

THE CAPE COD VOTER

VOLUME 51 ISSUE 9

JUNE 2011

CALENDAR

Tuesday, June 7
9:30 am

LWVCCA New/Old Board
Cape Cod Five, Dennis

Tuesday, June 21
10 am

Address Birthday Cards
Nauset High School

Thursday, June 30 is the end of the LWVCCA fiscal year
Time to pay dues for the 2011--2012 Year
See Attached Form for Details

President's Message – June 2011

WHAT A BUSY MONTH THE PAST 30 DAYS HAVE BEEN . . . !!

There are several important things to communicate to you this month:

- Dealing with the LWVUS Clean Air Ads and their repercussions.
- The exciting news of our own Annual Meeting.
- A report of the LWVMA Convention just completed in Sturbridge.
- Our plans for June.

Regarding the “ads,” I hope you were able to read the May 20 “My View” opinion piece written on behalf of the board for the Cape Cod Times. This piece was prompted by the CCTimes editorial and an op ed opinion by state Republican Committeewoman Cynthia Stead. It explained what the Board and I were dealing with, our response to those contacting us and our own negative view of this form of “advocacy” chosen by LWVUS.

Those attending our Annual Meeting at Harbor Point Restaurant on May 14 urged that a resolution concerning the ads be taken to Convention. Its primary emphasis was that the state board not take supportive action on any advertising advocacy in Massachusetts by the national League without consulting with local units. (See the Annual Meeting and the Convention articles which follow.)

On Tuesday, May 17 newly elected vice-president Phyllis Walsh and I attended a Birth-Day party in Sandwich, celebrating the formation of a new unit in that town. Paige Lyons, the chair, and her new members are doing an excellent job of recruitment and developing program for their unit for the coming year. The unit is up to about 12! new members already.

Our Barnstable County Committee has barely paused for a breath for months – they keep on going like the famous “energizer bunny.” County government may not seem like the most exciting topic, but it is truly exciting and very interesting at this present time in history. In fact, it is a time to be seized for its opportunities. Please email Jari Rapaport (jari2@comcast.net) or call Nancy Curley (508-398-2775) if you would like to help. We are the only general citizen organization that closely monitors the County government’s functioning and is working to strengthen/improve it.

The Health Care Committee under Rhondda Tewes’ leadership is also pushing ahead to consider where its emphasis will be in the coming year, including the subject matter for a future public forum.

Our June joint Board meeting will deal with the all-important calendaring for the coming year. (Does anyone have the dates for televised performance of the opera? That info would be helpful. So also, any other dates that would pose conflicts for several of us. Call me or your unit chair with this information.)

Please continue reading for others news. And most of all, have a wonderful and relaxing summer.

Judy

Annual Meeting, May 14, 2011

About 32 members enjoyed a wonderful breakfast at the Harbor Point Restaurant in Cummaquid on May 14. Unbelievably our long lost sun appeared briefly to brighten the landscape shortly before we adjourned.

New board members elected are: Phyllis Walsh (Cotuit) as vice-president, Dorothy Kelly (Harwich) as co-public relations, Joan Craig (Chatham) as legislative director, Karen Mazza (Brewster) as Nauset Unit Chair and Paige Lyons (Sandwich) as Sandwich unit chair. The board looks forward to the contributions these members will make.

At the same time we said good-bye to retiring members Renate Sands (vice-president), Elaine Bono (legislation) and Freddie FitzGerald as Orleans unit chair. Their hard work and dedication over many years has been so appreciated.

The **Program** was approved as presented with the addition of our participation in the LWVUS study of **The Federal Role of Government in Education**. Paige Lyons will coordinate this study. Some of our newer members since 2010 have expressed interest in this area of study so I urge them to contact Paige (paigelyons@comcast.net or 508-420-2835). Another new area of study is **Promoting a Positive Future for CC Youth (ages 16-25)** Karen Mazza (mazzak@comcast.net or 508-896-3539) would welcome your interest and help as she and Renate Sands explore what services are available, what are lacking, and bringing providers and potential clients into connection. Please, please support these new initiatives. You're sure to learn much and (as one of our new members said she wanted to do) help make the world a better place. Thank you!

The **Budget** and **By-Laws** were quickly approved which left sufficient time for discussion on the "ads."

