

MakingDemocracyWork

LWV BOSTON

Notes from the President

August 30, 2011

Thank you for the opportunity to lead the LWV's Boston organization. I cannot do it without you, your ideas and commitment. We need you to keep this league in business!

Our priorities are: [Voter Registration /Outreach](#); [Participation in Government](#); [Candidate Forums](#); and [Encouraging Women to Run for Office](#). We are currently working with MassVote to get new voters registered. We are also working with a coalition of organizations, under the leadership of Terry Yoffie, state LWV's, to recruit women to run for office.

My personal goal is to increase and diversify our membership and improve communications through electronic media. Our redesigned web site, www.lwvboston.org, will go live in September. We have a lot to do this year and look forward to your involvement. Let me hear from you! Contact me at jhzw@mac.com or 617.983.5614. Thank you for your support. [Jude Hutchinson, President](#)

Candidates Forum - Boston City Council

September 22, 2011 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Location tba.

[Co-sponsored by MassVote, the LWVBoston and several local organizations.](#)

Election: Preliminary - 9/27; Final - 11/8

District 2 Candidates:	Bill Linehan	Suzanne Lee	Bob Ferrara	
Ward 3 South End/Chinatown	Pcs 7, 8	Ward 6 South Boston		Pcs. 1- 9
Ward 4 South End	Pcs 1- 3	Ward 7 South Boston/Dorchester		Pcs. 1- 9
Ward 5 South End/Bay Village	Pc 1	Ward 8 South End/Roxbury		Pcs. 1, 2
Ward 9 South End	Pc 1			
	VOTE	VOTE	VOTE	VOTE

LWVB's first time voter brochures available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese & Haitian Creole. Contact Anne Schmalz 617.298.0555 for delivery.

LWVB Board of Directors – 2011-2012

www.lwvboston.org board@lwvboston.org

President: Jude Hutchinson, Jamaica Plain

Vice President: - vacant

Treasurer: Judith Wright, South End

Secretary: vacant

President seeking members to be project managers in electronic communications, social networking, and membership work.

Directors

Kerry Costello, Jamaica Plain

Ila Cooper, West /Roxbury

Amy Gitlin, Roslindale

Clare Hayes, South End

Jeffrey Herman, West Roxbury

Janice Kenneally, West Roxbury

Anne Schmalz, Dorchester

Mary Tamer, West Roxbury

Carlotta Williams, Mattapan

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OUTREACH: 2010 - 2011

Jude Hutchinson

October – Ballot Questions

Martha Roney hosted our popular biennial information forum on ballot questions and the November election. Various Board members assumed responsibility for presenting the pros and cons on each question, followed by lively discussion among attendees.

February – Recycling Talk and Swap

Boston's Recycling Coordinator, Susan Cascino, showcased the single stream recycling program now used in most city neighborhoods. She pointed out the advantages and cost savings of this system. The presentation elicited a great deal of interest, questions and audience participation, including a bag of "what do I do with this?" items brought by veteran recycler and meeting chair Anne Schmalz.

The Recycling Swap was a great success; almost everything that attendees brought found new homes. On a cold winter night, about 35 people attended and enjoyed hot cocoa, sweets and literature on recycling. We would like to repeat this in other neighborhoods. How about yours?

March – Run, Women, Run

Our cooperative Forum at UMass Boston, "Encouraging Women to Run for Office" drew an audience of nearly 70 from both the Boston and State Leagues, UMass Boston students and faculty, legislators and some political newcomers. Dr. Carol Hardy-Fanta, Director of The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, and Reyes Coll-Tellechia, Department of Hispanic Studies, were key to the success of this event. Panelists included State Senator Katherine Clark, Representative Gloria Fox and Cambridge City Councilor Denise Simmons. We will do this again! Thank you to Gloria Carrigg and Jude for taking photo's.

June – Annual Meeting

Journalist Margery Eagan was our special guest speaker. Ms. Eagan is a long time columnist with the Boston Herald and a talk radio co-host with Jim Braude on FM96.9 WTKK. Her discussion centered around the media's role in today's political landscape. Annual Meeting business followed with election of officers. Thank you to CC Williams for her great work in coordinating this event!

