

The Bulletin

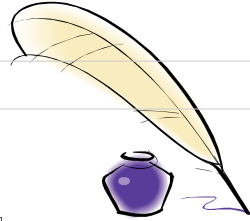
Westwood/Walpole League of Women Voters



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Calendar of Events

Special points of interest:

- **Calendar**
- **Program Planning**
- **Studies:**
 - Affordable Housing**
- **Memo on Political Parties in Massachusetts**
- **Voting Machines in MA**

- **Mark Your Calendars**
 - Westwood FinCom meetings
 - LWVM Essay Contest
 - Westwood Reads- Jazz concert
 - LWVMA Convention
 - LWVUS Council

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*Welcome Back to Another Full Year Of League Events
Westwood-Walpole Steering Committee Adminstrates the Local League.*

March

1st—SC meeting
26th & 27th Westwood FinCom meetings
—Fund Drive Ends

April

TBA—SC meeting
TBA—Westwood Candidate's Event
17th—Primary special election 11th District (representative seat)
24th—Westwood Elections

May

TBA—SC meetings
7th —Westwood Town Meeting
15th—Final special election 11th District (representative seat)
TBA—Walpole Candidate Event

June

June 1st & 2nd—LWVMA CONVENTION
June 7 & 8th—LWVUS COUNCIL
TBA Walpole Town Meetings
TBA—LWV Annual Meeting



Happy Saint Patrick's Day

The **Bulletin** is published ten times a year, September-June, by the League of Women Voters of Westwood/Walpole MA
Visit the **LWVMA** home page at www.lwvma.org and the **LWVUS** home page at www.lwv.org



State Program Planning with Bread and Soup

Westwood/Walpole League Votes to:

- **Study State Laws that implement Affordable Housing in Massachusetts**
- **Re-study on Education focusing on standardized testing and its use in Massachusetts.**
- **Bring our state HealthCare positions in line with National Position with regard to single-payer health insurance**
- **Retain all other positions with a minority wanting Public Policy DROPPED**

- **Have the LWVM Focus Action on: Transportation, Education, Healthcare, and a minority for handguns.**

Westwood/Walpole League took action either by responding to “Action Alerts” or through public education under the following positions:

Civil Liberties, Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, Natural Resources, Equal Opportunity

Program Planning led by Marcia Hirshberg was, as usual, a big success. There was food for the body and for the mind.

The soups and breads were a delight to both the eyes and the stomach and much appreciated on such a cold night. Thank you to all who contributed food. Special thanks to Doug Obey who brought the wine. Thank you Marcia for having us in your home and leading us through the process.

This year league members reviewed our national positions. Remember the League is a three-tiered organization—National, State and Local. We can have positions at each level, but no state or local league position can counter nor negate a LWVUS position.

Thank you to all who came—Sheila Coakley, Nan Crossland, Nancy Farris, Margaret Kaleh, Phoebe Joseph, Pam Kane, Jane Nash, Doug Obey, Susan Rogers, Barbara McDonald, Chris Previtera, Jane Wiggin, Susan White, and Carol Ziemian who had to leave but left the brownies. Thank you, Carol



Affordable Housing—Part 3

LWVM Affordable Housing Study: Part 3

Massachusetts Legislation to Develop Affordable Housing—40B

By Jane Nash, LWVM Affordable Housing Study Committee co-chair

Previous articles in this series covered the need for affordable housing, the history of zoning in the US, and Massachusetts' zoning law 40A. This and subsequent articles will focus on Massachusetts laws that seek to create more affordable housing.¹

Massachusetts' Affordable Housing Zoning Law

In 1969 the Massachusetts Legislature enacted and the Governor signed Chapter 774, officially titled "An Act Providing for the Construction of Low or Moderate Income Housing in Cities and Towns in Which Local Restrictions Hamper Such Construction." Today this law is generally known as Chapter 40B for the sections that created the comprehensive permit.

By streamlining the permitting process for qualified developments, 40B intends to increase the supply and improve the distribution of affordable housing. First, it created the comprehensive permit (CP) process, by which developers can apply to the local Zoning Board of Appeals for a single permit to approve housing Developments if at least 20-25% of the units have long-term affordability restrictions. This replaces the usual process of getting separate approvals from a variety of local permitting agencies (for example, the Board of Health and the Conservation Commission).

Under the comprehensive permit the developer can request waivers of zoning and other local requirements if it is proved that such waivers are necessary to ensure the economic feasibility of the project.

