



League of Women Voters of Albany County

May 2011

Educate

Participate

Advocate

Annual Dinner and Meeting

Wednesday, June 15, 2011

5:30-6:00 PM Cash Bar 6:00-7:00 Annual Meeting 7:00-8:30 Dinner
Wolferts Roost Country Club

120 Van Rensselaer Boulevard, Albany, NY

Come greet your friends, hear a discussion of our past year's activities, vote on the slate of officers and budget for next year, celebrate our members who have been Leaguers for 50 years, learn of the plans for the coming year at the state and local level, and best of all - learn of ways to participate in different activities both big and small.

Please fill in the tear-off and mail to:

Lois Griffin at PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159 by no later than June 6, 2011.

Name(s): _____ Email: _____

Name(s): _____ Email: _____

Choose from the following three dinner entrees:

Chicken Piccata with madeira lemon butter	\$26.50	_____
Baked Haddock	\$29.50	_____
Eggplant Roulade	\$25.00	_____

All dinners include a fresh fruit plate, a salad of field greens with tomatoes, onions and cucumbers, fresh vegetables, rolls, coffee or tea and Chocolate Mousse for dessert.

Please include a check made out to LWVAC reflecting your dinner choice. Gratuity is already included.

Please consider carpooling to this event.

____ I will drive others to the annual dinner.

____ I will need a ride to the annual dinner.

League of Women Voters of Albany County

Website: www.lwvalbany.org Email: lwwac@lwvalbany.org

Mary Berry, President

Monica Sharp (475-9736) and Margaret Danes (438-7218), Membership Co-Chairs

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the President

Spring is a time of renewal! As I write this the bulbs I planted last Fall are in bloom – a beautiful sight and one I take great delight in as they are the first bulbs I ever planted. The change in seasons invigorates us as we spend more time outdoors, enjoying activities that we had “put away for the winter.”

Our League is also experiencing a time of renewal - many challenges face us in the coming year. I hope that you all will join us by renewing your membership and join in our activities. We have an opportunity to embrace new ways of fulfilling our League’s purpose to “promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and to act on selected governmental issues.” (LWVAC Bylaws, Art. II).

This will be our last bulletin printed on paper and mailed to each of our members. Starting this Fall, our bulletins will be emailed to each of you and will be found on our website. If you do not have an email address and wish to continue to receive the bulletin by hard copy, please let me know and you will receive it by mail. This change will save money, time and trees! Please support our league in this endeavor.

In this bulletin you are being presented with proposals to make amendments to our bylaws; one necessitated by a change at the national level and one we hope will streamline our Board making it more efficient, effective and flexible to meet the changes in our membership. Please read them and come to our annual dinner for discussion and voting. Also in this bulletin is the proposed slate for our Board for the coming year which will also require your vote at the annual dinner.

Ours is a volunteer organization, all that we accomplish is due to you taking part in our League’s activities – whether it is attending a monthly program or timing a candidate’s debate. We need you. Please come to our annual dinner on June 15 at Wolferts Roost in Albany and learn of the activities we have accomplished and those we are planning for the coming year, some new, some to be reintroduced. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Yours in League,

Mary Berry, President

Announcements

We are pleased to extend our congratulations to Courtney Burke, a long time league member and former president of the Albany County League on her confirmation as Commissioner of the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities. Governor Cuomo announced her unanimous confirmation by the NYS Senate on April 11, 2011. OPWDD provides services, support and advocacy to approximately 126,000 individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Courtney most recently was the director of the Rockefeller Institute’s New York State Health Policy Research Center.

A BIG thank you to all those who donated items to our league to be included in the Silent Auction at the LWVNYS Convention. See all the items and bid - there's something for everyone (find Silent Auction on League website at www.lwvny.org). Please consider supporting their businesses in the future:

Photographer Nancy Noble Gardner for her flower print “Iphigenia” (thank you Judi Campbell)

Photographer Saul Aronson for his “Empire Series” prints (thank you Mary Berry)

Artist L. F. Tantillo for a print of “The Trading House” (thank you Loretta Simon)

Herbal Bliss Soaps for bars of handcrafted pure all natural soap (thank you Monica Sharp)

Ben Rauch woodworker/sculptor for a handcrafted wooden bowl (thank you Monica Sharp)

Larry’s Southwestern Sauces by Larry Sombke for a jar of Chipotle Sauce (thank you Monica Sharp)

Earthstone Candles by Blake Kush for a “Oil Candle for Life” (thank you Monica Sharp)

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan citizen organization that promotes the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

This newsletter is published by the League of Women Voters of Albany County, PO Box 611, Slingerlands, New York 12159 and mailed to League members. The frequency of publication is as follows: one mid-summer issue followed by nine monthly issues from September to May.