VOTER SERVICE/CITIZEN EDUCATION REPORT

Clare Hayes, Chair

Offices up for election in November 2010 included all State Constitutional Officers, all members of the Massachusetts Legislature and Governor's Council, Suffolk County Sheriff and District Attorney, and members of the U.S. House of Representatives. There were few surprises, but results did reflect a larger than usual turnover of seats among the Boston delegation in the Legislature. In addition there were two separate special elections to fill vacancies on the City Council. Specific information on newly elected officials is contained in the *2011 Guide to Elected Officials*.

Also on the ballot were three referenda questions: (1) repeal of "40B," the affordable housing law and (2) reduction of the state sales tax to 3% failed to pass, but (3) voters did succeed in repealing the sales tax on alcoholic beverages.

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There are several initiatives underway in Massachusetts to reform the voting process, many of which are available to voters in other states. These include Early Voting, online Voter Registration, Pre-Registration for 16 and 17 year olds (so they are ready to vote as soon as they turn 18), Post-Election Voting Machine Audits, Permanent Voter Registration (if you change your address with the Registry of Motor Vehicles or the Post Office, your voter registration would be updated automatically) and Election Day Registration (postponed by the Election Laws Committee for hearing next November). Over Secretary Galvin's objections, the Legislature passed a bill for bilingual ballots that the Governor signed.

At the national level, the LWVUS is fighting legislative attempts across the country that could result in disenfranchising thousands of citizens by creating unreasonable barriers to voting and registration. Five states passed voter suppression legislation that includes requiring photo ID's to vote and burdensome restrictions on voter registration drives. The League's Public Advocacy for Voter Protection project is fighting these attempts to reduce access to the democratic process.

The 2010 census figures are in. To reflect population shifts and in compliance with strict guidelines, the process of redistricting is underway. The State Legislature is responsible for redrawing district lines for the U.S. House (Massachusetts is slated to lose one Congressional seat) and for the State Senate and House of Reps. The City Council will redraw its own district lines. The Boston League is actively advocating for the City to redraw precinct lines (a separate process), which have grown more and more lopsided through the years. We are distributing the updated 2011 *Guide to Elected Officials*. You may request copies at our website.

www.lwvb.org

CITY COUNCIL OBSERVER

Anne Schmalz

The Boston City Council (BCC) wrestled with some thorny issues this year. Council President Michael Ross presided over the Firemen's Contract ratification and the expulsion of Councilor Chuck Turner. In both cases emotions ran high and the fortitude of the councilors and of your observer were tested.

Two new councilors were elected to fill vacated seats. This brings an infusion of energy and enthusiasm to BCC. Councilor Ayanna Pressley is focusing attention on issues confronting women and families in painful circumstances; she continues praising SHEroes, women who are doing good things in Boston.

Councilor Steve Murphy's presidency is relatively calm with lots of humor and competence. There seems to be a general aura of mutual respect and affection among the councilors.

Beneath the surface there is always more going on; e.g., I sense that some councilors are blocking the redrawing of district lines. Budget votes are still ahead.

"Since 2001, I have been the Observer!. This fall, with the election to fill the seat of resigning Councilor Maureen Feeney, I will have been there longer than 10 of the 13 Councilors. At the recent State Convention I described the value of being an Observer. As well as enjoying watching the 'theater' of 13 disparate players, and following various dramatic devices and plots, one has the opportunity for advocacy that comes with gaining the Councilors' trust and sometimes their confidence."

(Anne received our prestigious public service award at the Annual Meeting. ed)

PARK PLAZA CIVIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PPCAC)

Beatrice Nessen

This year, the PPCAC's primary activity was to review the reactivated and restructured Kensington project at the corner of Washington and LaGrange Streets. This project dates back to 2003 and is controversial due to the demolition of the historic Gaiety Theater and half of Washington Street. It needed to meet the BRA's requirement of one acre to be eligible as a Planned Development Area (PDA). The project received BRA approval the site cleared, and still remains vacant after seven years due to financial problems.

