
THE CAPE COD VOTER

VOLUME 51 ISSUE 7

MARCH 2011

CALENDAR

Tuesday, March 1
9:30 am

LWVCCA Board Meeting
Cape Cod 5, Dennis

Wednesday, March 9
4:30 to 7 pm

Membership Task Force
Betsy Bray's home,
15 Periwinkle Way, Harwich

Friday, March 11
11 am, Light Lunch

Environment Committee
Erica Parra's home
60 Payson Lane, Orleans

Tuesday, March 22
1 pm

County Observation Corps
To Be Announced

Friday, March 25
7:30 to 9:30 am

Legislative Breakfast
Ardeo's, Yarmouth

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Leaguers,

My attention was grabbed by a recent Op-Ed piece in the *Cape Cod Times*. It was written by Bob Herbert, syndicated columnist for the *New York Times*, and given the title: “When Democracy Weakens.” Herbert writes inspired by two realities: what has happened in Egypt and what he clearly sees as happening in our own country. As for Egypt, he quotes our own Senator John Kerry (from another *NYT* Op-Ed article the end of January) saying “the Egyptian people ‘have made clear they will settle for nothing less than greater democracy and more economic opportunities.’ [while, says Herbert] Americans are being asked to swallow exactly the opposite.”

Herbert is referring to how the [voting booth] “levers of real power have been all but completely commandeered by the financial and corporate elite” of our country. . . . “The wealthy call the tune and the politicians dance.”

Herbert attributes this in part to the “mad rush to privatization over the past few decades” and the more recent Supreme Court Citizens United decision. He laments the demise of any real power among the poor amidst their ever growing needs occasioned by the downsizing of the economy and the financial plights of all levels of government which have diminished jobs and services.

Herbert closes his article with a comment from a conversation with the late Howard Zinn: “If there is going to be change, real change [in this country], it will have to work its way from the bottom up, from the people themselves.” And Herbert thinks of the people in the square in Cairo, and now, we might add, in numerous other middle-eastern countries.

Currently, I’m also fascinated by what we are seeing in Wisconsin. As League members whose greatest concern is a healthy democracy, I’m convinced we have much to think about, to talk about and to be concerned about. What do you think? Has our democracy been weakened? If so, can it be strengthened? By what means? Surely some are better than others. Are there actions our Cape Area League should take as we consider program for the 2011-2012 year? That the LWVMA should consider? As voted at the 2010 LWVUS convention, it will be conducting a study on privatization. At the least, it seems to me that we should be prepared to engage in that study when it comes to us.

We will be making our programming decisions at our Annual Meeting **now scheduled for May 14 in the morning as a brunch meeting**. This is a change from what is printed in your handbook. (Once again, we had a time conflict with the Metropolitan Opera telecast.) LWVMA will do its program planning at Convention, May 20-21. Please, let us hear your opinions and League voice.

In League,
Judy Thomas

BOARD NOTES

Annual Meeting: scheduled for May 14. Details to be announced. [Change from lunch meeting to earlier breakfast]

County Government Forum: The forum was well attended. Commendations extended to Mary Lou Petit for handling the marketing and invitations and to Teresa Martin for facilitating the panel discussion. County Commissioners Bill Doherty, Sheila Lyons, and Mary Pat Flynn attended the forum and were very impressed. League units will follow up and invite members of the Delegate Assembly to February Unit meetings.

Additional Forums: The Board voted to discuss possible cooperation with the Cape & Islands Unitarian Universalist Church's Social Justice Committee on water related programs on April 16, 2011.

Membership Committee: A meeting is scheduled on March 9, 4:30 – 7pm. Betsy Bray conducted two focus groups for LWVMA in Natick attended by 47 persons and did a fantastic job.

Health Care Committee: The committee will continue to keep up with national events and maintain contact with the state committee. The resource brochure for low income persons is being updated and will be available very soon.

County Government Committee: There is no movement on the Charter Review and it still remains an area of concern.

Legislation Committee: The Legislative Breakfast has been rescheduled from March 18 to March 25 at Ardeo's Restaurant in Yarmouth, starting at 7:30am. The legislative directory is being updated.

Jane Teixeira-Henry

DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO SEE YOUR STATE LEGISLATORS IN ACTION!

Due to Legislators' calendar conflicts, the date of our annual Legislative Breakfast has been changed to March 25, 2011.