Environmental Protection Fund Open Space Institute's Alliance for New York State Parks

April 11, 2011 Program
by Nancy Heinzen

On April 11, the League of Women Voters and Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy jointly hosted an evening program about the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and current efforts to support New York State Parks.

The history of EPF was informative. According to guest speaker, Jessica Ottney Mahar, Director of State Government Relations for the Nature Conservancy, the primary source of funding for the EPF is a real estate transfer tax, which since 1993 has generated close to \$2.4 billion.

Although, a "dedicated" fund, EPF funds can be raided to cover short falls elsewhere in the New York State budget. This began in 2001, which for previously approved projects resulted in delayed reimbursements, and various administrative headaches. Now the Nature Conservancy and several other organizations, lobby annually to protect the EPF from future raids.

Locally, approximately \$38,850,000 has been invested in Albany County, supporting such initiatives as the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, Historic Barn Preservation, Historic Preservation, Municipal Parks, Household Hazardous Waste Disposal, Hudson River grants, Open Space Protection, Urban/Community Forestry, Municipal Recycling, Invasive Species Removal, and Water Quality Improvement Programs.

Despite significant cuts elsewhere in the NYS budget, thanks to the support of key legislators, EPF funding for FY11-12 matched FY10-11. Recognizing that continued support of the EPF depends on voter interest, Ms. Mahar urged League members to thank their legislators for protecting the EPF this year, and to keep an eye on the fund for next year.

Carol Ash, former Commissioner of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and now an advisor to the Open Space Institute's Alliance for New York State Parks, discussed her own experience managing OPRHP. Intimately involved with identifying and prioritizing maintenance needs throughout the park system, during the budgetary crises of 2008, she was keenly familiar with the likely consequences of immediate and long term budget cutbacks. Unsure of how citizens would respond, Ms Ash was impressed with the strong citizen support for keeping the parks open and vowed, into the future, to avoid similar cutbacks again.

The Alliance is currently researching how to fund park capital needs, perhaps proposing to the legislature a 1 or 3 cent plastic bag fee, an approach which has worked well elsewhere in the country.

We Need Your Help

Want to do something to help our League? Here is a list of a few things that you might do. Most do not require a meeting – just doing!! Some will take a couple hours once or more if you choose. You decide.

- Sit at a table and check people in for the December luncheon or the Annual Dinner.
- Be a timer at events that need them.
- Staff an information table at a Farmer's Market, Community Day, etc.
- Write an article for the Bulletin
- Register Voters
- Become a Board Member
- Call a list to encourage people to attend events
- Stuff envelopes, prepare mailings
- Be a poll reporter
- Invite a friend to join you at a League event
- Join our Observer Corp and provide a League presence by attending local governmental meetings
- Distribute handouts at program meetings
- Help set up and take down chairs when needed
- Chair or serve on a committee
- Greet people and get them to sign in at League events
- Offer to drive others to League programs
- Respond to LWV calls for action
- Represent our League on the Board of Fair Campaign Practice

We celebrate all our volunteers who serve our communities and help further the purposes of the League in so many ways. What are you willing to do? Call Mary Berry at 439-5679 or email at maryb424@aol.com.

League of Women Voters of Albany County

Proposed slate of board members for 2011-2012

Name	Term	Title	Name	Term	Title
Mary Berry	2010-2012	President	Jan Messina	2011-2013	Director
Marian Schwager	2011-2013	Vice President	Lois Griffin	2011-2013	Director
Paula Philo	2010-2012	Secretary	Mary Ann Lettau	2011-2013	Director
Margaret Sawyer	2010-2012	Treasurer	Judi Campbell	2011-2013	Director
Monica Sharp	2010-2012	Director	Loretta Simon	2011-2013	Director
Margaret Danes	2010-2012	Director	Julie Elson	2011-2013	Director
Arleen Stein	2010-2012	Director	Tina Raggio	2011-2013	Director

By-laws Amendments

Proposed amendments to the By-laws of League of Women Voters of Albany County to be voted on at the general meeting June 15, 2011. To accomplish these changes, the following amendments are proposed: items underlined are to be removed, [in brackets] to be added.