Many opinions were shared regarding **the ads**. It's fair to say no one present approved them. Judy relayed some of the information she had learned through conversations with LWVMA president Marcia Hirshberg, a conversation with a national board member and a conference call with national president Elisabeth MacNamara and several other local League leaders. Because there was great concern that national and state were going into very dangerous waters in advocacy, while claiming to be non-partisan but political, and bringing we opposing and reluctant locals along with them, it was approved we send a resolution to the state convention to speak of our concerns. As drafted the resolution read at convention stated:

Whereas, recent TV ads, sponsored by the LWVUS and with the permission of the LWVMA, highlighting the vote of one particular legislator while ignoring many other similar votes by others, have created great concern among local Leagues in the Commonwealth as well as the public due to the appearance of partisanship, and

Whereas, a great many local Leagues in the Commonwealth had no foreknowledge of these ads and thus were shocked by them and what seems to be an apparent change in policy of the LWVUS and LWVMA with regard to advocacy and the definition of non-partisanship,

Therefore be it resolved that the LWVMA refrain from support of any similar type media advocacy which singles out the position of a particular elected official without consulting with local Leagues about a policy with regard to such ads and information about such ads, and be it further,

Resolved that the LWVMA develop a written policy with regard to its own media advertising and/or support of such advertising by the LWVUS, and be it further

Resolved that both the cause of and the great displeasure of the local Leagues of Massachusetts be conveyed to those attending the LWVUS Council meeting in June, 2011.

Submitted by,
The Annual Meeting of the LWV Cape Cod Area

LWVUS Convention May 20-21, 2011

Eighty-nine members of the LWVMA from the state board and local Leagues attended the May 20-21 State Convention meeting in Sturbridge. Phyllis Walsh, Betsy Bray, Jari Rapaport, Karen Mazza, Florence Seldin and Judy Thomas were attendees from the LWVCCA.

The theme of the convention was “Women Making a Difference.” Banquet and luncheon speakers, Joanna Weiss (opinion writer for the *Boston Globe*) and Lisa Wong (mayor of Fitchburg) highlighted the theme with both humorous and serious stories from their experiences..

Eva Valentine of the Haverhill League was elected the new state president in a contested election. The remainder of the slate was elected unopposed. Of note is that Joan Boyer of our neighboring Falmouth League was elected treasurer.

The LWVCCA was proud that Betsy Bray, our membership director, co-led a workshop on membership and leadership.

The Statement of Strategy (Strategic Plan) of the LWVMA was presented and approved. The plan was the result of more than a year of study. This important document includes five goals, listed below in order of priority.

1- Change the funding model and expand revenue sources, while limiting expenditures. (The LWVMA has encountered financial difficulties due to decreasing membership, loss of investment revenues and very high rent through a ten year lease, contracted when the economy was significantly better.)

2- Create strong connections between the LWVMA and local Leagues through communications and leadership development. (Lack of regular communication from state was an identified problem as well as inadequate leadership development and training.) A new Presidents Council/Network of local presidents will be part of this plan. Presidents will have up to two members who will sit on the state board.

3- Focus on voter service activities. (This activity had been included in a program and action priority. The decision to separate the two and place a greater emphasis on voter service for the near future was a consequence of repercussions from the LWVUS Clean Air Act commercials.)

4- Program and Action. (LWVMA advocacy for positions that have been part of the LWVMA program for some time.)

5- Shift LWVMA Board structure and operations to implement strategic priorities.

More information on the plan, as well as other convention activities, will soon be available on the LWVMA website.

A deficit budget was adopted. It is expected that the deficit will be eliminated as a result of the hiring of a development consultant (refer back to #1 above).

RE THE ADS

The major topic of discussion in both casual and formal conversation was the Clean Air Ads of the LWVUS. Judy Davis, national board rep to Massachusetts, listened to many comments and provided much helpful information. (While our former state president Marcia Hirshberg supported the ads, she did not have a voice in determining the running of the ads in MA. This was a national board executive committee decision based on a strategic plan developed with numerous cooperating organizations.) Judy Davis apologized to the convention on behalf of the national board for national's failure to give timely information and useful resources to Massachusetts Leagues prior to the running of the ads. She labeled this failure a "disaster." In her major address, Judy tried to give distinction and definition to "non-partisan but political." Many attendees found parts of this "hair-splitting" that would almost certainly be confusing to the general public as well as the membership. National intends to put some clarifying language of non-partisan but political on its website. Judy also said that though the League is a grassroots organization, decisions about program and action by national regarding national issues are not subject to approval by state Leagues any more than state can dictate to local Leagues about how they will carry out advocacy on local issues.

