



The League of Women
Voters of Hingham

Hingham Voter

Serving the Towns of Hingham, Hull, Cohasset and Norwell

March 2009

LWVH Board 2008—2009

President: Julie Strehle

Vice President: Deborah Courteau

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Membership:

Christine Dietterich

Publicity: Jerry Elsdon

Web Site & Newsletter:

Lynn Cotter

Town Meeting Study:

Kate Boland

Events Coordinator: Dina O'Neil

President's Letter

Dear Members,

We see it often in the news these days, the need for oversight of our government and elected officials, and the need to be involved in and have a voice in our government's decisions. That is why the League of Women Voters of Hingham continues in its efforts to get voters involved. We have an Observer Corps, for which volunteers attend town board meetings and report back to the membership. You may have received a phone call recently about our efforts to recruit more volunteers. We hope that you keep this effort in mind if you have some free time, as we would love to have your help. You can email Marisa Costello at tmbac@comcast.net.

On February 5th, we had our 3rd annual State of the State event. Senator Bob Hedlund and Representative Garrett Bradley reported to thirty members and guests the latest happenings on Beacon Hill. Of course, in these times of uncertainty, we appreciated their meeting with us and their candor about

the current state of programs. Please see Deb Courteau's wonderful report on this event in this newsletter.

Finishing out our year, we have the following upcoming events: The Candidates Forum will be held at the Hingham Public Library on Sunday afternoon, April 5th. We have decided to try a new location this year, and to try a daytime event, making it as accessible as possible to voters. We will be taping this event for re-broadcast; be sure to look for it on our website this year! At the local election on May 2nd, LWV of Hingham volunteers will hand out our "I Voted Today" stickers. Also in May, we will have two events. First, we plan to revive the past Plant Sale fundraiser, in order to keep up with the cost of "I Voted Today" stickers and costs associated with our other initiatives. Your \$50 dues are much appreciated, however, most of these dues are sent to our State and National Leagues to fund their support, so we must fundraise on a local level. Please look out for our

pre-sale information and we thank you for your support. Finally, we will finish out the year with our Annual Meeting in late May. Dina O'Neil is busy making arrangements for the event, and we will be back in touch with speaker and date details.

We are in the process of putting together a new Board of Directors for the new year starting in May. I am so pleased to announce that we have new Co-Presidents for next year, Lynn Cotter and Deborah Courteau. Both members bring wonderful spirit and skills to the office, and I feel so fortunate that the LWV of Hingham has them stepping into this position. They are currently fitting people with jobs on the Board, so if you are interested in becoming more involved, please contact them to find a way to participate at:

lynncotter@comcast.net,
d.courteau@verizon.net

Best,
Julie Strehle

Upcoming Events

Monthly Board Meeting

Wed, March 12 @ 7:30 p.m.
104 Summer Street, Hingham

Candidates Forum

Sun, April 5 @ 2:00 p.m.
Hingham Public Library

Hingham Town Meeting

April 27, 2009
Hingham High School

Hingham Town Elections

May 2, 2009

Plant Sale/Fundraiser

Sat, May 9
High Street, Hingham

LWV of Hingham - State of the State Recap

A Relaxed and Informative Evening

by Deborah Courteau

On February 5th, the League of Women Voters of Hingham held their annual State of the State All-Member meeting. The evening proved especially lively as both State Senator Bob Hedlund and State Representative Garrett Bradley, along with our members, discussed the numerous current happenings in our state legislature. To quote our President, Julie Strehle, "Wow, last night went great! It was relaxing and informative. Thanks to everyone for coming out and bringing friends."

We have a new Speaker! Both Bradley and Hedlund approve of new House Speaker, Robert A. DeLeo. He is big on pension reform and ethics reform – two areas which need immediate attention from our state legislature. And, he is actually doing something about it instead of just talking about it. Bradley likes DeLeo's style of putting different people in a room to discuss an issue and then listening and absorbing instead of dominating.

Ethics in the legislature – does it still exist? Bradley said a package is coming out of the House soon. Some aspects appear good (giving Secretary Galvin additional subpoena power) and some appear bad (a statewide grand jury). Both agree there needs to be major effort put into cleaning up the grey areas of lobbying. Bradley wants to see an increase in attention to campaign finance laws ... there needs to be more disclosure. Right now there is an 18-day gap in filing campaign contributions. It

should be immediate to eliminate those major donors who contribute a few days before elections so as to prevent the public from knowing which donors/lobbyists are supporting which candidates.