See the new coupon for reservations in this issue of the Voter. If you have already replied, your reservation is held. If you must cancel, call Elaine Bono. It's a good way to introduce friends to the League- all are welcome.

Our legislators value these opportunities to talk with constituents; your presence strengthens the League's voice! See you on the 25th!

MEMBERSHIP . . .

Here is your opportunity to help and be involved with the League of Women Voters!

Betsy Bray, Membership Chair, will have a Membership Task Force meeting on Wednesday, March 9 at her home, 5 Periwinkle Way, Harwich from 4:30- 7p.m. The original January meeting was postponed due to snow.

All are invited to attend. The Task Force will be planning for the Membership Tea to be held in May, and the Women in Democracy Breakfast that is tentatively scheduled for fall, 2011. The group will also be brainstorming for member recruitment ideas. Bring all your ideas to contribute to the mix!

It is called a “task force” since there will be one or two meetings at the most. It is a great way to be involved with minimum effort and besides, wine, soft drinks and pizza will be served! Please let Betsy know you are coming by emailing; braybetsy@gmail.com or calling her at 508-432-4824. If you need a ride, let Betsy know.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The Environment Committee will meet at Erica Parra’s house, 60 Payson Lane, East Orleans, on Friday March 11, at 11 o’clock. After the meeting, we will have a light lunch. Soup and dessert will be provided. Guests are welcome. We especially invite our newer members to meet with us to explore possible new initiatives and learn about our current issues. Please let Erica know if you are coming – 508-255 -3116, or fparra@comcast.net.

We will discuss the committee’s future plans. This spring, in many towns, important environment decisions are being made- or being put off: land-based wind power, waste water. What should the League’s role be? Please come prepared to comment on your town’s progress, or lack of progress. Is there anything more we can do to support Cape wind? Should we become involved in the NSTAR right of way debate? We need your input.

Erica Parra

COUNTY OBSERVATION CORPS

You are invited to join the LWVCCA **Observation Corps**. Public access and transparency in government is of major concern and. we will continue to work for public awareness of county functions as well as regional opportunities. Now that your appetite has been stirred by our County forum and the follow-up it is important that we learn more and not let the ball drop. There are now considerable expectations for League action!

A meeting of the Corps will be held on March 22 at 1pm. The location will be announced. We principally observe the Wednesday meetings of the Board of County Commissioners and the Delegate Assembly. Schedules are arranged to meet individual time choices.

Please let me know of your interest in the Corps. If you would like to visit one of the meetings before the 22nd, that would be great. Please call me at 508-255-2476.

Jari Rapaport

BARNSTABLE COUNTY GOVERNMENT:

Lose it? Change it? Improve it?

Here is a report on the event.

The well attended forum on Barnstable County Government held on January 29, 2011 at the Harwich Community Center had standing room only. Teresa Martin, Eastham Delegate, Barnstable Assembly of Delegates did an outstanding job as moderator. The change in the format allowed her to ask questions of the panel which she did in a fast paced, knowledgeable way. The panel consisted of

- Paul Niedzwiecki, Executive Director, Cape Cod Commission
- Senator Robert O’Leary, Former State Senator and Barnstable County Commissioner
- Wendy Northcross, Chief Executive Officer, Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce
- Julia Taylor, Falmouth Delegate, Barnstable Assembly of Delegates
- William Doherty, Chairman, Barnstable County Board of Commissioners

Julia Taylor explained how she served on the county charter commission. That effort brought forth the Barnstable County Government as we know it today. It consists of the Barnstable County Commissioners (the executive branch) and the Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates (the legislative branch). The latter has population-based weighted votes. Both the legislative and executive branch are elected. The Cape Cod Commission has appointed members from each town with both planning and regulating powers.

County Commissioner Bill Doherty explained that the services provided by the county cost only 6 cents per day. Some of the services are: Cape Cod Compact which deals with energy efficiency, Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, 4-H, the Dept of Health and Environment which checks beaches for safety, Grant support for each town, AmeriCorps program, Cape Cod Economic Council, Dept of Human Services, Children’s Cove and county dredging. He reiterated that the county government is efficient but it is limited by the budget.

A general complaint voiced by several of the panelists that the County moves too slowly was countered by comments that the county feels restricted by the attitudes of the towns. The selectmen of the 15 towns of Cape Cod often put barriers in the way of regionalization and are loath to give up any power. This either slows or is an impediment to progress and often is not cost effective. Besides the towns, the state and federal government can also cause impediments by imposing laws and regulations which are not always funded.

