

Hingham Voter

Serving the Towns of Hingham, Hull, Cohasset and Norwell

March 2008

LWV of Hingham Board 2007—2008

President: Julie Strehle
VP Voter Education:
 Deborah Courteau
VP Advocacy:
 Melanie Quackenbush
Secretary: Victoria Milano
Treasurer: Marisa Costello
Membership:
 Christine Dietterich
Publicity: Jerry Elsdon
Web Site & Newsletter:
 Lynn Cotter
Green Study Co-Chairs:
 Kate Boland, Elizabeth Fetsko
Events Coordinator: Dina O'Neil
Advisors: Cindy Coe, Cathy Salisbury

Upcoming Events

Municipal Finance Consensus Meeting

Wed, March 26 @ 7:00 p.m.
Hingham Public Library

Energy Options/Wind Meeting

Mon, March 31 @ 7:00p.m.
Hingham Public Library

Monthly Board Meeting

Wed, April 9 @ 7:30 p.m.
31 Park View Dr., Hingham

Candidates Night

Thur, April 17 @ 7:00 p.m.
Linden Ponds, Hingham
Derby Clubhouse Auditorium

Know Your Town Meeting

Tue, May 13 @ 8:00 p.m.
22 French St, Hingham

President's Letter

Dear Members,

We are in the final stretch of our May 2007- May 2008 year of the League of Women Voters of Hingham. We held a fantastic, well-attended State of the State in early February. State Representative Garrett Bradley and State Senator Robert Hedlund were terrific speakers, and provided the membership with answers to questions ranging from their opinions on the presidential election to their stances on casino gambling. (See related article in this newsletter.)

Thanks to Deb Courteau for organizing this event. We look forward to holding this event again next year!

At the end of February, LWV of Hingham held an information forum on the Special Town Meeting/Schools Project at Linden Ponds retirement community in Hingham. It was a great opportunity to meet residents and promote discussion about the proposed schools project.

Also in late February, the Green Committee hosted its annual Organic Lawn Care Workshop at the Hingham Public Library, with 30 people attending. Thanks to Kate Boland for organizing this event. The Green Committee continues its work to educate the public with its Green Corner in the Hingham Journal newspaper.

LWV of Hingham is busy with some upcoming events, so please come out and support

them. On March 26, we will meet at the Hingham Public Library at 7:00 p.m. to hold a **Consensus Meeting** on the issue of Municipal Finance. The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has been studying the issue of the financing of town services across Massachusetts for the past three years, and has offered some Consensus questions for the local leagues to consider. Please read up on this study at <http://www.lwvma.org/fiscalpolicystudy.shtml> and come out for our meeting!

As a result of our recent event at Linden Ponds, the Board of LWV of Hingham reconsidered the location of our upcoming annual **Candidates Night**. In the past, LWV of Hingham has been concerned about the poor sound quality that comes with the rebroadcast on the local cable channel of our events held at the Hingham Town Hall. A majority of our "audience" is receiving this event via cable TV, versus attending the event in person. While the town of Hingham is working on this issue of its equipment at Town Hall, the Board voted to hold this year's Candidates Night at

Linden Pond's Derby Clubhouse, in the auditorium. We can take advantage of their state-of-the-art technology, while bringing a new segment of the voting population in contact with the candidates. Perhaps next year, we can bring this event to the Hingham Public Library or other venues around town. We are open to the idea of innovation and bringing the best product to as many voters as possible. Our event is on Thursday, April 17, at 7:00 p.m. in the Derby Clubhouse, in the auditorium. Please come out to see this informative event!

Finally, we will conclude our year with **Annual Meeting**, which will be held in late May. We will send an email soon with the date and location information. Longtime LWV of Hingham member Jane Malme has agreed to speak to our membership about her career in law, which has included tax innovation both in Massachusetts and countries around the world, which developed out of her early experiences with the League of Women Voters. So mark your calendars!