The Governor's Budget. Hedlund is frustrated with the Governor's submitted budget, and specifically the danger of leaving so little in the rainy day fund as downturns are not likely to change anytime soon. He added that he sees the loyalty lying with the legislative leaders in voting, and not with the Democratic party. He said he might offer a Rule this year to "adhere to the rules", citing the example of numerous cell phones in use while there exists a ban on cell phones while in Chamber. Bradley said the meals tax might work, and that the utility pole tax will be good for Hingham – but not if the utility companies pass the cost on to residents!

The Governor's plan to invest \$1 billion in biotechnology over the next 10 years saw heated debate between our two legislators. Hedlund is against the \$1 billion set aside for the plan and believes it only creates a slush fund for the executive branch to give money to their favorite biotech companies in the industry. He also questions if this is the best time to spend this money. Bradley agrees with the Governor's plan because our state is best situated to make progress and to create high-paying jobs, which in turn provide more revenue in the

way of taxes and consumer spending. He believes this is an investment in an area which Massachusetts is very well positioned in.

The Economic Stimulus Bill currently being debated in Washington, DC will most likely provide help to Massachusetts with Medicare aid, sewer and water project funding and funds for education. The state will decide how to divide the money among the towns according to federal guidelines. Hedlund feels the water and sewer projects need more attention than the schools. Bradley acknowledged the projects most likely to be funded will be those that can start in 6 months and be finished in 2 years in order to get people back working as quickly as possible in construction and other related jobs.

Gambling in Massachusetts. Just when you thought the issue was gone for awhile ... a new Speaker of the House is appointed who somewhat likes the idea. In addition to Speaker DeLeo, Bradley also appears to support allowing some gambling in our state. Currently, if an Indian Tribe wants to open a gambling center in Massachusetts, they can. They can also offer gambling, except for slot machines – which provide the biggest revenue. And right now, the state will get none of the revenue. We can tie up infrastructure to make getting there difficult, but the key is control – to cut a deal to get part of the revenue. Hedlund

agrees that it will generate revenue – but only upfront revenue in the forms of licensing fees and construction jobs. He believes it will change the character of the state for the worse and that many smaller entertainment venues will be forced to close. While Hedlund said we don't have to encourage it, Bradley stated that we are all adults and if people want to gamble they will find a way.

Redistricting. Currently the state legislature redraws electoral districts following the U.S. Census every 10 years for the offices of State Representative, State Senator and U.S. Representative. This is done to compensate for population shifts. Redistricting can be full of favoritism – used to punish disfavored legislators and reward loyal ones. The result being that communities are fractured and minorities are disenfranchised. It has been proposed that redistricting be taken out of the hands of legislative leaders and put into a non-partisan independent redistricting commission. Hedlund supports the idea of an independent commission; but right now he sees more legislators voting with leadership because it is the easy thing to do. He feels right now legislators are less in the public eye. Making things worse are that junior members are not feeling empowered and are not participating. Hedlund suggests checking out www.scalingthehill.com to see the live debate on this issue.

....continued from page 2

Should we add a 1 or 2 cent gas tax to increase revenue? Hedlund and Bradley both agree this will not work. The overhead cost will be more expensive than the revenue received, and it will only be a quick fix. There needs to be a major overhaul of the transportation department. There are too many issues that cost money, including the MBTA and their pension system. We must reform a system that is billions of dollars in debt from the Big Dig and other transit services. If nothing is done, the state's infrastructure will deteriorate further.

The MBTA pension system is a fringe benefit the state can no longer afford. To get a full pension, most state employees must wait until they are 65, but MBTA workers can receive a full pension after 23 years of service, regardless of age. As the MBTA struggles to pay its bills and has been forced to raise fares three times in six years, MBTA retirees are allowed to boost their pension still further by converting their accrued sick days, which they can carry over

from year to year indefinitely, into pension credit. There are also no restrictions on the amount of money MBTA retirees can earn if they return to work in the public sector. MBTA retirees also receive free health insurance for life, regardless of when they retire.

Chapter 40B is a state law that establishes certain requirements for affordable housing developments in Massachusetts. It allows developments which do not conform to local zoning to be approved and constructed if less than 10% of the housing in a town is considered affordable by persons earning 80% of the median income. Recently, a hearing was held on proposed changes by the Dept. of Housing. Both Bradley and Hedlund filed a joint statement stating that not enough notice was given to the public. Bradley believes several community groups would have been represented if they had known about the hearing. It turns out this wasn't the only problem surrounding 40B.

The Inspector General audited financial statements for 10 completed 40B projects. This review revealed that millions of dollars in excessive profit were hidden by unscrupulous developers who agreed to profit limitations in exchange for significant zoning concessions. These profits should have been turned over to the municipalities that approved the projects upon their completion. Construction of affordable housing is a difficult task for many communities. Good planning is important to make sure a town ends up with affordable housing where it wants it, constructed to meet the needs of town residents and their families.

