for the area is included in the town's Master Plan. Nevertheless, very little housing was built in Amherst in the decades of 1980 to 2010, and even less of that was affordable.

The League believes everyone should have access to decent and affordable housing; it supports programs, policies and regulations to address the housing needs of low- and moderate-income families and individuals. For that reason, in 2018, the Steering Committee voted to become a member of the Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Coalition, to join its work in support of increasing affordable housing in Amherst.

There are two projects in the planning stages to add affordable housing in Amherst: East Street School and Northampton Road.

The projects which will be located at the old East Street School has passed a major step. The Town Council on April 1 approved sending out a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking a developer to design it. The League had commented in favor of this proposal at the Town Council meeting on March 18.

The general plan includes between 15 and 36 units, with:

- A minimum of 15 rental units with 24 bedrooms for individuals and families with at least 50% affordable at 60% of Area Median Income (AMI) with a mix of bedroom sizes from studio to 3 bedrooms.
- A minimum of 10% affordable to households earning 30% of AMI.
- All affordable units will be energy efficient, affordable in perpetuity, and have at least one parking space.

The second project would be located on Northampton Road. Valley Community Development Corporation (Valley) is working to create 28 studio-size (240 square feet) units for the lowest income people. Valley will provide both onsite and offsite services for residents who need them. The site is within walking distance of both the center of town and stores on University Drive; it is on a major transportation route.

The initial proposal is for a combination of

- 10 units for homeless people who make no more than 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) - which will be subsidized;
- 8 units for people who earn up to 50% AMI - who will pay their own rent;
- 8 units for 80% AMI - who will pay their own rent;
- 2 units for 30% AMI clients of the Department of Mental Health.

This kind of housing cannot be built or maintained without significant subsidies. Therefore, the Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (AMAHT) requested \$200,000 in funding from the Community Preservation Account (CPA); in late April the CPA approved that request. The Trust is also requesting \$200,00 from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

League support before the Zoning Board (probably June) would be helpful.
Report written by LASJ member Elisa Campbell

Questions? Want to help? Contact the committee members who wrote the two reports
LASJ Chair Rebecca Fricke

Voter Registration Report

The Voter Registration (VR) Committee was busy this past year - mainly in the fall of 2018 - educating voters and potential voters about voter registration, absentee ballots in MA and other states, and the ballot questions.

At the VR Committee meeting on 9/13, Alice Swift provided a training on VR in MA. We also discussed upcoming events and activities. A traveling suitcase filled with VR materials began its travels that day and was kept busy through the end of the VR period in MA.

Voter Registration Information Sessions provided by the LWVA in August/September/October included the following:

- 5 - Head Start Parent Open Houses
- 1 - Gun Rights Rally in Springfield on 8/26/18
- 1 - Jones Library National Voter Registration Day
- 1 - Amherst College Student Registration Event
- 4 - Amherst Farmers Market on the Common
- 1 - The Arbors of Amherst
- 1 - Town of Amherst Regional Public Schools First Day Event
- 1 - Town of Amherst Block Party
- 1 - Hampshire College Voter Registration Cafeteria Event
- 1 - Amherst Regional High School Senior Home Room VR Sign Up
- 1 - Brookfield Farm Candidates Forum with VR materials
- All Candidates' Forums and Events - VR materials made available

It is difficult to estimate the number of actual new voters registered. Most people were already registered. However, there was much discussion with members of the public looking for information about where to vote, how to access an absentee ballot, the VR deadline in MA, etc. The visibility and access to information that the LWVA provided was important on many levels.

There are many LWVA women who made this significant undertaking possible. I am very grateful to each and every one of them for the role they played in VR events, especially in light of the intensity of this particular voting year.

Nancy DiMattio

Voter Service Report

The summer and fall of 2018 were busy times for both our League and our neighboring Leagues. An extraordinary number of open seats were up for grabs in the state legislature, and in addition, Amherst was holding its first municipal election under its new home rule charter.

Because one of the two major parties did not choose to run any legislative candidates in 2018, all of the action for the legislature was in the crowded primary season. Questions were raised about League participation in the resulting one-party events, but in the end the local Leagues (Amherst, Northampton and Franklin County) provided both panelists and moderators for candidate forums arranged by the Hampshire Gazette and including local media as additional co-sponsors:

- LWVA cosponsored a candidate forum on July 18 that featured Democratic candidates for the Third Hampshire House District, Mindy Domb and Eric Nakajima. Our League took care of room set-up and provided question screeners and one panelist (responsible for presenting questions from the floor.) Becky Shannon from the Northampton Area League moderated.

- LWVA provided a moderator for a similar Second Hampshire House District candidate forum in South Hadley on July 26, where the Northampton League was the main co-sponsor and the Franklin County League provided a panelist.

Our League also provided a moderator for a pre-primary candidate forum for the candidates for Berkshire County District Attorney sponsored by the Williamstown League.

But the main events for LWVA were the preliminary and final elections for the new Amherst Town Council, whose members will serve for three years. The two elections were timed to coincide with the state primary and general elections, respectively. We arranged forums for both elections as well as publishing an election guide for each election. The election guide for the preliminary election featured one open-ended question for the 34 candidates for Town Council. The election guide for the November election presented the responses of the 26 finalists to five questions in tabular form.

As for forums:

- For the preliminary election, we held events in each of the five districts, where between four and seven candidates were running to be one of four finalists for two district Council seats. These events combined a "speed candidating" segment and a more formal panel discussion. All were held on the evening of August 21.
- On August 29, we sponsored a forum at ARMS for the seven candidates vying for six finalist slots for the three at-large positions on the Council.
- For the final election, we held a series of three mini-forums for all 26 finalists for Town Council on October 23. This required a number of innovations, the chief of which was to send the three questions to the candidates in advance, with instructions to prepare enough remarks to be able to say something new if they happened to be one of the last to respond.
(Another possible approach to this problem was rejected by the LWVA committee, although it has been used by other MA Leagues including Franklin County. This would have been to address each question to only part of the field of candidates, but provide time when candidates could speak on one of the topics they did not receive, or on some other topic of their choice.)
Panels of 12 district candidates, 6 at-large candidates, and finally 8 district candidates succeeded one another on the stage at ARMS during a marathon three-hour session. Another innovation at this forum, enjoyed by the candidates but not by the moderators, was the use of the Town Meeting electric timer instead of Leaguers with stopwatches and signs.

Thanks to the many members of LWVA who helped to make all this possible, as well as to our neighboring Leagues which provided moderators for our forums.

In November of 2019 there will be municipal elections for the town-wide elected offices in Amherst, and in the future municipal elections will occur only in odd-numbered years.

Kathy Campbell

To subscribe to the e-bulletin, visit lwvamherst.org and click on the blue tab "Sign up for Email Updates".
Note: a print bulletin will no longer be published. If you have friends who would prefer a paper copy of the e-bulletin, please contact a member of the Steering Committee.

Don't forget to visit the Amherst League of Women Voters Facebook page and "like" us. Marla Jamate, our Facebook editor, does a great job and deserves a wider LWVA audience!