I. The first three articles of the League by-laws set forth the League name, purpose and policy and define membership. Per LWVUS policy, the first three articles of all local and state league by-laws must be consistent with those of the LWVUS in order to define and maintain the unity of the organization and the powers and the privileges of members. At the 2010 National Convention the membership category was amended. Specifically, the amendment strikes the word "honorary" from Article III, Section 2 (A) of the LWVUS By-laws.

In order to mirror the LWVUS, the same change is proposed to the LWVAC By-laws *Article III-Membership: Section 2 (a) (3)* those who have been members of the League for fifty years or more shall be honorary life members excused from the payment of dues.

II. In the interests of streamlining our Board to make our League more efficient and effective with a more modern, flexible governance system a change is proposed to reorganize the make-up of the Officers of the Board. It is proposed to eliminate the offices of Second and Third Vice President, leaving President, Vice President, Recording Secretary and Treasurer in addition to up to ten Directors.

Article V – Officers: Section 1. Enumeration and Election of Officers.

The officers of the League of Women Voters of Albany County shall be a President, a First Vice President (Program), a Second Vice President (Administration), a Third Vice President (Action), a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, and [up to] ten Directors. Officers shall be elected for terms of two years by the general membership at an Annual Meeting and shall take office immediately. The President, First Vice President, Recording Secretary and [up to] five Directors shall be elected in even numbered years. The Second Vice President, the Third Vice President, the Treasurer and [up to] five Directors shall be elected in odd numbered years.

Section 3. The Vice Presidents.

The three Vice Presidents, in order of rank, shall in the event of absence, resignation, disability or death of the President, possess all the powers and perform all the duties of that office, until such time as the Board of Directors shall elect one of its members to fill the vacancies. The Vice Presidents shall perform such other duties as the President and Board may designate.

III In order to bring our By-laws into accord with our changing demographics, it is proposed to change the definition of quorum for a general meeting as follows:

Article VIII-Meetings: Section 3. Quorum

Twenty-five (25) [Ten percent (10%)] of the voting members of the organization shall constitute a quorum for a general meeting.



Public Access TV Comes to City of Albany

After almost 10 years of advocacy for a public access station for Albany residents, a contract with Time-Warner Cable and participating entities for PEG (public, education, government) has been signed! The League of Women Voters of Albany County has been one of the major players in bringing this to fruition and it has been a local league program item, adopted each year at our Annual Meeting. Along with the Council of Albany Neighborhood Associations (original members of a Coalition), achieving the goal of a public access capacity has also been supported by a number of other organizations and several elected officials.

The City of Albany entered into a franchise agreement with Time-Warner Cable to provide access channels designated for non-commercial public, educational and governmental use (“PEG”) and funding for equipment for PEG access programming. In addition, the City has also entered into Memorandums of Agreement with various stakeholders for purposes of implementing PEG access. These entities are: the Albany School District, College of St. Rose, New School of Radio and Television, Capitalize Albany Corporation and Albany Public Library.

The “P”(public) part of PEG will be located in the main Albany Public Library in a studio, which will be directed by a part time (20 hrs. weekly) staff person, known as the Public Access Coordinator. The Library, while offering space, receives no compensation for the use of its facilities. The Library board has been fully supportive of public access.

The “E”(educational) part of PEG will be a collaboration between the Albany School District and the College of St. Rose Communications Center and will offer in-house training at Albany High School and at the new state of the art Communications Center on the campus. St. Rose will also offer the mandatory training to the public at stated times so that beginners can learn how to operate cameras and the techniques of creating programs and videos.

The “G”(government) component will be handled by the New School of Radio and Television, located at the Harriman Campus. They will be responsible for filming all government meetings, etc. which will then be offered on the “G” access channel.

