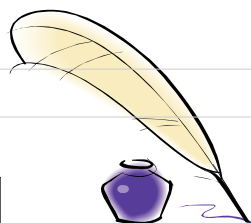




Westwood/Walpole League of Women Voters

Volume 5 issue 9

May 2007



Calendar of Events

Special points of interest:

- **Calendar**
- **Articles/Reports**
 - Affordable Housing 5th part
 - Candidate forum
 - Day on the hill
 - Essay Contest Winner -Walpole
- **Last Call—**
 - LWVM Convention
 - LWVUS Council
- **Annual Meeting**
Hope to see you there.

Westwood-Walpole Winter/Spring Events

Members are welcome to attend Steering Committee Meetings
Interested—Contact Jane Nash at 781-769-1185

May

- 10th —Steering Committee meeting at Cheryl's in Walpole
- 7th & 9th— Walpole Town meetings
- 21st—Walpole Candidate's Night

June

- 1st & 2nd—LWVMA Convention
- 2nd—Walpole Election
- 13th—LWVUS Council
- 14th—LWV Annual Meeting — Raffael's 1601 Main St, Walpole
 - 6:00— Cocktails
 - 6:30— Dinner
 - 7:15— Speaker
 - 8pm— Business meeting

Speaker: Judi Barrett
Topic: Are Massachusetts' Affordable Housing Laws Successful? If Not, Why Not?

Look for invitations in the mail around May 21, 2007



MEMORIAL DAY

Remember! Let us all work for Peace!

Steering Committee

Secretary:

Jane Wojick

Membership:

Marcia Hirshberg
781.326.8784
Hberg40@comcast.net

Bulletin:

Jane Nash
781-769.1185
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Treasurer:

Cheryl Schiarizzi

Web Master:

Kathy Zola



Invitation to Annual Meeting

The Westwood/Walpole League of Women Voters

Cordially Invites you to

ANNUAL MEETING

Date: Thursday, June 14, 2007

Time: 6:00-6:30 Cocktails

6:30-7:15 Dinner

7:15-8:00 Dessert/Speaker

8:00-9:00 Business Meeting

Place: Raffael's, 1600 Main Street, Walpole

Speaker: Judi Barrett

Topic: "Are Massachusetts Affordable Housing Laws Successful. If Not, Why Not?"

Cost: \$25.00 per person

Guests are most welcome

Westwood/Walpole Annual Meeting Response Card

RSVP **Must be received by** May 31st

Please use return envelope enclosed for your convenience

I will attend. Name _____

-Please check meal choice

Roast Prime Rib with au Jus (boneless)

Chicken Francese-egg dipped and sautéed in a light lemon sauce

Baked New England Scrod with seasoned lemon butter crumbs

Special diet requirements _____

-Check enclosed for:

Meal: How many _____ x\$25= _____

-Check enclosed for Dues: Amount _____

-Total of check enclosed: \$ _____

I cannot attend; but I enclose a check for my dues: _____

DUES WILL BE COLLECTED FOR 2007-2008 at the meeting as a convenience.

Single \$50.00, Family \$75.00, New member or Student \$25



LWVM Affordable Housing Study: Part 5

The Role of Local Housing Authorities in Massachusetts

Previous articles in this series covered the need for affordable housing, zoning laws, and Chapter 40B, 40R and 40S. This article explains the work of local housing authorities and rental voucher programs.*

Chapter 121B of 1969 codified previous Massachusetts housing laws and enabled all cities and towns to create and operate a local housing authority (LHA). Currently there are 253 LHAs in Massachusetts, with significant differences among them based on local factors as well as the number of housing units in the community built or supported by government. Although operating in local communities, LHAs are technically part of state government.

Housing authorities in Massachusetts have five board members. In towns, four members are elected and one is appointed by the governor. In cities, the mayor and city council appoint four members (one representing labor, one representing tenants, and two appointed by the mayor) and the governor appoints the fifth member.

Housing Authorities' Powers & Responsibilities

The principal power of LHAs is to administer public housing and voucher programs that serve low-income residents. They do this under regulations of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which establishes income guidelines for occupants and fair market rents based on median incomes for each area of the country. HUD also sets the contribution toward rent of occupants (usually about 30% of household income).

Massachusetts LHAs currently operate more than 227,000 state and federal housing units. This includes 50,000 federal and 34,000 state units of public housing. They are also responsible for the majority of federal and state vouchers and other types of housing. LHAs are responsible for accounting and reporting their activity to the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which regulates all state programs and administers many of the federal programs.

In addition to ongoing activities such as maintaining properties, screening applicants and collecting rents, the LHAs have other important powers. They may receive loans, grants and annual contributions from

state or federal sources; purchase, lease or hold lands; contract for construction; borrow money; invest in securities; and engage in certain tax agreements. They are charged with working with local officials to study housing needs and living conditions in the community, and respond to the findings by providing housing for low-income families, and elderly and disabled people. With no independent source of funds, most LHAs have recently been strapped to maintain the publicly-controlled units they have and must depend on other mechanisms and community groups to initiate new developments.

