

League of Women Voters Asheville-Buncombe County Board Meeting

January 11, 2024; Zoom at 6 pm

In Attendance: Suzanne Fisher, President; Nicole Wheeler-Schumacher, Vice President; Patricia Hearron, Secretary; Lynn Lederer, Treasurer; Board members: Kelly Carlson, Nadine Hamby, Linda Kinsinger, Donna Mann, Ruth Planey, Cheryl Williams and Sharon Withrow.

Suzanne called the meeting to order at 6:05

NC LWV has provided a document with Guidance on Mis- and Disinformation. Suzanne proposes posting on website and sending to our members via Constant Contact along with a reminder about February 15 meeting. Lynn was concerned that it might alienate some of our members by addressing a problem that does not exist. Suzanne countered that in her experience some individuals do need reminders to avoid any partisan involvement. Cheryl felt that the proposed cover letter Suzanne sent to the board does a good job of framing the document to avoid negative repercussions.

Minutes from November 16, 2023 Meeting were approved (motion by Ruth, second by Cheryl).

Finance and Budget Update: Lynn had no additions to the report she had emailed earlier. She mentioned that she is downsizing to move. She currently has in storage at her house old LWVAB files that can probably be discarded, but wondered what to do with a microphone that has not been used for a number of years. She will either take it to Habitat for Humanity Restore or Suzanne will take it to the Black Mountain Home for Children thrift shop.

Membership Committee: Sharon reported that 5 new members have joined since our last meeting, including some who have expressed interest in becoming involved with committees. She and Lynn reported on final arrangements for the January 18 Winter Gathering and board member assistance with set-up, clean-up, centerpieces and nametags. Suzanne will make a short presentation about our goals and activities and acknowledge volunteers. Action teams will have informational displays. Julia will conduct a short ice breaker activity. Cheryl will bring the microphone and banner.

February 15 Zoom Presentation on Misinformation: Suzanne will send a reminder via Constant Contact after January 18th.

May 16 Annual Meeting (to be re-visited at February meeting)

- Bylaws Review – in process
- Program Planning – in process
- Nominations – Suzanne distributed a list of current board members indicating those whose terms will be ending and asked that they think about whether and in what capacity they would like to continue.
- Budget to be determined

LWVUS: Power the South event in Greensboro: Suzanne Fisher, Lynne Joshi, and Cheryl Williams will be attending; we can have one additional member attend but need to act soon. The event begins at noon on January 26 and ends at 3:00 p.m. on January 27.

LWVNC

- Suzanne noted that the deadline for LWVNC's February newsletter is January 19 and asked members to send suggestions for inclusion and pictures from the January 18 event.
- Western Regional Meeting in Hickory on April 27, 2024 (Saturday). It will include Asheville-Buncombe, Hendersonville, Catawba Valley, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg; Suzanne will be in

Sweden but encourages other board members to attend so that our group is well-represented. Cheryl plans to attend.

Voter Services Committee Update: Suzanne noted that we are using a consistent message “Vote and Make Sure Your Vote Counts.” Cheryl reported that the committee had a productive year: they registered 194 voters and logged 228 volunteer hours (not counting hours spent observing Board of Elections meetings). They collaborated with students from Asheville High School, Erwin and AB Tech. No more registration events are planned before the primary but they tentatively plan to send postcards reminding people to “make a plan to vote.” Cheryl said she would look into ordering a banner which is available from LWVNC at no cost.. Ruth Planey distributed Vote 411 bookmarks to local theatrical companies.

Vote 411

- Suzanne and Kelly will be interviewed on Blaine’s World Podcast to be taped on January 22 at 6:30 pm
- LWVAB is covering Buncombe, Madison and McDowell Counties in 2024
- There are no competitive primary races for General Assembly in our area so no questionnaires will be sent. Email addresses have been obtained for all but one candidate in other races; Kelly will mail that candidate a hard copy of the questionnaire.
- Budget for Ads for Primary and General Elections: Kelly asked if we could share expenses for advertising Vote 411 for the general election with Henderson County LWV. She suggested that a print ad in the *Mountain Xpress* (at a cost of \$350-\$400) would reach a more diverse audience. Suzanne suggested that we might advertise in the *Citizen Times* for the primary election since that draws more committed voters.
- Kelly noted that the VOTE 411 bookmarks and yard signs she has on hand were purchased with funds from a “Making Democracy Work” grant. Lynn emphasized that the action team should focus on what is needed to accomplish goals because there is money in the budget. Suzanne noted that expenses for the general election will be coming out of the budget for the next fiscal year.
- Kelly requested the help of board members to distribute yard signs. Lynn suggested posting them in front of libraries. Kelly will check with her local library to determine if this is possible.

ERA Action Team Update; ERA Alliance planning to focus on GOTV for targeted groups; may be working with Lillian’s List which is a 501(c)(3) organization whose goal is to get progressive women candidates on ballots.

National Popular Vote Action Team Update

- None of the General Assembly races for districts where we have members are contested so will not be contacting candidates.
- Direct Election of the President League Action Team was approved by the LWVNC Board in December; they are working on getting a representative for all chapters/MALS and offering monthly Zoom session for League members.
- While they want to publicize the effort, they want to be careful not to distract from our primary goal of disseminating voter information.

Communications Update

- Website and Instagram: Nadine has started a TikTok account
- Newsletter: Patricia noted that the “open rate” on Constant Contact is above the average for other similar organizations; for the January issue she used the option of re-sending the newsletter to individuals who had not opened it after the first distribution.

- Constant Contact: Lynn noted that the cost for this platform is \$45/month. All agreed that it was a worthwhile investment.
- Suzanne reminded us that when we record presentations (such as February 15) we should not include any Q and A.

Old Business

- Pro bono ads by theatre groups: Ruth has contacted local theater groups who generally declined to include ads for VOTE 411 in their programs, pointing out that most programs are already printed and what space is available is used for their donors. She therefore pivoted to asking whether they would let us insert or distribute the VOTE 411 bookmarks at their venues. The Blue Ridge Orchestra will allow VOTE 411 bookmarks to be inserted in their programs; Montford Park Players will permit voter registration tables and distribution of bookmarks at their performances in the summer. Suzanne will have an article appear in *Rapid River Magazine* in February.
- Voter Information Team: Cheryl reported that the team has decided to operate in a collaborative manner without a named chair, thereby avoiding any conflict with League policies regarding officers' involvement with political activity outside of their league activities.

New Business

- Junior League Volunteer Expo March 23, 12 pm to 3 pm at Crown Plaza; need 2 volunteers for each shift: 11 am to 1:30 pm (includes set up); 1:30 pm to 4 pm (includes take down). Donna has requested that we be given a prominent placement at the event given that this is an election year.
- Susanne will work on drafting a land acknowledgement statement to be included in our public meetings.

Next Meetings: January 18 (Holiday Party); February 15 (General membership meeting with Zoom presentation); Board meetings: February 29; March 21; April 18; May 16; June 20. (Propose in-person meetings in March and June)