Regionalization is a theme that was repeated several times. Paul Niedzwiecki stated we have future challenges to face. If we do not have a regional approach to wastewater, 15 towns will have 15 solutions increasing the cost unnecessarily. Wendy Northcross echoed this theme. She stressed that we have a fiscal crisis and we need to work together. It is not possible for towns to solve their own problems (ex. housing, transportations and water collaboration) unless we explore cost effective methods. Robert O’Leary pointed out that having a regional government helps in dealing with the state and federal government when applying for major projects, such as infrastructure.

Elliot Carr, speaking on behalf of the Business Round Table, said the pace of regionalization is too slow. He proposes a special committee to evaluate the County Government with quick results, perhaps as short as three months. His suggestions for co-chairs of this committee were former state senators Henri Rauschenbusch and Rob O'Leary, which brought applause from the audience.

In response to the question about the office for a regional co-coordinator, Robert O'Leary responded with a positive 'no.' The whole purpose of the county government is to be a regional body, it does not need a separate co-coordinator to take over that function. What we need, according to Rob, is people to serve in government who have political leadership and vision, people willing to take risks and push something forward.

The name change of Barnstable County to Cape Cod County was greeted with enthusiasm by both the panelists and the audience. According to LWVCCA members, name changes have been proposed before but this is the first time it was greeted with such enthusiasm.

On a negative note – the PA system failed half way through the forum. We feel it is imperative we obtain our own stand alone PA system.

County Government Committee

FOLLOW-UP UNIT MEETINGS

Each Unit has reported on their meeting with members of the Assembly of Delegates representing their area and their reports are presented here. This is a starting point for continuing to clarify the complexities of County government and refine our understanding. There is of course much redundancy, but also apparent are some differences in interpretation.

UPPER/MID CAPE UNIT

Four members of the Assembly of Delegates and eight members of the mid and upper Cape league gathered at the Media Center in Yarmouth on Tuesday, February 15. The purpose was to share information and points of view on one of the hottest topics on Cape Cod - County Government - specifically the Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates.

Assembly Representatives:

- Spyro Mitrokostas, Yarmouth, new delegate to the Assembly - 11.16% of weighted vote
- Marcia King, Mashpee - 11 years on the Assembly - 5.83%
- John Ohman, Dennis - 14 years on the Assembly - 7.19%
- Tom Lynch, Barnstable - 10 years on the Assembly - 21.52%

Mary LeClair, a league member from Mashpee, provided perspective and answered questions as a former County Commissioner. She also enhanced this Voter article based on her County Government background and experience and County documents such as The Barnstable County Year 2010 Budget.

Assembly of Delegates Background: This is the legislative branch of county government. "As the County's law-making body, the Assembly's work takes the form of ordinances and resolutions which may be initiated by Delegates, Assembly committees, the Board of County Commissioners, or by an initiative petition. The Assembly of Delegates appropriates the County's annual operating and capital budgets and supplemental requests. At the direction of the Speaker and the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, each Standing Committee of the Assembly participates in the review of the County budget. The Standing Committees meet with department managers and discuss the effectiveness of each program being operated within Barnstable County and also examine future needs for regional services within the County.

Because it is difficult to forecast the number and/or complexities of legislative initiatives that the Assembly of Delegates will be required to deal with, it is impossible to predict what the volume of output or priorities will be in any given year. The Assembly of Delegates budget was prepared to provide the present level of service. The budget is designed to assure that the functions of the Assembly of Delegates are carried out and that the public is well served. "

Public Outreach and Transparency - The delegates run for office every two years. Each of the delegates communicated with their towns and constituencies in a different way - some more formally and others more informally depending on the issue, the size of the town, their time in office, etc... Channel 17 televises assembly sessions.

One delegate asked if the delegates should challenge themselves by asking if what they do is relevant and what issues should they tackle?

County Commissioners - They are the executive branch of county government."The Executive powers of the County shall be vested solely in the Board of County Commissioners and may be exercised either directly by such Board or through the several County agencies under its direction and supervision. "

There was some discussion about the pros and cons of hiring a county administrator. ..."The Chief Administrative Officer for the County shall be the County Administrator, who shall be appointed by a majority vote of the County Commissioners to serve for an indefinite term. The County Administrator shall have, possess and may exercise all the powers, rights and duties commonly associated with the office of chief administrator of a local government."... Currently, Mark Zielinski is serving as both County Administrator and Treasurer.