Best,
Julie



left to right:
Marty Saunders,
Linden Ponds; Dorothy Galo, Hingham School Superintendent; Julie Strehle, President, League of Women Voters of Hingham; Barbara Ward, Linden Ponds

2nd Annual Organic Lawn Care Workshop

LWV of Hingham held their 2nd annual Organic Lawncare Workshop and had a fantastic showing—30 people in attendance! Joe Cotter, Owner of Paradigm Landscape, did a wonderful job reviewing the care and maintenance of lawns in an organic fashion. He covered the overall effects of chemical based "land" care on humans and pets, provided a

timeline of how to proceed with transitioning your lawn from a chemically reliant lawn to organic. The audience was extremely engaged and the question and answer session was equally as informative as his lecture and the two DVDs addressing the benefits of transitioning and cost savings over the long term.



left to right: Elizabeth Fetsko, Green Committee; Joe Cotter, Paradigm Landscape; Christine Dietterich, Membership; Kate Boland, Green Committee

School Forum at Linden Ponds

As a public service, LWV of Hingham sponsored a forum at Linden Ponds in February regarding the Special Town Meeting and Election. The forum was open to the public and provided an opportunity to present information and address questions and issues. It was well attended with 40 people.

Julie Strehle, LWV of Hingham President, facilitated the forum and introduced the speakers, which included Dorothy Galo, Superintendent, Hingham Public Schools, Chrisanne Gregoire, Chair, Hingham School Committee, Sandra Cleary, School Building Committee, and Laura Burns, Selectwoman.

Affordable Energy Options Meeting

LWV of Hingham is co-sponsoring a workshop on affordable energy options. The presentation is called "Green and Affordable Energy Options for Massachusetts – Focus on Wind". Larry Chretien, Executive Director, Mass Energy (Massachusetts Energy Consumers Alliance) will be the featured speaker.

Other sponsors include REACH Hingham Wind, Hingham Habitat for Humanity, Old Ship Church Green Sanctuary, and the AAUW.

The event will take place Monday, March 31, 2008, 7:00 p.m. at the Hingham Public Library.

LWV of Hingham Municipal Finance Consensus Meeting We Need Your Two Cents Worth!

Over the last several years, serious financial problems have beset the majority of cities and towns in the Commonwealth. The constraints of Proposition 2 and escalating local expenses threaten local services including the advances made by the Education Reform Act. The Commonwealth's source of revenue (income tax) is volatile and recent economic declines have resulted in more limited state aid to municipalities.

A Fiscal Policy Update Study, adopted by the LWV of Massachusetts convention in 2005, was undertaken to evaluate the current status of the financing of local government. The 17 member FPU committee has been busy ever since. Kathy Leonardson and Zaxaro Bennett Chair the committee populated by seasoned fiscal policy analysts along side newcomers to the field.

In January of last year, the committee organized two all-member forums entitled: Municipal Finance: Where does the money come from and where does it go? Next, the committee designed a study on municipal finance so that Leagues could assess the fiscal health of their own communities. Then in October 2007, Fall Conference featured a panel on Who pays for local government? Why is it that my property taxes continue to go up while funding local services is a struggle?

Now the committee is seeking consensus on three questions dealing with the fiscal relationship between state and local government.

- Question 1 asks members to decide what principles should guide the fiscal relationship between state and local government.
- Question 2 revisits a 1993 LWVM position opposing new local option taxes.
- Question 3 asks if there should be new statutes to help municipalities deal with two growing expenditures: health insurance and pensions for municipal employees.

For us, studying municipal finances for the last 3 years was like unraveling a mystery, trying to figure out what was causing funding problems on the municipal side, says Leonardson. This study evolved to look at the fiscal relationship between the state and local governments from the local viewpoint, something that organically developed as we learned more along the way. We encourage all Leagues to join us, learn from our materials, and tell us what you think through the consensus process.

The League of Women Voters of Hingham will have its Consensus meeting on **Wednesday, March 26**, at the Hingham Public Library (Fearing Room). Please come at 6:45 p.m., ready to start the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Please familiarize yourself with the background and issues by going online to www.lwvma.org/fiscalpolicystudy.shtml. Then click on Fiscal Policy Study Consensus Materials for Local Leagues and then click on Consensus Study Materials.

Hope you can make it!

State of the State - by Deborah Courteau

On February 7th, members and friends attended the LWV of Hingham's annual "State of the State" All-Member Meeting at the home of our President, Julie Strehle. We listened to State Representative Garrett Bradley and State Senator Bob Hedlund discuss the issues facing our legislature, laughed at their difference of opinions, and questioned them further on topics of concern, including Governor Patrick's recent budget proposal, casinos in Massachusetts, healthcare, transportation, the building and maintaining of our schools, and, of course, the Presidential election.