Rental Voucher Programs: Section 8 and MRVP

Tenant-based programs or "mobile vouchers" are an effort to provide affordable rental housing for low-income individuals and families outside of public housing developments. The largest programs in Massachusetts are the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (usually called Section 8, from the federal law that first authorized it) and the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP). Several smaller programs are available for specialized populations, and Section 8 funds now include some project-based vouchers.

The reasons for tenant-based vouchers include flexibility and choice for tenants, dispersal of disadvantaged households, involvement of the private sector in housing the poor, and potentially faster responses to changing housing needs. The main disadvantages are that tight housing markets don't provide a reliable stock of needed housing and that marginal properties are subsidized during falling markets.

Funding for both the federal and state voucher programs has been cut in recent years well under applications by eligible households. Federal Section 8 funding amounts did not match inflation during the last six years, so numbers of vouchers have had to be cut while waiting lists lengthened or were closed. In 2006, Section 8 served 74,443 households in the Commonwealth. At its peak in 1990, the state-funded MRVP assisted over 14,900 households with tenant-based vouchers, but in 2005 it assisted 1,544. These cuts have exacerbated the numbers of homeless families since vouchers are the most flexible way to supply emergency housing.

* Due to space constraints, sources for this article are online at www.lwvma.org/affordablehousing.shtml.

LWV Westwood Candidate Event

Westwood-Walpole League of Women Voters

MEET THE CANDIDATES 2007!

Forum Organizers: Kathy Zola, Jane Nash

Moderator: Erin Pastuszynski

Date: Sunday, April 15, 2007

Place: First Parish Church, Nahatan and Clapboardtree Streets, Westwood

The raw and rainy afternoon did not deter the crowd. We had an audience of over 100 people attending this year's candidates event in Westwood – an excellent turn-out.

Candidates for both the Westwood town election and the Norfolk 11th District Representative Primary election introduced themselves for 1 minute, and then candidates for contested positions answered written questions collected from the audience. Each candidate had up to a minute to address each question.

Erin Pastuszynski from the Concord league did a superlative job at moderating. She synthesized similar questions and maintained a calm and respectful tone throughout the event.

We think that several factors contributed to the event's success. Candidates' invitations went out via certified mail. The Sunday afternoon time-slot worked well. The town issues, especially the Westwood Station and High Rock Village development projects, were on people's minds. Pre-event newspaper publicity included an ad in the *Daily Transcript* and the *Westwood Press*, notices and articles in the *Daily Transcript*, the *Westwood Press*, the *Walpole Times*, the *Hometown Weekly* and even the Sunday calendar metro south section of the *Boston Globe*. Email notices were sent out to LWV Westwood-Walpole League members and a few other town email lists.

Many many heartfelt thanks go out to the candidates, the audience members and the organizers, especially Erin Pastuszynski, for making this event so successful!

Town election uncontested position candidates who participated in this event:

School Committee: 2 positions, 2 candidates

- Barbara Delisle (Candidate for re-election) (Not attending)
- John O'Brien, Jr.

Selectman: 1 position, 1 candidate

Patrick Ahearn (Candidate for re-election)

Town election contested position candidates who participated:

Library Trustee: 2 positions, 3 candidates

- Karen Coffey
- Incumbent Eric Gutterson (Candidate for re-election)
- Jessie Turbayne

Planning Board: 2 positions, 4 candidates

- Robert Malster (Candidate for re-election)
- Bruce Montgomery
- Joseph Toffoloni
- John Walsh

Town Clerk: 1 position, 2 candidates

- Dorothy Powers
- Helen "Beth" Sullivan

Norfolk 11th District Primary special election for state representative

4 Democrats

Stephen M. Bilafer
Thomas M. Boncek
Joanne S. Flatley
Cheryl A. Schoenfeld

2 Republicans

Douglas E. Obey
William D. McKinney

LWV Westwood Candidate Event– Pictures



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Over 100 people attended this very successful meeting

Last Call !! LWV MA Convention

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

CONVENTION 2007

“Growing Leaders!”

FINAL CALL

June 1 & 2, 2007 | Courtyard by Marriott, Marlborough

Featured Speakers

Senate President Therese Murray

Senator Susan Tucker

LWVUS President Mary Wilson

Register Today!

Registration deadline: May 11

Late registration deadline: May 18

Registration materials attached to this email and on www.lwvma.org. You can also register by contacting the LWVM office at 617-523-2999 or lwvma@lwvma.org.

LWV Essay Contest—Walpole Winner



VANDANA APTE

LWV Essay Contest—Walpole Winner

Making Democracy Work: Citizens' Rights and Responsibilities

The following essay was written by Vandana Apte, a sixth grader from Johnson Middle School in Walpole. It was awarded first place in the Massachusetts League of Women Voters 8th annual Online Student Essay Contest in the 6-8th grade grouping. Vandana and her family and some neighborhood friends will attend the Making Democracy Work Awards ceremony on Sunday, April 29, at Faneuil Hall. She will read her essay which won a classroom grant for her teachers Elizabeth Bogardus and Paul Sowden. Mr. Sowden was informed about the contest by his principal who received information about it from the Walpole League. Congratulations, Vandana!!