The CP process in no way allows the negating of zoning, health or conservation laws that will endanger the community or its citizens. Builders are still required to meet all building codes. Only a public agency, a nonprofit organization, or a limited dividend corporation may apply for a comprehensive permit, and the development must have already been approved under a state or federal housing program such as MassHousing or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A community is exempt from 40B regulations if 10% of its total year-round housing stock is considered affordable.

Second, Chapter 40B establishes an appeals process for developers. If a zoning board in a community that

Does not meet the 10% affordable-housing requirement denies or makes decisions that would make a project uneconomic, a developer can appeal to the state Housing Appeals Committee. Denials are upheld if the municipality can show that the development presents a serious health and safety issue that cannot be mitigated.

Successes

Chapter 40B has played a critical role in the production of affordable housing in Massachusetts. According to the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association in January 2006:

- 43,000 units in 736 developments have been created under 40B statewide since the early 1970s (an average size of less than 60 apartments or homes per development).
- This includes approximately 23,000 affordable homes reserved for households with incomes below 80% of a region's median income.
- Of the 43,000 units, approximately 31,000 are apartments and 12,000 are homeownership units. The level of production is higher than any other single housing program available in the state.

Challenges and Local Concerns

Despite these successes, many people have raised concerns about the law.

- Insufficient affordable housing has been built under 40B. As of January 2006, only 47 of the state's 351 communities had achieved the 10% goal.
- There is a lack of adequate funding. While some funding increases were approved recently, state spending on affordable housing had been cut.
- Communities reach their goal of 10% only to lose it again for a variety of reasons.
- Local officials would like to have more control over the number of units being built under 40B.
- The methodology of counting units to reach the 10% goal has been questioned.
- The valuation of low or moderate income housing is not considered fair or equitable.
- There appears to have been a lack of proper controls and oversight. The Massachusetts Inspector General's office has said that "some developers are reaping eye-popping profits and taking advantage of a system that provides little scrutiny or oversight."

¹ Due to space constraints, see the online version of this article at www.lwvma.org/affordablehousing.shtml for a comprehensive list of references and sources on www.lwvma.org

Mark Your Calendar—Westwood Reads



March 4th at 2:00pm at the Main Library

The Westwood Reads inaugural event will feature Mike Monaghan's jazz group with Brad Hatfield on piano.

Westwood Reads 2007

The Library will launch its third community wide reading program in March 2007. The book chosen for the 2007 event is *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Copies of this popular American novel are available at the Library and through the Minuteman Library Network.

Program opportunities will include book discussions, presentations by Fitzgerald scholars, and jazz performances to reflect the novel's Roaring Twenties setting. Support for this program comes from the Friends of the Westwood Public Library and the Westwood Board of Library Trustees.

For an update list of programs visit the web site at www.westwoodlibrary.org

Useful Internet sites on *Gatsby* and Fitzgerald

Fitzgerald, brief biography: <http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/fitzgeraldbio.html>

Fitzgerald, life and career:

<http://www.simonsays.com/content/destination.cfm?tab=1&pid=349245&agid=13>

Gatsby, a beginner's guide: <http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/3844/>

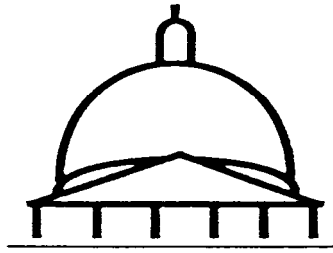
Gatsby, reader's questions:

<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/gatsby.html>

University of South Carolina Fitzgerald Centenary site:

<http://www.sc.edu/fitzgerald/index.html>

Mark Your Calendars



League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

Day on the Hill

Tuesday, April 10, 2007
State House, Boston

9:00 a.m. Registration & Reception – Nurses' Hall

Invite your legislators to join us for a light breakfast – and the chance to talk with you, with League members from across the state, and with our program Specialists.

10:00 – 12:30 Program – Gardner Auditorium

Featured Speakers

League of Women Voters President Madhu Sridhar

And

News from League Program Specialists

We look forward to seeing you there!

Mark Your Calendars

8th Annual Online Student Essay Contest

Open to all students in Massachusetts from grades 4 - 12

[Deadline: March 16, 2007](#)

[More information](#)

Making Democracy Work Awards Event

Sunday, April 29, 2007 | Faneuil Hall

LWVM Convention: June 1 & 2, 2007

Please mark your calendars for the 2007 LWVM Convention. More information will be included in later League Leaders Updates and on the LWVM website, www.lwvma.org.