Weighted Voting - All of the delegates supported weighted voting and felt it did not impede their ability to think regionally. The smallest town can still influence the outcome of a vote through the power of persuasion. To date weighted voting has not been a stumbling block to acting regionally.

Revenue - The County budget is \$24.5M. The revenue comes from tax revenues, intergovernmental funding, grant contracts and department revenues. The revenue from the towns is derived from a state formula based on assessed real estate value. The town assessments can increase by no more than 2-1/2% of the previous year's assessment. If the County needed to raise more revenue from the towns, they'd have to win an override in each town which would be nearly impossible to achieve. If the county wanted to raise more money, they'd have to raise fees.

During the real estate boom the county had a surplus so they increased services and sent some of the surplus money to the towns. Because the County cannot have a rainy day fund, the County had to disburse the money annually. The state doesn't allow a rainy day fund and the delegates felt would be unpopular with the state legislature. This could be a possible question for the legislative breakfast.

There was talk of the benefits of enterprise accounts (revolving accounts) for some services so they could exist on their own. The County Dredge is an example of an enterprise account. It was built from a grant and not county funds. The income derived from the Dredge goes into that account and any expenses for running the dredge or its upkeep comes from that account. The funds in this account cannot be used for any other county functions.

Regionalization - Reduces the load for individual towns by equalizing the cost of the service or program. Some examples of current regional services and major initiatives are Cape Light Compact, Cape Cod Water Protection Collaborative and the septic betterment program.

Although Barnstable County has a Fire and Rescue Academy on the Cape, *some town* fire departments send their fire personnel off Cape for training vs. using the Cape training facility. This trip is **an expense to the particular town** and a perk for the fire personnel vs. using *the* existing Cape facility. *This perk is written in their contract.*

County 911 - About half of the towns on the Cape have bought into this regional approach. However, some fire departments are not happy with a county 911, especially Barnstable, where there are five fire departments who know their villages and, thus, feel they have a better response time. They'd need to have an opt-in with incentive to join a regional 911. The cost to purchase a school closings call system for Barnstable would be \$60K.

If towns really wanted to regionalize, the candidates for regionalization would be police, fire, schools and DPW which are 85% of the towns' budgets. All agreed that the pressure for regionalization moving forward will be economic. In addition to financing, the challenge facing regionalization is identifying and delivering services that are both needed and wanted, developing a support system for regional government and services and creating public awareness.

The Cape Cod Commission: This is the regional planning and land use agency for Barnstable County. ..."The Commission was granted authority to prepare and oversee the implementation of a regional land use policy plan, to recommend for designation specific areas of Cape Cod as districts of critical planning concern, and to review and regulate developments of regional impact.".....The Cape Cod Commission has District Local Assistance (DLTA) money from the state of MA to coordinate regional solid waste solutions.

One of the delegates recommended that the League define what we think should be regionalized and make recommendations to the appropriate government entities on the Cape. As a follow up, Judy Thomas, LWVCCA President, thought our League could think of questions regarding regionalization to take to individual town selectmen's meetings during the public discussion time to increase public awareness.

Other Regional County Programs and Services - Extension services such as the Lyme Disease Study and Prevention Program - Barnstable County has more knowledge on Lyme disease than any other county in the country. Children's Cove (Cape and Islands child advocacy program - the first in the state), the License Plate Program, Grant Writing and Administration

Services, AmeriCorps Cape Cod. Tours would help provide insight into the county and its programs.

Some Other Issues Facing Regional Government - Wastewater, Human Services, Affordable Housing, Transportation and Homelessness.

County Government Name Change - Many people are not aware that Cape Cod and Barnstable County are synonymous. We discussed at both the unit meeting and the County Government Forum that the County needed a name change to avoid confusion with the Town of Barnstable and to reflect the county's regional role. Mary LeClair mentioned the name Cape Cod County as a possibility. A name change would require an act of the state legislature. This might be a possible question for the legislative breakfast.

Open Cape - One benefit among many could be attracting more young people coming to the Cape. The county is woefully behind technologically.

Charter Review Committee- One delegate indicated that a role the League could play would be to look at the structure of county government and make recommendations for structural change through the charter review process.