Both Bradley and Hedlund agree that this is not just an issue for many legislators. It is hard to build a coalition to get changes passed when there are so many building trade lobbyists who do not want changes made to 40B. However, every new session of the state legislature brings a few more supporters who are being affected. We need to

give the towns back some level of control.

It appears the Fore River Bridge construction will be around for a long time. Currently, it is at 25% of the design phase with a goal of putting it out to bid in January 2011. According to Hedlund's handout, construction is set to begin in Spring 2011.

On the Community Preservation Committee funding, it was confirmed that the legislature is looking at ways of expanding certain sections of the Act to allow funds to be spent where needed, such as the Housing Authority.

Hedlund brought up a very important point – the lack of both adults and children in understanding civics. Most people don't even read a newspaper – the Metro doesn't count! Few schools even offer a civics class anymore. The problem will get worse.

Thanks to all who attended. See everyone soon!



Members and guests at the 3rd Annual State of the State.



Senator Bob Hedlund & Representative Garrett Bradley

Organic Lawn Care Workshop Recap

The LWV of Hingham Organic Lawn Care Workshop this past Sunday was well attended with approximately 30 people (even with all the snow!). Speakers David Macdonald, Owner of Summit Landscaping, Joseph Cotter, Owner of Paradigm Landscaping out of Quincy, and Cindy Prentice, Owner of Garden Resources, gave an informative and interactive discussion on how to start and maintain an organic lawn.

The key to a great lawn without using synthetic fertilizers and toxic pesticides is to create nutrient rich microbial soil. One of the first steps is to have your soil tested. This can actually be done through the University of Massachusetts. Having the soil tested will help in creating the right environment for a beautiful lawn. Other important steps include lessening the compaction in the lawn by aerating, spreading organic compost and overseeding. Aerating should be done in the Spring and Fall at least for the first couple of years. Composting is one of the best things to do for the lawn, but acquiring a good quality compost is very difficult (Go Green Landscaping and Kennedy's in Scituate were recommended). Overseeding should occur end of February/early March and late Summer. Depending on the grass, the land and the type of soil, there are many ways to create a healthy lawn using organic methods. Here are a few that were discussed:

- Corn Gluten - can be used to help suppress weeds, but can be expensive. Should be spread by April 15.
- Mower Blades - the sharpness of the mower blade can make a huge difference in the health of the grass. Recommended that blades should be sharpened every 8 - 10 hours of use or at least on an annual basis.
- Grass Clippings - grass clippings should be bagged or raked only the first and last mowing, otherwise they are great to have on the lawn. These clippings can also be used as a mulch in a vegetable garden as long as it is used lightly.
- Blade Level - for a healthier lawn the blade level should be between 3 - 3 1/2 inches.
- Watering - a once a week deep soaking (1 inch of water - use a tuna can for measurement) is better than short light waterings throughout the week. Best to water between 5am - 7am. Watering overnight exposes the grass to fungal and pest issues.
- Ground Cover - instead of grass, there are alternatives for shaded ground cover. For example, vinca, myrtle, pakisander, ferns, hostas as well as steppables.
- Moss - caused by calcium deficiency. To combat moss, aeration and spreading lime are possible cures. Dolomitic lime and calcific lime are two that were mentioned with calcific being preferred as it contains nearly 100% calcium.

The discussion concluded with a reminder that in changing a lawn over organically does takes time, but in the long run will provide a healthier nontoxic environment without all the synthetics and pesticides.

LWVH Town Meeting Study Update

In the interest of increasing attendance and voter participation at Hingham's Town Meetings, the League of Women Voters of Hingham is researching, compiling and will possibly submit a proposal to the Board of Selectmen for consideration.

The Town Meeting Study Committee consists of 5 members including Chair, Kate Boland, Eva Marx, Julie Strehle, Victoria Milano and Connie Coleman. The committee is currently in the process of editing the questionnaire that will be sent to other towns. They are profiling 20 other communities that the Board of Selectmen use for benchmarking purposes. Some are contiguous and others meet Hingham's profile for a variety of reasons. The goal is to meet the objective of gathering data, compiling information and presenting suggestions or ideas.

The committee is still looking for volunteers and hopes the time commitment is limited to a couple of meetings, and email/phone calls on your own time. If you are interested in participating or helping out, please contact Kate Boland by email at kateboland@comcast.net or phone 781-749-5946.