Proposed first as a condominium project, it changed to rental with some minor revisions to the exterior architecture, loading and parking from below grade to parking on the first few floors, and relocating a dock to Boylston Place. PPCAC raised concerns about the major change at Boylston Place, formerly owned by the BRA, (sold to Kensington) that runs between the rear of the China Trade Building and the Kensington site.

The original proposal, to turn Boylston Square into an active canopied pedestrian space, involved the opening up of the ground level of the China Trade Building to retail activity. The latter proposal did not materialize. Since Kensington's revised plan places the truck loading dock with an entrance off Washington Street onto Boylston Place, the active pedestrian area is a truck driveway, serving both China Trade and Kensington. The benefit of the revised project is mitigation funding for Liberty Tree Park in front of China Trade on Essex Street and to the Friends of the Public Garden. Kensington developers also committed \$7 million to Hang Lok elderly housing project.

Recently, the CAC was asked to review a newly revised proposal for 65 Stuart Street, the vacant lot adjacent to Jake Wirth's. Originally proposed as an office building, this new proposal is for housing. This planned development will also use LaGrange Street for vehicle circulation; therefore, it needs to be coordinated with the Kensington Project. We raised issues with the developer during our first meeting.

The PPCAC "in business" for more than 30 years, is an advisory group stipulated by the state's approval of the Park Plaza Urban Renewal Plan. During this time, we contributed improvements to many of the proposed projects. Generally, we had a constructive relationship with the BRA and developers. However, over the past year, it is evident that the BRA is trying to undercut the PPCAC's status and relationship with the urban renewal projects. We will continue to work as an advisory committee. We hope Peter Meade's appointment as BRA Director will help us resolve the differences.

Joan Wood will serve as the League's Alternate Representative to the PPCAC.

Prudential Center Project Advisory Committee (PruPAC)

Clare Hayes

The Prudential Center Project Advisory Committee met once during the past year, although sub-committees (Design, Transportation/Mitigation, Community Benefits) meet more frequently. Construction on the Avalon Exeter Residences is scheduled to begin sometime this summer. An 18-month to 2-year construction period is estimated. Community benefits will be due when permits are issued. The PruPAC Benefits sub-committee and the BRA are currently working on an RFP for the application and selection process for non-profits.

EDUCATION REPORT

C.C. Williams

The Boston Public School Committee (BPSC) and Superintendent Carol Johnson had a full plate for the 2010-2011 school year. Balancing the budget with a projected \$63 million shortfall was no easy task. The superintendent had to eliminate 250 positions, as well as use one time stimulus fund and funds provided by the city. The BPSC also had a painful decision to close, merge and expand schools. In the end, 18 schools were affected. The plan touched about every community in the city and projected savings were about \$10.6 million. Dr. Johnson had the additional task of addressing how the budget's operating costs are affected by the 5600 empty seats citywide.

In March 2011, the BPSC passed the Boston Public School budget. For the first time in BSC history, the district's schools are being allocated funds under a formula known as weighted student funding, ensuring equitable funding for all 56,000 students. This plan allows the resources to follow the children's needs. It addresses English Language Learners, Special Education, Limited English Proficiency as well as Vocational Training. It also considers student issues such as poverty.

Dr. Johnson continues to work on her initiatives such as her 5-year Boston Public School Acceleration Agenda and the Redesign and Reinvestment effort. In June 2010, BPS held a day of dialogue with meetings at 17 locations throughout the city to listen to parents, teachers, community activist and others. She asked for feedback on what makes a good, strong, quality school.

The top areas of concerns are:

- Increased math
- Increased sciences
- Improved homework assignments
- Safety
- Discipline
- Quality teachers/evaluations

Dr. Johnson is currently working on addressing these issues. She rearranged staff to effectively reach more students; installed leadership teams to address academic issues and concerns; installed more certified ESOP teachers in schools with the greatest need; and formed community partnerships such as adopt a school to increase student help. She continues to honor her mission that every child is educated and receives the resources to make it happen.

The BPSC extended her contract to 2015. The proposed budget totals \$829,533,000, a 1% increase (\$ 8.1 million) from the current fiscal year appropriation from the City of Boston.

Edited by jude Hutchinson, 8.28.11. Please note that some of the Committee reports were created in June for our annual meeting. So, some of the information is out-of date!