Since there were several resolutions dealing with the "ads," a committee was formed consisting of the state resolutions co-chairs and submitters of the resolutions to combine thoughts into what became seven resolutions, three of which were adopted. Those adopted are:

1. "Resolved, that before June 2012 the LWVMA will draft a written policy with regard to its own advocacy to be presented to local Leagues for their input and approval before the 2012 Council."
2. Resolved, that the board of the LWVMA urges the LWVUS to disclose the organizations and individuals who fund advocacy ads concurrent with the appearance of those ads.
3. Resolved, that the LWVMA urges the national League Board, prior to conducting media campaigns within states, to provide state and local Leagues in those states with a plan for public relations and media communications including, but not limited to, drafted press releases, letters to the editor and a list of who from the national and state Leagues will be available to respond to the press.

One of the failed resolutions dealt with informing other state Leagues about what had happened in Massachusetts. The convention was informed that comments on the "Leaders List-serve" on the national website indicated that all states were well aware and making various comments, both pro and con, on this recent type of advocacy campaign by national.

What surprised our LWVCCA group was that there was not consensus on the appropriateness of the ads in our state. There were more than a few delegates present that approved LWVUS's attention-getting approach which they felt drew attention to the Clean Air Act and the League as an active organization to be reckoned with. We will await to see and hear what happened at the LWVUS Council meeting this June.

Judy Thomas, president

DAY ON THE HILL

On a very rainy Wednesday, four members from LWVCCA went to "Day on the Hill" on April 13, 2011. The featured speakers were Senators James Eldridge and Stan Rosenberg. We were also able to communicate with Sarah Peake.

Senator James Eldridge spoke about the importance of open government and accountability. He is sponsoring three bills which deal with political spending. The first requires corporations and labor unions paying for political advertisements to disclose their spending even if the advertisements are made by another group or entity. It also requires groups paying for political ads to report on funds they receive. The second bill requires corporations chartered in Massachusetts to include their political spending in their quarterly reports to shareholders. The third bill prohibits lobbyists from soliciting campaign contributions and state contractors from giving contributions to state candidates running for office.

According to Senator Stan Rosenberg, Senate Chairman of the Special Joint Committee on Redistricting, the process of redistricting will be more complicated this time because Massachusetts is losing one of its 10 Congressional seats. He is in favor of the process being done by a legislative committee as opposed to an independent commission because the former is held accountable by the people every two years. If voters are dissatisfied with the results they can show it at the poles. The committee feels that public participation is vital to this process. Thirteen public hearing have been scheduled so far. The one on the Cape will be held at Cape Cod Community College on June 27 at 6 PM.

Sarah Peake was delayed at a meeting so we spoke with her assistant. She said the best way to advocate for a position or legislation is not through a letter, nor by telephone or through mass e-mails but by writing an e-mail with a personal anecdote or message. While we were having lunch at the State House cafeteria, Sarah Peake came by and shared with us that the funding for tourism was not in line for major cuts.

Renate Sands vice president

VOTER SERVICE

After a busy Spring, moderating candidates forums and timing town meetings, we turn our attention to our final activity for this year: addressing birthday cards with enclosed registration forms to be mailed to Nauset High School students during their 18th birthday month. We usually do around 250 cards, and employ a full conference table of volunteers.

We accept all comers, but are particularly eager to include volunteers who live in the Nauset region and may not have had an opportunity to visit the High School and meet the Principal, Tom Conrad. Just let me know you will be part of the team, pack up a pen, and join us in the conference room next to the principal's office on Tuesday, June 21st at 10:00 a.m.

Elizabeth Levy, Chair

COUNTY GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee has been following the appointment of the commission/task force to study and a copy of the draft charge to the study group which is still in formation. We are also recommend changes to the County structure, and have communicated to the Commissioners the League's support for open, transparent meetings and diversity of membership. We have received planning for a public meeting to provide some guidance from experienced professionals on issues related to county functions and structure.

We continue to observe both Commissioner's meetings and those of the Delegate Assembly. The Commissioners are currently reformulating rules for public comment at their meetings in relation to the open meeting laws passed last year. While acknowledging the need for procedures for orderly transaction of public business, several questions have arisen around the ability of the public to address the Commissioners or seek information around items not on the agenda.

The Assembly of Delegates has just approved the 2011/12 proposed budget for the County. It was of interest to note that all of the 4 new members of the Assembly voted no on the motion to pass the budget largely because there were discrepancies around certain projections of income for the coming year.

We need to have additional members to observe these meetings so that there are at least 2 members present. Try it out and see how you like it! Get in touch with Nancy Curley or Jari Rapaport ,co-chairs

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS:

Barbara Blanchard, Chatham, has lived on the Cape for 16 years and was an elementary school teacher and interior designer in Fairfield, CT. Barbara was a past LWV member and wants to be involved here on the Cape.