LWVH Organic Lawncare Workshop speakers David Macdonald, Owner of Summit Landscaping, Joseph Cotter, Owner of Paradigm Landscaping out of Quincy, and Cindy Prentice, Owner of Garden Resources.

Hingham Conservation Commission - Observer Corps Report By Susan Wetzel

Other Participating Boards – None

Date/Time of Meeting – January 5, 2009 7:00 PM

Place of Meeting – Hingham Town Hall

Meeting Posted on Website and Agenda Attached? Yes

Members Attending – Eugene Babin, Vice Chairman; Bill Grafton; Charles Barry; Carolyn Nielson; Doug Harvey
Conservation Department – Cliff Prentiss, Conservation Officer

Chaired by: Samuel Chapin

Submitted by: Susan Wetzel

Old/New Business – The members of the Conservation Commission discussed the Draft – Dock and Pier Policy. The Commission is continuing to work on developing a town by-law that will protect the coastal wetlands in the town. The existing docks with waterways permits would not require any change and would be grandfathered under the new by-laws. The residents that were present were assured that they would have an opportunity to comment on the proposed by-law at town meeting after it was completed.

Administrative Consent Order – The Commission received a request from Jim Claypool (representing the Back River Condominiums) that the prior request for vista pruning be withdrawn. Paul Doyle presented a written notice on behalf of the officers of the Bare Cove Park that threatened to take legal action against both the Conservation Commission and the Selectman if an Administrative Consent Order was issued. In consideration of these concerns the Conservation Commission did not issue an Administrative Consent Order.

Notices of Intent – The Conservation Commission reviewed the request for a septic proposal for 4 Steamboat Lane. The property owner selected a new engineer McSweeney and a discussion was held regarding the proposed changes to septic system that was presented at the December 15, 2008 Conservation Commission Meeting. The new plans were approved however the plans will need to be approved by the Board of Health.

The developer for the property at 20 Woodlock Road presented plans to develop the property. Ms. Nielson excused herself from the discussion (due to potential conflict of interest). Many abutters were present for the discussion and were very concerned about current flooding caused by drainage from the property. A discussion with the developer, abutters, and Conservation Commission was held on how best the water drainage might be mitigated. A unanimous vote was held to approve the Order of Conditions.

The Commission reviewed the plans for the development of the property at 240, 242, 244, 246 Lazell Street and 120 South Pleasant Street. The independent consultant, hired by the town made several recommendations such as: the flags be numbered in order to more easily identify areas of potential concern, current zoning only allows for 100 cubic feet of soil removal (the current proposal is for removal of 30,000 cubic feet) and the impact on neighboring streets and the impact on the property, additional testing is needed at the proposed “rain gardens”, and how the ongoing maintenance might be maintained.

The abutters have hired an attorney to represent their concerns. The Conservation Commission requested that the developer work with the abutters to address their concerns. Based on the recommendations of the town’s consultant, additional review of the property will be needed. The developer agreed to work with the consultant, abutters and Conservation Commission to resolve questions and concerns.

The Conservation Commission reviewed the proposed maintenance and operation plan of the South Shore Country Club (SSCC). The elements of the operation plan agreed to not trim grass within 20 feet of the wetlands (by visual estimate) and not to cut grass shorter than 18” in order to provide a vegetation buffer. The Conservation Commission was pleased with the changes and the motion to approve was unanimous.

The proposed plan to dredge the Hingham Harbor was discussed and a motion for the Order of Condition was approved for the dredging.

Request for Extension - The Commission granted the request for an extension of the Dennis Road applicant (Michael Ferrara).

A brief discussion was held regarding the upcoming budget.

Next Meeting January 26, 2009, 7:00 PM, Hingham Town Hall

Hingham Conservation Commission - Observer Corps Report By Susan Wetzel

Other Participating Boards – None

Date/Time of Meeting – February 9, 2009 7:00 PM

Place of Meeting – Hingham Town Hall

Meeting Posted on Website and Agenda Attached? Yes

Members Attending – *Bill Grafton; Carolyn Nielson; Doug Harvey*

Absent – Eugene Babin, Vice Chairman; Charles Barry

Conservation Department – Cliff Prentiss, Conservation Officer; Linda Defreitas, Secretary

Chaired by: Samuel Chapin

Submitted by: Susan Wetzel

Old/New Business – The residents of Martin's Lane requested that the Conservation Commission support their efforts to have their street, Martin's Lane, be designated a Scenic Road. The Commission discussed the designation and agreed that it was a very important scenic road in Hingham leading to World's End and voted to support the designation. A letter from the Conservation Commission will be drafted and forwarded to Town Meeting in support of the designation.