Dyna-Member Award for Convention 2007

Does your League have a newer member who stands out from the crowd? Someone who has truly made a difference in your League? Then this dynamic, relative newcomer in your midst is a Dyna-Member, and LWVM's Membership and Training Committee wants to know all about your League's good fortune!

The Dyna-Member Award will be presented to selected nominees and their local Leagues at the LWVM Convention Awards Luncheon on Saturday, June 2, 2007. Nominations are due April 27, 2007 to lwvma@lwvma.org. See the memo in this League Leaders Update for more information.

Lotte E. Scharfman Award for Convention 2007

The Lotte E. Scharfman Award will be presented to three local Leagues at the LWVM Convention in June 2007 that conducted creative and innovative Citizen Education or Voters Service activities during 2005 – 2007. Applications are due by May 1, 2007 to Risa Nyman (rnyman@lwvma.org). For more information, see the memo in this League Leaders Update.

LWVUS COUNCIL AND CONVENTION—June 8th-11th, 2007

- **Council 2007 will be June 8-11** at the Marriott Metro Center in Washington, DC. “Strengthening our Leaders” will be the theme. State presidents and presidents of ILOs, capital and big city Leagues will be invited to attend. The registration fee of \$295 includes the banquet. Hotel rooms are \$165 per night. The goals are:
 - o 100% participation of State Leagues
 - o Networking opportunities
 - o Meaningful workshops and learning experiences
- **Convention 2008 is in Portland, Oregon.** The Board discussed possible locations for 2010 and 2012.



Did you know?

MASSACHUSETTS NOW HAS FOUR OFFICIAL POLITICAL PARTIES AND 18 POLITICAL DESIGNATIONS?

So, how did it happen and what does it mean?

According to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, both the *Green-Rainbow Party* and the *Working Families Party* became official state-wide parties after the November, 2006 election because they each had a state-wide party candidate[s] who received 3% or more of the total votes cast in the governor's race. [Jill Stein, candidate for Secretary of the Commonwealth and James O'Keefe, candidate for Treasurer, both from the Green-Rainbow Party and Rand Wilson, candidate for Auditor from the Working Families Party received more than the 3% required.]

As official parties, they will be able to participate in the state-wide primary system and will keep this party status until the next gubernatorial election in November 2010. At that time, they will again need to reach the same 3% vote level in a state-wide race in order to retain their political party status. If this level is not met, they will return to the status of political designation.

A party is listed as a political designation after submitting 50 signatures from MA registered voters utilizing the application procedure established by the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office for recognition.

During the next four year cycle, these two new political parties will be identified on all voter registration forms; along with Democratic Party, Republican Party and Un-enrolled. A voter may select only one category when they register.

A complete list of Massachusetts Political Parties and Political Designations, with contact information, is available on the Massachusetts League's election and voting website at <http://www.votinginfo.info/politicalparties.htm>




New Voting Machines Tested In Massachusetts

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

www.lwvma.org | www.votinginfo.info | lwvma@lwvma.org | 617.523.2999

Description of New Voting Machines Tested in 2006 Elections in Massachusetts

All three machines have been certified for use by the Secretary of the Commonwealth. The Secretary will purchase a minimum of one machine per polling place to fulfill the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requirement that polling places have a voting system that allows disabled people to vote independently. Machines will be purchased using HAVA money. Selection of which machine to purchase will be made after analyzing data from the 2006 Elections trial use.

Does the machine:	AutoMARK (optical scan ballot marking touch screen machine)	AccuVote TSX (smart card activated touch screen machine)	eSlate (access code activated machine)
produce paper record?	yes (ballot)	yes (generated by machine)	yes (generated by machine)
have a touch screen?	yes	yes	no (uses rotary optical encoder "SELECT Wheel")
tabulate votes?	no (marked ballot fed into optical scan machine)	yes	yes
utilize smart cards*?	no (blank ballot is marked directly by machine)	yes	no (voter given random 4-digit access code)
have puff/sip features**?	yes	yes	yes
have headphones?	yes	yes	yes
To see a demo of the voting machine, visit:	www.essvote.com/HTML/fla/automark/autoMark_tour.html	www.diebold.com/dieboldes/demos_tsx_pm.asp	www.hartintercivic.com/files/videos/6300-317_eSlateVBO-BrdBnd.wmv
Image of machine:			

*Smart cards are credit card-sized cards that carry ballot basic info so that the machine brings up the correct ballot for the voter. These cards are not traceable to an individual's vote.

**Puff/sip features allow disabled voters to blow through a hose to indicate voting preferences.