My parents became United States citizens only recently. They both went through a very long citizenship process that took nearly two years to complete, but they both say that it was worth it. Because they are now citizens, they have many more responsibilities such as voting and respecting other citizens' freedom and rights. Now my parents are getting more deeply involved in the government's decision process. My mom now hosts coffees when we have local town elections hoping that her meetings will endorse a candidate that she hopes will win.

Voting is a major responsibility because without voting, you would never take part in the decision process, therefore you would not be contributing your ideas or thoughts to your nation. Because voting lets my parents take part in the decision process of an election, they love voting, but along with voting comes duty. That duty is to make sure that you do vote, and take the time to go to the voting center to actually cast your vote because every vote counts. Many American citizens do not realize the importance of this responsibility, therefore they don't sometimes do it. If one person doesn't vote, it doesn't make that big of an impact on the election, but if a large portion of citizens start thinking that voting is not important, it could have a huge impact on the election. The whole concept is very much like dominoes. One domino that does not do its job might not affect much, but all it takes is two wobbly dominoes for the whole system to come crashing down.

Another new responsibility that my parents have is to respect other citizens' freedom of religion. The diversity of religions, customs, and traditions in the United States are really interesting and make my country special. Because citizens have the freedom to practice their own religion, they have to make sure that they respect other citizens' customs, traditions, and religions. At my house we celebrate many Indian festivals such as Diwali because my parents were born and brought up in India. I love celebrating these Indian festivals with my family and friends. But I also celebrate other American holidays such as Christmas as part of my life here in America. I think it's really great that I live in a country that allows me to practice my own religion, Hinduism, as much as any other. As citizens, our responsibility is to respect all religions and peoples. We are all very lucky to have this privilege in a country that protects religious diversity by law.

As for voting, I look forward to the day when I can vote. For now, I am happy baking chocolate chip cookies and helping my mom when she hosts her Election Eve coffees.

Report Day on the Hill—Muriel Zaginailoff



DAY ON THE HILL 2007

The topic for Day on the Hill this year was The Face of Poverty in Massachusetts. League attendance was good and it was encouraging to see student delegations in the audience who were sponsored by local leagues.

State League President, Madhu Sridhar's opening remarks reminded league members present to take full opportunity to meet with their district legislators and the importance of these connections. Madhu introduced League specialists who would be speaking later in the morning in the areas of Drug Mandatory Minimum Sentences; Improving the Earned Income Credit for Working Families; More Equitable Provisions in Chapter 70 Relative to the Distribution of State Aid; Equitable Coverage in Annuity Policies; Patient Safety; Environmentally Safe Alternatives to Harmful Cleaning Products.

Governor Deval Patrick was the dynamic key note speaker. After the obligatory remarks he jumped right in and addressed a list of things his administration had engaged in during his first 92 days in office. They ranged from partnering with the legislature on needed road and bridge repair, a Municipal Partnership Act, increasing dollars to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, extending funding to day care, health insurance, equity in Chapter 70 distribution, promise of a higher education package in the spring, and others. He agreed that communication is the key and said, for example, he needs to improve how he communicates his agenda. His remark that many things were happening besides choosing curtains and an automobile drew laughter from the audience.

He also spoke at length about keeping the system of communication open between government and the people. He stressed the need to hear from the grassroots population – to have a vision – to accept the challenges and move forward wherever possible.

The Governor made the mistake of challenging his audience to come to the State House or communicate with the legislatures for more than the one visit. Needless to say Madhu with her great sense of humor set him straight about our activities on Beacon Hill!

The guest panel included Noah Berger, Ex. Director, MA Budget and Policy Center, gave us an insight into the financial problems; Lyndia Downie, President, Pine Street Inn, spoke about the continuing need of assistance to the homeless and their needs, and Sylvia Ferrell-Jones, CEO, YWCA, Boston, spoke about her organization's outreach to women in the community, particularly newly arrived immigrants. They all were impressive and impassioned in addressing the topic of poverty and shared their experiences.

After the morning session delegates took their legislators to lunch and lobbied for bills that the League is interested in and/or wants to follow the progress of.

DATES TO REMEMBER

May 7th & 9th Walpole Town Meeting

May 21st Walpole Candidates' Night, 7:30-9pm, Old Post Road School

June 1st & 2nd LWVM Convention

Affordable Housing Workshop Saturday, June 2nd 10-11:30

June 2nd Walpole Elections

June 13th LWVUS Council

June 14th Westwood/Walpole LWV Annual Meeting
see page 2 of this Bulletin for more information and look for
an invitation in the mail!!!



Westwood Walpole LWV
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