

# Hingham Voter

Serving the Towns of Hingham, Hull, Cohasset and Norwell

January 2008

## HLWV Board

2007—2008

**President:** Julie Strehle

**VP Voter Education:**

Deborah Courteau

**VP Advocacy:**

Melanie Quackenbush

**Green Study Co-Chairs:**

Kate Boland, Elizabeth Fetsko

**Secretary:** Victoria Milano

**Treasurer:** Marisa Costello

**Membership Recruiter:**

Christine Diatterich

**Publicity:** Jerry Elsdén

**Web Site & Newsletter:**

Lynn Cotter

**Events Coordinator:** Dina O'Neil

**Advisors:** Cindy Coe, Cathy Salisbury

## President's Letter

Dear Members,  
The HLWV finished out a very busy fall season with some great events, and I want to thank the members responsible for their success. Our Shopping Bag Fundraiser, although not sold out, has been quite well received, with over 200 bags selling in just two weeks. We have about 100 bags to go, 100% of those monies as profit, so I encourage you to use the order form in this newsletter to order the last of these bags if you haven't had the chance to do so yet. Most of the money earned from these bags will go towards the publication of the "Know Your Town" booklet, which should happen this spring. (More on that to follow.) Many members were involved in this effort to design and sell these bags, especially Victoria Milano and Christine Diatterich, so I thank them for their service to HLWV, and everyone's help and patience during this endeavor!

We also sold our shopping bags at Hingham's annual Christmas in the Square event in December. We had a lovely table set up on Main Street, right on the way up to the Festival of Trees, and had volunteers staffing the table for bag sales and voter registration. Thanks go to table volunteers Victoria Milano, Elizabeth Fetsko, Deb Courteau, Laura Marwill, Lynn Cotter, Kristen Walker, Tricia Van Buskirk and Lynn Barclay.

Speaking of Festival of Trees, HLWV submitted its own "green" Christmas tree to Hingham's annual Festival of Trees event during Christmas in the Square. Jerry Elsdén headed up this effort, along with help and donations from Helga Jorgensen, Elizabeth Fetsko, Chris Wilk, Joanne Pollick and Chartis Tebbetts. Decorations included energy efficient LED tree lights, gingerbread houses made from cereal boxes and styrofoam trays, stars made from old sweaters and buttons, an angel made from a crocheted table cloth, and a tree skirt sewn from old silk drapes, all which provided a beautiful tree and an education on the value and beauty in reusing materials. We give a special thanks to Jerry for this effort.

After a short break during the holiday season, the HLWV is ready to continue its programs for the rest of the year. We have our annual **State of the State All-Member Meeting** coming up in February, where State Representative Garrett Bradley and State Senator Bob

Hedlund will update us on Beacon Hill happenings. It's a great event to meet and talk with other HLWV members, plus meet and talk with our state legislators in an informal setting. It will be held on **February 7, from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**, at my house, 231 Leavitt Street in Hingham. Look out for your invitations in the mail. Don't forget to RSVP, and please feel free to bring a friend.

In March we will hold a **Consensus Meeting**, based on findings from the Massachusetts League of Women Voters' study on municipal finance and the current financial picture of our state and towns. Please stay tuned for more information on the date and location.

We will host our annual **Candidates' Night** forum on April 16 at Hingham Town Hall. Our **Annual Meeting** is slated to be held in late May, so stay tuned for more details on our speaker, date and location.

Cheers,  
Julie

## Upcoming Events

### State of the State All Member Meeting

Thurs, Feb 7 @ 7:00 p.m.  
231 Leavitt St, Hingham

### Monthly Board Meeting

Thurs, Feb 7 @ 6:00 p.m.  
231 Leavitt St, Hingham

### Know Your Town Meeting

Wed, March 12 @ 7:30 p.m.  
22 French St, Hingham

### Candidate's Night

Wed, April 16  
Hingham Town Hall



Laura Marwill, Deb Courteau and Elizabeth Fetsko work the table at Christmas in the Square.

## Observer Corps Notes

**Observer—Laura Marwill**  
Advisory Committee  
Jan. 15, 2008

Joe Bierwirth, Chair  
Irma Lauter, Vice Chair  
Jerry Seelen, Secretary

Call to order: 7:32 pm

January 8, 2008 meeting minutes approved.