Regarding the budget, Rep. Bradley talked about the difficulties in having to guess on how much revenue will come in during the upcoming year. For example, while the Governor, in his recent budget submitted to the House, included casino revenues, that money won't materialize in fiscal year 2009. You can't count on it.

Both Rep. Bradley and Sen. Hedlund agreed that lottery revenue is not as high as anticipated. Sen. Hedlund acknowledged it is a bad way to raise revenue; but that the State is tapped out everywhere else. He added that it is ironic how much money is spent on lottery advertising – money that could instead go back to the communities. He suggested tapping into the Stabilization Fund as lottery revenues keep declining. Rep. Bradley countered that he agreed with the money spent on advertising because, "If you're going to do it, you need to support it fully." Sen. Hedlund also expressed his disappointment with the lack of discipline on behalf of the

Legislature in not spending the surplus we had wisely, such as on education.

In discussing the impact of casinos on the residents of Massachusetts, Sen. Hedlund strongly believes it will impact lottery sales, the character of the Commonwealth and the local communities that host music and theatre. For example, the North Shore Music Circus won't be able to compete, and local restaurants won't be able to compete. He is skeptical about the government's role in gaming. He believes the Governor's analysis is from a

pro-casino viewpoint, that the construction numbers are not realistic, and that projected revenues are only promises. He wants

numbers he can trust more before he votes to expand gaming in the Commonwealth.

Rep. Bradley is not morally opposed to casino gambling. However, he is concerned that because an Indian Tribe commissioned the Marlborough land, currently the State will get no revenue from it. He also reminded us that the saturation point for casinos nationally has already been reached. Casino's around the country are not making money like they used to.

Member Pat Facey stated that New Jersey, Rhode Island and Connecticut have casinos, but all are in financial trouble. The casino revenues haven't solved their financial difficul-

ties. "It's not a panacea to what ails us right now, that's for sure", Sen. Hedlund agreed.

Our President, Julie Strehle, took the opportunity to lobby both gentlemen on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts as being long opposed casino gambling in our State. She noted that Connecticut, New Jersey and Rhode Island all have higher tax rates, that gambling revenue streams are inconsistent, and there is a loss of local jobs. Both Rep. Bradley and Sen. Hedlund agreed the legislature has to address the issue this year.



Regarding healthcare, Rep. Bradley said more community-based healthcare is needed, which is more of a hybrid of Governor

Romney's individual mandate. And that it will take a few more years to work out. Regarding transportation, Sen. Hedlund stated that we've spent more on new projects than any other state in this country. And, now we don't have enough money to support our infrastructure over the next 20 years. The State is broke, so it can't bail out the Turnpike or the MBTA. He suggested a gas tax is only way to pay for highway and bridge repairs, as a \$20 billion shortfall for maintenance of existing infrastructure is a big problem.

Regarding schools, Rep. Bradley and Sen. Hedlund successfully lobbied for Hingham to be the first project under the new system to obtain funding. Many

questions remain, but a new school will most likely receive 40% funding from the State. Voters will have options on how to pay the other 60%: to fund a new school with 42% guarantees; or spend \$7 million to rehabilitate an existing school and table the middle school with no reimbursement. Both hope that voters will pass both options.

Both of our guests bravely discussed the Presidential primary. Rep. Bradley supports Barack Obama. Sen. Hedlund concedes that Senator McCain is not the most electable guy the Republicans could have. "I feel like a man without a country", he declared. He also expressed concern that Senator McCain would continue with Bush's lead.

Pat Facey brought up the danger of losing the next generation of voters who are being turned off by the nastiness of the campaigns. "They can disagree, but must do it politely," she said. Senator Hedlund agreed, "We must demand that the press stop dumbing us down. They only cover the limited outrages of the politicians. They don't cover anything anymore unless there is a scandal."

Rep. Bradley added that, "So much of politics, much like life, is relationship-driven." He believes the unwritten rule in Massachusetts state politics - that you don't campaign against other people - should be used across the country. Pat added that the tone should be at the issues, not the people.