A PEG Oversight Board has been established by the common Council to oversee implementation of PEG access, the cable television public access facility/studio in Albany at APL, and to promote public awareness of public access in the City.

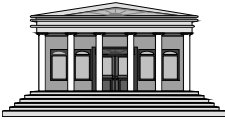
The Board will be made up of eleven appointed members as follows: (4) by the Common Council, (2) by the Mayor, and (1 representative each) from Albany School District, College of St. Rose, New School of Radio and Television, Capitalize Albany Corporation, and Albany Public Library. One of the Mayoral appointees will serve as Chair for one year. Thereafter the Board will select its Chairman. Terms are staggered. Members serve without compensation. Specific duties assigned to the Board are: 1) assisting in the development of public, education and government access television in the City by promoting the use of the public studio to citizens and groups throughout the City, and 2) overseeing the cable television public access facility/studio and assisting the Access Coordinator who will be responsible for the day to day operation of the studio, 3) reviewing the memorandums of agreement between the City and the stakeholders, 4) making recommendations at the end of Phase 1 implementation for the next Phase II funding. A call for applications by the Common Council requested applicants to apply by April 13.

The advocates had recommended that a broader Oversight Board mandate should include the three components of PEG, however, the Common Council did not agree with that assessment of need.

A critical component of the PEG, the public piece, will need concentrated effort by the Board to create a studio, set policies and establish schedules for usage. An Access Coordinator has been hired.

The Citizen’s Committee for Public Access will remain involved and monitor the implementation – we are excited about the prospect of real public access for Albany after a ten-year long campaign!

Aimee Allaud, Marggie Skinner, Stephen Winters



Follow-Up to Our Local Consolidation Study

Loretta Simon

Last year we participated in the State League's Local Consolidation Study. After noticing an article in the newspaper stating the Village of Lake George had decided against consolidation, I contacted the Village to find out the reasons behind the decision. Mayor Robert Blais graciously invited me to call him, and we talked about consolidation and the situation in Lake George. Mayor Blais has been in office 40 years and served on the original committee for Local Government Efficiency. The issue of consolidation has been raised before in Lake George. This latest study, conducted with a \$49,000 State grant, was the third one in 22 years.

Mayor Blais reiterated what we learned in our study, that consolidation of municipalities or municipal services is a good move when it is found to be practical, based on each community's unique local circumstances. The local picture in Lake George is as follows:

1. The Village of Lake George owns the majority of the infrastructure, \$22 million dollars in assets, including the water treatment plant, the sewage treatment plant, a fire department, and two public beaches. It provides water, sewer, and fire protection services to the Town for a fee. Police protection is provided by the Sheriff's Office. The Town has \$2 million in water and sewer service assets. Both municipalities have a highway department.
2. If the Village were to dissolve, tax rates within the village would fall by 14%, while rates outside the village would increase by 32-35%.
3. The village is the population center. The town is rural with little demand for services.
4. The Village has debt associated with its extensive infrastructure, while the Town has no debt.
5. The Village is a tourism center with a valuable tax base. Tourism brings in \$1.2M in revenue from parking meters, occupancy tax, and rentals of real property. The Village sponsors tourism-related activities, such as weekly fireworks shows and hires over 25 summer employees.
6. During the study the Town experienced financial problems and lost its bond rating. The Village has a bond rating of A.

In negotiations with the Town, the Village wanted to secure an agreement that the Town would continue to support tourism events like the fireworks and use the \$1.2M of tourism revenue to pay off the Village's existing debt. The Village also wanted to ensure that some Village employees with significant tenure and experience running the municipality and its infrastructure be retained. The Town would not agree to any of the above stipulations. There also appears to be little incentive for Town tax payers to take over the functions of the Village, especially in light of the expected tax increase.

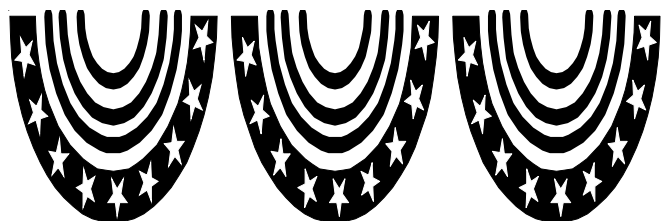
Three public hearings were held during the study period, but were poorly attended. At the last hearing, those who came expressed strong feelings that consolidation not be put up for a vote. Although the Village Board would have preferred to put the issue to rest once and for all, the Board voted not to present the issue to the voters for a formal vote. The Village and Town are now talking about possibly consolidating their highway departments.