Chief of Police Mills and Dept. Chief Souther present public safety budget: Chief Mills mentioned how missed Chief Carlson is and how his spirit is still with HPD. The police Dept. is short staffed, still trying to hire 4 additional officers requested last year. There are 51 positions funded, but only 44 on staff. Mills expects to fill 4 positions this year but no more. Extensive background checks are important to eliminate problems with new hires. The police budget is mostly salaries. Overtime is funded through unfilled but funded personnel. Chief Mills warns that in the next few years, when the dept. is fully staffed, there won't be enough money to pay OT and OT will probably increase because new officers are very active. Because the HPD is understaffed, it has also been able to absorb contractual salary increases this year. Discussion followed about how to truly reflect OT costs once HPD is fully staffed. Ted Alexiades, Town Accountant, mentions that next year the town may have higher revenues resulting from building permits currently being pulled. Chief Mills noted that medical aid calls are increasing because the town's demographic is changing. Shop lifting calls are way up because of the Derby St. Shoppes. Mills, respecting that the Selectmen have asked

for level funding from all depts., requested a small increase of \$4,500.00 to pay for a GPS system on the Harbor-master's boat. He felt it would be "a real life saver." His staff has done research and it appears there is no grant funding available for this, but they feel they have done a great job whittling down the price. The AdComm wondered if the GPS could be funded from mooring permit fees, but those fees have been designated for use to repay the Whitney Wharf renovation expenses until 2012. Since the mooring permit fees are relatively new, the meeting felt a raise in the fee for this purpose wouldn't be well received by the Town. It's possible the funding could be found in the '08 budget. Chief Mills will discuss the possibility with the Town Accountant and Charlie Cristello, the Town Administrator and report back next week.

**Building Commissioner's Budget:** Due to a question regarding increases, the report will be made next week.

**Employee Benefits Budget:** Group Insurance budget (town's cost to fund employer share of health care and non-teacher retirees) increased 15%. Reserves invested by the County Health System Health Care Trust Fund (HCTF). The Town is about \$100 thousand underfunded this year which it expects to recoup from the '08 reserve fund. Ted Alexiades expects there should be some savings this year, but the Town is still about \$100 thousand under budgeted. OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits) rules have recently changed requiring towns to fund the liability or show it as unfunded on the

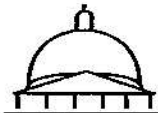
balance sheet. Ted Alexiades recommends the town begin to fund it ASAP. The accrued liability is nearly \$68 million (promises made to current and past employees.) Ted's calculations show that the town needs to set aside \$2.9 million annually (in the Health Care Trust Fund at 8%) to fund currently accruing liabilities. Ted fears the Town will lose its Aaa status if it doesn't begin funding the liability now. There is a possibility that the town could reduce its liability if it were to opt out of the state teacher retirement system. When the town joined the state system, the town paid 50% (minimum required by state law) of retired teachers' health care. Sometime after joining the state program, the state contracted with the union to pay 90% of retired teachers' health-care, thus obligating the towns in the system to increase their payments to 90%. If the town opted out of the state system it could pay 50% of all new teacher retirees' healthcare benefits which would immediately reduce the amount of the liability to \$1.6 million. The AdComm suggested meeting in executive session with the Board of Selectmen, the Personnel Board and the School Board to discuss how this should be approached. Gerry Seelen asked if this is the proper role for AdComm. Joe Bierwirth feels this is a looming crisis that impacts the financial viability of the town. Linda Port asked to take a sense of the meeting. She would lead a subcommittee to try to quantify the long term effects of the liability and to examine how to achieve parity between teachers and other town retirees.

**Workers Comp analysis:** Underfunded because of poor claims experience. Ted is esti-

mating a \$167,000 deficit for '08, therefore is requesting '09 funding level of \$300,000.

**Debt. Service:** The town's financial policy guidelines state that debt service should not exceed 5% of net operating revenues (operating budget less appropriations divided by cash.) Currently the town is substantially below the guideline. If the town approves the debt exclusion for the new school project, the project will cause the town to exceed its debt policy guidelines in 2011, '12 and '13. It is not just the effects of the school project however, it is the combination of the school project, the fire station and the DPW. The town would also have to approve an override (permanent increase in tax levy) for operating costs of the new school. Ted passed out forms which break down the tax impact per average household and per \$10,000 property evaluation. He feels this information should be disseminated to the town before town meeting. The net tax impact would be about \$460 per year for the avg. household, of which \$250 would be permanent. (The avg. household assessed value is about \$688,000.)

**School Project Update:** The School Building Committee and School Board are very disappointed that the state is not ready to make a commitment in writing yet. This has great implications as the timeline is very tight to get the school built for Fall '09. The State and the building committee are going to try to salvage the situation and will report back next week.



League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

### DAY ON THE HILL

Annual Lobby Day

Balancing Economics, Energy and the Environment

Wednesday, March 19th | State House, Boston

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**  
Speaker of the House,  
Sal DiMasi



*Featured Speaker*  
State Senator  
Pamela Resor



9:00 a.m. Registration & Reception – Nurses' Hall  
Come meet your legislators and join us for a light breakfast.  
10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Program – Gardner Auditorium  
Hear featured speakers on the issues.  
12:30 p.m. – Lobby Your Legislators

News from League Program Specialists on League-Supported Legislation in the areas of the Environment, Casino Gambling, Health Care, Education, Administration of Justice, and more!