The evening was truly informative. The HLWV looks forward to seeing everyone again next year.

Observer Corps Report

Observer: Marisa Costello
Board: Recreation Comm.
Date: January 3, 2008
Attendance: Frank Jones, Budd Thorne, Bob Keyes, Tom Campbell, Scott Bosworth, Kathy Clarkeson, Mark Thorell

***Note - this is not the full Observer Corps report as we had to shorten it to fit it in the VOTER.*

New Business:

Tory Dolan – Independent Contractors vs. Full Time Employees: Request for a policy change on tickets. She wanted verification that she is able to sell a ticket to a member if they fill out a waiver form at that time. She wanted clarification on sharing a ticket. Kathy Clarkeson will check with Ted Alexiades because he said in the past that people should not be able to share a ticket. The instructors asked that some sort of organization system be set up for the steps, weights and other equipment in the facility (all belongs to the town). Kathy stated that these items could be stored in the old office. Bob Keys wants a closet to be assigned to Phyllis the yoga instructor for her mats.

Frank Jones – Staffing for Weekend Activities: Request to have all senior staff members at all weekend events (dances, etc). Kathy Clarkeson states that there is always one senior staff member here on weekends. Mo is on from 1pm to 6pm right now which allows the game room to be open when there is not a birthday party booked. Frank Jones requests to see a new schedule for Kathy's staff. Kathy states that she is not available on weekends during the winter months. This was a condition of her hiring. Frank Jones again insists that she should be present for programs where over 100 kids will be attending.

Kathy counters that her senior staff is fully capable of taking care of any situation that may arise during these events. She also mentions that there is a police officer as well as several parent chaperones in attendance at these events. Again Jones states he wants Kathy in attendance at these events and she again states that she is not available on weekends in the winter. Someone asks if this condition is in writing and she said no, but that Tom Campbell was part of the hiring committee and would be able to attest to it. Tom Campbell was very reluctant to support Kathy stating that it was so long ago and that he couldn't remember everything from back then. The argument between Jones and Clarkeson goes back and forth for several minutes, with Jones insisting she be here and Clarkeson stating that she is not available on weekends during the winter. At one point the words harassment and forcing out came up and the room was getting very uncomfortable. Jones switched gears and states his desire to have the Rec Center open from 9am to 6pm on Weekends. Kathy Clarkeson mentions that there are dog training classes every Saturday from 10 to 12 and almost every weekend is booked with a birthday party. Currently the game room is open 3pm – 6pm on the weekends. Jones still insisted that on the weekends there weren't birthday parties, we make the room available to anyone that wants to stop by and hang out there from 12 – 6pm. When Frank Jones was asked how the hours would be advertised, he really didn't have an answer (people could just stop by and see if it was open). Cathy Daly of Harvard

Drive suggests that the hours be posted on the website every Friday evening as well as an updated voicemail on the Rec Centers phone system.

Bud Thorne made a motion to have the board get together to further discuss the staffing issue before the next meeting. He did not realize it was a violation of open meeting law, so it would need to be assigned to a sub-committee. The motion is withdrawn.

Chairman's Report:

Frank Jones began his report clarifying the issue that arose on New Year's Day. A few days before, Bob Keyes asked Frank if he could open the fitness center on January 1st if he could find someone to work that day. Frank said okay but did not share this information with anyone else. Frank went away for work but forgot his cell phone. Bob posted signs stating that the fitness center would be open on January 1st. Mark Thorell saw the signs and took them down. On January 1st, people showed up thinking the Fitness Center would be open and it was not. A huge commotion broke out and no one could reach Frank to get clarification. Frank admitted to making a mistake by not communicating the decision to be open that day to anyone else on the Rec Commission as well as Kathy Clarkeson and her staff. Scott Bosworth made a motion that in the future, the Fitness Center will be open on January 1st if staffing is available. The motion was accepted. Someone requested clarification on the procedures regarding the agenda for the Rec Commission meetings. To whom should Agenda items be communicated? Who is responsible for posting the Agenda on the Town Hall website? Tom Campbell mentioned that when he printed