Mayor Blais and I postulated that perhaps making the Village and Town co-terminus might be an alternative. He said that Harrison and Scarsdale had done so and it is worth thinking about. Based on past history, the topic may indeed come up again.

New Member

Alice Brody - Albany

Welcome!



Fair Campaign Practices for the Capital Region

Fair Campaign Practices for the Capital Region, Inc. (FCP) was founded in 1999 by the League of Women Voters of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties and the Interfaith Alliance of New York State, Capital Region. Eleven years ago, FCP developed a Fair Campaign Pledge and established procedures to accept candidates' charges of unfair campaign practices within the Capital District. FCP was based on a similar organization that was established in Westchester County in New York State.

Each year declared candidates are invited to sign a pledge to abide by a code of conduct during their campaigns. If a candidate is alleged not to have abided by the principles, he/she can be charged by his opponent with violating one or more of the principles. Only candidates can file a complaint asking for a hearing. A determination by the FCPC of the merit of the charges is then made, and if it is felt that there is merit to the charges, a hearing is convened with representatives of the two sponsoring organizations constituting a hearing panel and both sides have opportunity to present their claims.

A pool of 32 respected individuals from the four county region is selected to hear complaints. These community representatives serve on Hearing Panels that determine the validity of complaints. In order to ensure a balanced, fair process for all sides, the local chairs of all the recognized political parties, or their designees, automatically become ex officio members of the FCP Hearing Panel and attend hearings. For the 2011 election season, complaints will be confined to the General Election (post primary election) period.

After a hearing is held and a decision is made by the hearing panel, the decision is made known to the candidates involved and to the media so that the media can inform the voting public.

How can you participate? Checking out the FCPC website, www.faircampaignpractices.info, will give you more information about the structure, Principles, Pledge and the procedures. Serving on a panel (usually there is one hearing a week, if needed, during the pre-election season) after taking a 2 hr. training in the spring or fall is all that is required. We have made it a practice to make up the panels with experienced and novice panelists so you would not be alone.

Based on the concept of a jury by one's peers, this is a short term contribution you can make to achieving better quality campaigns for the Capital District. The Committee's history of complaints and findings is searchable on the website. The recent history records the following number of hearings 2010(2), 2009(6), 2008(7), 2007(11). In local election years (2011, 2009, 2007) we have found that there are usually a greater number of complaints.

In mid-summer a hearing schedule is prepared by the Committee coordinators on a weekly basis with representation from both the League and the Interfaith Alliance and members of the community who have taken the training. If there are no complaints during a given period, no hearing will be held.

As a founding member of the Committee, I encourage old and new League members to consider becoming a part of the process. I have been a board member, panelist, and Coordinator and it's a very rewarding experience!

Please contact me for additional information, Aimee Allaud, 482-2617, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com

Membership 2011-2012 - Join & Make a Difference

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address, City, Zip: _____

Email: _____

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership \$50/year | <input type="checkbox"/> Contribution in support of my local League |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household Membership \$75/year | <input type="checkbox"/> Please send me more information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Membership \$15/year | |

Mail to: League of Women Voters of Albany County PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159

For financial aid information, contact Monica Sharp, 475-9736

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALBANY COUNTY
PO Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159

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“Remember - democracy is not a spectator sport!”

League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
Tues, May 3, 7pm	Board Meeting	St. Stephen's Church, Delmar	
Wed, May 11, 6:30 pm	School Bd Candidate's Forum	Cohoes Middle School Library	
Fri, May 13, 6:30pm	School Bd Candidate's Forum	Bethlehem Middle School	
May 20-22	LWVNYS Biennial Convention	Desmond Hotel, Albany	see www.lwvny.org
Tues, June 7, 7pm	Board Meeting	St. Stephen's Church, Delmar	
Wed, June 8, 5:30pm	Voter Registration	Parsons Child and Family Center Festival	
Wed, June 15, 5:50 pm	LWVAC Annual Dinner	Wolferts Roost, Albany	see page 1