The Commission discussed the need to appoint an additional member to the Open Space Acquisition Committee. The Committee is comprised of five members, three appointed by the Conservation Commission and one each by the Planning Board and the Selectmen. With assistance from Conservation Officer Cliff Prentiss, the Committee evaluates opportunities for the acquisition and protection of open space parcels. The Commission is currently seeking a candidate for appointment to fill the vacancy.

The Commission agreed that it would be best to review the Irrigation System Bylaw after the Board of Health and other town boards have had an opportunity to complete their review.

The minutes of the January 25, 2009 meeting were not available to vote on. The revisions are currently being made and will be available at the February 23rd meeting.

Notices of Intent – Mr. Robichaud, of the South Pleasant Street Realty Trust, provided an update with significant proposed changes to the drainage system. Mr. Chapin requested that further clarification be provided on soil removal and be updated in the next proposal. Ms. Neilson requested that the developer provide an illustration of where the water will drain to and requested that the Conservation Commission walk the property with the developer. The abutters to the property were present at the meeting and requested that the developer provide proposed changes 2 weeks prior to the final specifications being placed on the agenda of the Conservation Commission meeting. A four-week continuation was issued for the project.

Request for Extension of Order of Condition – The Commission received and approved the request for an extension to remove weeds in order to preserve Cushing Pond. The approval was for one more treatment of weeds. However, any additional treatments will require the filing of a new Order of Condition with the Commission.

Orders of Conditions – The Commission signed the Order of Condition for 1 and 15 Technology Place (it had been signed incorrectly at the January 25th meeting)..

Certificates of Compliance – The Commission was unable to issue a Certificate of Compliance for 200 Central Street and 27 Stagecoach Road due to weather conditions. The property is covered by snow and not currently visible.

A brief discussion was held on the impact of the current economy to Hingham's proposed budget. The Conservation Commission's office staffing will be impacted.

Next Meeting February 23, 2009 - 7:00 PM, Hingham Town Hall



League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
Citizen Education Fund

10th Annual Online

Student Essay Contest



For Massachusetts Students in grades 4-12

and Young Adults age 18-24

Contest Deadline is March 6, 2009

*For contest details, essay questions and rules,
check the website*

www.lwvma.org

- US Savings Bonds prizes for grades 4-12 winners
- \$1000 cash prize for 18-24 age winner
- Educational grants for winners' teacher or advisor
- Special Awards Event, Faneuil Hall, Boston, April 5, 2009

Spring House Tour in Concord

Room for Us: Adapting Spaces to Your Needs

Wed., April 15, 2009, 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Learn how to make the most of your living space when you need to expand, downsize, modify or update.

Program begins with continental breakfast at 9:00 a.m. at Trinitarian Congregational Church, 54 Walden St., Concord, MA, followed by an introductory talk at 9:30 a.m. by

Holly Cratsley, AIA, Principal of Nashawtuc Architects, Inc.

Tour homes from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$30 in advance or \$35 at the door. Advance registration strongly encouraged.

Please send check payable to "LWVCC" to **LWVCC House Tour, P.O. Box 34, Concord, MA.**

For information, visit www.lwvcc.com, email House_Tour@lwvcc.com, or call 978-369-3842 or 978-369-7172.

Reusable Shopping Bags



We have 15 reusable shopping bags left that we are selling at \$5 each. If you would like to make a purchase, please contact Julie Strehle at ja.strehle@verizon.net.

Be A Part of Observer Corps!

Our goal is to continue to grow Observer Corps with more participants and coverage of additional boards. All are welcome and urged to view the Observer Corps Training video to find out more about this great service. If you are interested in becoming part of the Observer Corps, please contact Marisa Costello at tmbac@comcast.net.

One of the most valuable services a local League can offer its members, and often the community, is to observe municipal boards and committees. Participation in the Observer Corps is an excellent way for members to learn about local issues and share this information with League members through Bulletin articles and League meetings.

Among the town committees that are of greatest interest usually are the Board of Selectman, School Committee, Planning Board, Advisory Committee and any others based on member interest. Representing the League as a member of the Observer Corps can be a very rewarding and worthwhile experience. Hope you can participate!

LWV of Hingham Membership Form

2009 - 2010

Please mail to:
Marisa Costello
43 Woodlock Road, Hingham, MA 02043

Name _____

2nd Member _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email* _____

* Please provide email address to receive the VOTER Newsletter and other membership announcements

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**

- * Town Meeting Study
- * Report on Town Boards with Observer Corps
- * "Know Your Town" Publication

_____ **Social Event Planning**

- * Plan All-Member meetings, including Annual Meeting