the agenda at the beginning of the week and then looked at it a few days later, there were items missing or changed. There was concern that someone was posting and re-posting the agenda several times during the past week. Although Kathy Clarkeson was responsible for it in the past, the Secretary (Bob Keyes) is now responsible for creating it and the Chairman (Frank Jones) approves it before giving it to the Town Clerk to approve and post it. Someone commented that Kathy should not be doing the agenda since she is not a member of the board. Scott Bosworth asked what the procedure should be going forward. Frank Jones stated that all agenda items should be sent to him 72 hours before the meeting date. If an item will not be included in the agenda, he will notify the submitter in advance of the meeting. That person can still bring the topic up during New Business by motion. The agenda will be posted on the website as well as on the door of the fitness room 48 hours before the meeting date. A motion was made to accept these policy changes. The Road Race rules and regulations are being worked on by Frank Jones. A proposal of giving away a free membership to the Fitness Center in exchange for a donation of X amount was made in a previous meeting. Bob Keyes expressed his reluctance to do this stating it is too much to just give away. Scott Bosworth offered to be on the Road Race sub-committee. The Rec Commission is on the February 5th Advisory Committee agenda to discuss departmental budgets. Meeting adjourned at 10:15pm.

LWV of Hingham Membership Form

May 2008 – May 2009

Send to:
Marisa Costello
43 Woodlock Road, Hingham, MA 02043

Name _____

2nd Member _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email* _____

*We need your email address so we can alert you from time to time about a League meeting
or let you know when a new Voter newsletter is on our website*

Individual	\$50.
Household	\$75. (\$50, first member; \$25 second)
Full time student	\$25.
CONTRIBUTION	\$ _____
PAYMENT ENCLOSED	\$ _____

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government. It influences public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate. We are delighted to get help from our Members. Below is a list of activities in need of your help. Please check or circle any items with which you can assist:

_____ **Voter Education**

- * Help run Candidates Night
- * Register voters
- * Pass out "I Voted Today" stickers at the polls

_____ **Advocacy**

- * Municipal Finance Study
- * Green Study Committee
- * Report on Town Boards with Observer Corps
- * Compile town data for the "Know Your Town" booklet

_____ **Social Event Planning**

- * Plan All-Member meetings, including Annual Meeting

The League of Women Voters of Hingham Reusable Shopping Bag

Looking for the perfect gift for all the shoppers in your life? Do you want to be conscientious about the environment and inspire others to be aware? You can support the Earth and the League of Women Voters of Hingham at the same time: Introducing the League's stylish, lightweight, completely biodegradable, canvas shopping bag. It's the perfect size for the grocery store and other shopping trips.

The League in Hingham is energized and wants to continue to offer and expand its programs. Your participation in this fundraiser will support the "Know Your Town" booklet project, continue to allow us to send out "Thank You for Registering To Vote" postcards and host our annual "Candidates Night" forum.

The price for each canvas bag, measuring 12x17x6 (with a 7-inch gusset) will be \$8, or 3 bags for \$20.

Order Form

Please send in this form with a check made out to
League of Women Voters of Hingham to:
Dina O'Neil, 7 Park View Drive, Hingham, MA 02043

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Canvas Bag	Quantity	Price Each	TOTAL \$
Single Bag	_____	x \$8	= _____
3-Bag Set	_____	x \$20	= _____

(Add \$15 Shipping per address if outside delivery area)

\$ Amount enclosed: _____

Thank you! Questions, call Dina @ 781-749-8450


LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

**Candidates
Night**

APRIL 17, 2008 AT 7PM
LINDEN PONDS
THE DERBY CLUBHOUSE AT LINDEN PONDS,
WHITING STREET (ROUTE 53) HINGHAM

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

SPONSORED BY:



The League of Women
Voters of Hingham

Candidates running for office in the Town Election have been invited
to attend to answer questions and make a presentation.

This event will be broadcast on Comcast cable TV during the two week period
prior to the May 3, 2008 Town Election.

www.hingham.ma.lwvnet.org/

Help HLWV Be Green!
 Want to save paper and support the environment?
 Sign up for the on-line VOTER Newsletter. Please send an email to Lynncotter@comcast.net.

*Democracy: The more you use it,
the better it gets!*

**HINGHAM LEAGUE OF WOMEN
 VOTERS OF HINGHAM**
 30 Ward Street
 Hingham, MA 02043