Sheila Bowen, Harwich, has lived on the Cape for almost 32 years and is now retired. She has worked in many fields, including paralegal and insurance sales. Sheila owned and operated a tour company that created, sold and managed motor coach tours to the Cape and, later, all of New England. She is the Vice Chair of the Harwich Democratic Town Committee and President of The Harwich Neighborhood Alliance and Windwise~Cape Cod. Sheila joined the LWV because she is political and has always admired the group.

Phyllis Helfrich, Forestville (a section of Sandwich), has been retired for 12 years from teaching elementary school in Bucks County, PA. She has an interest in politics. Phyllis now looks forward to participating in the new Sandwich Unit.

Laura Kahkonen, Brewster, is a relative newcomer to the Cape, having retired as Director of the Windsor (CT) Public Library. Laura was a member of her CT League and wants to continue her association with the League through LWVCCA.

Teresa Martin, Eastham, serves as elected official to the Cape Cod Regional Government's legislative body, the Assembly of Delegates. Teresa is the principal at Cape Eyes, a company that works with public and private sector organizations as they adapt to changing environments.

Susan Sundermeyer, Sandwich, is a trained geologist and worked in various jobs including the Department of Environmental Protection in the regulatory area. She was recently elected to the Sandwich School Committee. Susan joined the League to work on getting citizens to come out to vote in local elections.

David Darling, Sandwich, moved to the Cape two years and eight months ago. He is a retired teacher and interested in community and economic development. David joined the League because he believes in its mission.

Claire Gradone, Brewster, has been a Cape resident for 35 years. She works as the Youth Services Librarian and Assistant Director of the Brewster Ladies Library. Claire has been impressed with the LWVCCA's professional level of commitment to community awareness. Claire is interested in community service, and was involved in several debates and forums at the Library.

Richard Utt, Orleans, moved permanently to the Cape last September. He is an architect and joined the League because he is interested in politics and likes the positions the League takes.

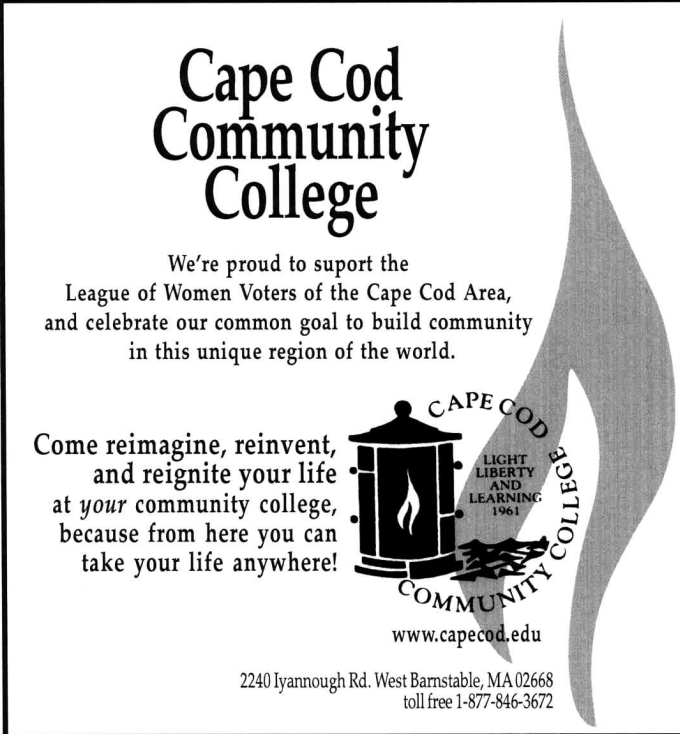
Elizabeth Desaulniers, Sandwich, moved to the Cape from Franklin, MA in 1994 after retiring from 22 years of service as a Director of Volunteer Services for 10 towns in the former Plymouth Bay Girl Scout Council. In Sandwich, she serves on the Conservation Commission (since 2004).

She also served on the Sandwich Charter Commission 1998-2001, and co-founded the Sandwich Newcomers and Neighbors Club,. She wants to help with the new Sandwich unit of LWVCCA.

NEW MEMBER WINE AND CHEESE

On May 1, 19 people attended the New Member Wine and Cheese reception. Thanks to Melt and Joan Bernstein for opening their beautiful home for the event. President Judy Thomas, The Voter co-editor Jari Rapaport, Health Committee Chair Rhondda Tewes, Unit Chair Joan Bernstein and Membership Chair Betsy Bray gave great overviews of League activities. Thanks to all those who attended, including the two new members who joined that day.

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