# State of STATE

You are Invited to an All-Member Meeting  
of the Hingham League of Women Voters  
featuring a presentation by our legislators

In the Massachusetts State House  
**Senator Robert Hedlund &  
Representative Garrett Bradley**

Thursday, February 7, 2008 at 7 - 9 PM

231 Leavitt Street, Hingham, home of Julie Strehle  
r.s.v.p. to Julie Strehle at 781-749-6956 or ja.strehle@verizon.net



*\*\* in case of inclement weather, please check our website ([www.hingham.ma.lwvnet.org](http://www.hingham.ma.lwvnet.org))  
for information about postponement and for cancellation \*\**

## 62nd Annual Citizen's Legislative Seminar

State Senator Robert Hedlund is currently taking nominations for the 62nd Annual Citizens' Legislative Seminar.

The seminar is designed to help constituents learn more about the workings of the Massachusetts State Legislature.

During the series, sessions will commence with a presentation given by two faculty members, normally a Senator and a Repre-

sentative, on the topic of the day. After a brief intermission for coffee and conversation, participants will break up into small groups for informal discussion, which will also be headed by a legislator.

The seminars will occur on the Wednesday mornings of March 12, 19, and 26, and April 2 and 9, beginning at 9:30 a.m. and ending at 12:30 p.m., except for the final day, which will end at 1 p.m.



The HLWV Board working hard in January.

## VOTER Goes Green - Sign up for the electronic VOTER

Yes, that's right! If you would like to save paper and support the environment, we will send you the VOTER Newsletter via email instead of via snail mail. All you need to do is email [Lynncotter@comcast.net](mailto:Lynncotter@comcast.net) to sign up. Once you sign up, instead of receiving the VOTER by postal mail, it will arrive via email in an Acrobat attachment. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat, please mention it in the email and we will help you out!



The Hingham League  
of Women Voters



# The Hingham League of Women Voters Proudly Announces its 2007 Reusable Shopping Bag Fundraiser

Dear Hingham League of Women Voters Supporter,

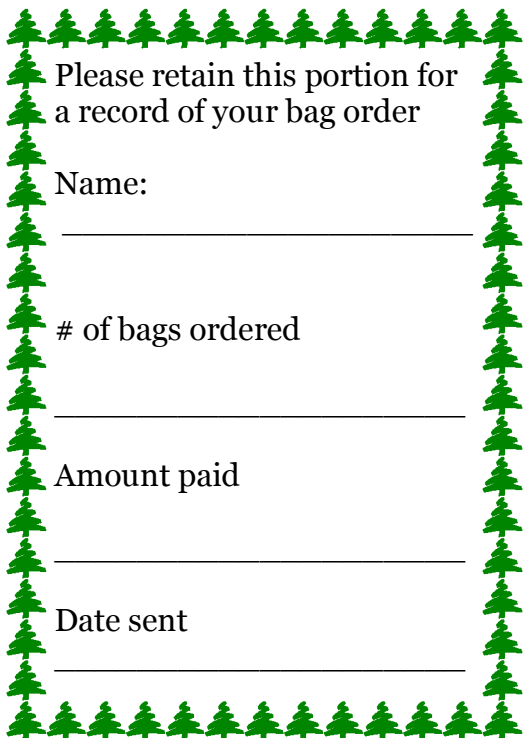
Looking for the perfect gift for all the shoppers in your life? Do you want to be conscientious about the environment and inspire others to be aware? You can support the Earth and the Hingham League of Women Voters at the same time: Introducing the League's stylish, lightweight, completely biodegradable,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

We invite all members to pre-order these shopping bags. We also ask that you forward this offering to all of your friends and family who are supporters of the environment and would like to support the Hingham League of Women Voters.

The price for each canvas bag, measuring 12x17x6 (with a 7-inch gusset) will be \$8, or 3 bags for \$20. Bags will be available for delivery starting in the first week of December. League volunteers will deliver your bags to your home in the delivery area of Hingham, Cohasset, Hull and Norwell. If you live outside this area, we would be happy to mail bags to you via UPS, with a \$15 shipping charge.

Thank you for your support,  
Victoria Milano, Shopping Bag Fundraising Chair  
781-740-1816



<b>Order Form</b>			
Please send in this form with a check made out to Hingham League of Women Voters to: Dina O'Neil, 7 Park View Drive, Hingham, MA 02043			
Name:	_____		
Phone:	_____	Email:	_____
Address:	_____		
<b>Canvas Bag</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Price Each</b>	<b>TOTAL \$</b>
Single Bag	_____	x \$8	= _____
3-Bag Set	_____	x \$20	= _____
( Add \$15 Shipping per address if outside delivery area)			
\$ Amount enclosed:	_____		
<b>Thank you!</b> Questions, call Dina @ 781-749-8450			



Please retain this portion for  
a record of your bag order

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# of bags ordered  
\_\_\_\_\_

Amount paid  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date sent  
\_\_\_\_\_

# HLWV Membership Form May 2007 – May 2008

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> 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

**HINGHAM LEAGUE OF WOMEN  
VOTERS**

30 Ward Street  
Hingham, MA 02043

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

**State of**  
**STATE**

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