Partisan vs. Non Partisan Elections for Delegates - There was disagreement among the delegates about whether elections should be partisan. One delegate felt that partisanship promoted more debate. The others were in favor of competitive races and debate but not partisan races. Their view was that elections should be over issues and not distracted by party politics.

Phyllis Walsh

NAUSET UNIT MEETING

On February 16, the Nauset Unit hosted a follow-up to the January 29 Forum: "Barnstable County Government: Lose it? Change it? Improve it?" The follow-up meeting featured a panel of Assemblymen of the Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates: Tony Scalese (Brewster), Chris Kanaga (Orleans), and Theresa Martin (Eastham).

The Assemblymen addressed a wide range of topics based on questions from League members, beginning with "who do you work for?" While each town elects, and pays, an Assemblyman, the Assembly serves Barnstable County, addressing regional issues that affect multiple towns (such as wastewater treatment) or taking actions that might provide economies of scale (such as centralizing 911). There is significant tension between the local wish to remain antonymous and the (potential) efficiencies of regional approaches. Several League members expressed the point that the role of the Assembly should be to identify reasonable regional solutions and move them forward over provincial resistance in small towns. Despite this tension, some project-driven regional programs, such as emergency planning, are moving forward.

One barrier to regional solutions, mentioned repeatedly, is the lack of understanding about what the Assembly does and how they work. Little PR is done; no technology infrastructure exists for online collaboration and communication; and meetings are often under-reported in local newspapers. There is also confusion about what is "Cape Cod" (a state of mind) and what is

"Barnstable County" (a political entity). In addition, in New England, towns have home rule. Regional, county government is not the norm.

The issue of "weighted voting" was discussed. Each delegate's vote is weighted by the percentage of his or her town's population to total Cape population. Thus, Orleans' vote is just under 3% and Barnstable's vote is over 21%. Some consider this unfair but so far no acceptable alternative has been proposed.

Assembly Facts: Assemblymen are elected every two years. There are 15 delegates, one from each Cape town, who meet bi-monthly. Six standing committees address regional concerns and review county budget expenditures presented by the County Commissioners and hold hearings on any ordinances. Towns contribute to the County budget through a County tax on assessed real estate valuations. In the past, the Assembly has grappled with whether to return "extra" funds back to the towns (which they did) or retain the funds for new programs or rainy-day funds (which some now wish they did). The Assembly is also a regulatory body: the Cape Cod Commission is required to get Assembly approval for the ordinances submitted to carry out Commission decisions.

The Assembly has a web page within the Barnstable County site:

<http://www.barnstablecounty.org/assembly-of-delegates>

Mary Utt

CHATHAM/HARWICH MEETING

Our representatives to the Assembly of Delegates, Ron Bergstrom (Chatham) and Leo Cakounes (Harwich) spoke on a variety of issues generated by members' questions. Although elected by their towns, they saw their role as being accountable to the county at large rather than to individual towns alone. Mr. Cakounes noted, however, that at times this involved a difficult balancing act and hard decision making -- as in a recent case involving the Cape Cod Commission's designation of "an area of critical concern" against the opinion of local constituents of that area. In response to questions about other controversial issues -- most notably, the siting of wind turbines and NStar's planned spraying of pesticides along their rights of way -- the complexities involved in the work of the County and the reporting of that work also became apparent. (note- The Assembly of Delegates must approve all ordinances, including those promulgated by the Cape Cod Commission)

In the case of turbines, it was noted that both the state and local governments have interest and authority over various aspects. The Cape Cod Commission, therefore, has been working to formulate guidelines that could help influence decision-making by the parties with authority to make them. With respect to NStar's proposed renewal of spraying, Mr. Cakounes explained how local boards had turned to the Commission for help in evaluating this proposal, which led to the formation of the Ad Hoc committee of which he was a member. Their purpose was to determine whether there was clear evidence of environmental harm from NStar's proposed actions. After months of meetings with scientists and representatives of knowledgeable and concerned parties, the Committee concluded, by majority vote, there was not such evidence although they suggested that the committee's study be further extended to include pesticide use in both residential and commercial venues on the Cape. Although the Committee's finding was not a

recommendation in favor of NStar's spraying, it was reported as such in the newspapers -- leading to a flurry of letter writing and other negative responses.

Mr. Cakounes' report of this incident as well as other aspects of our discussion seemed to speak to the need for improved communication, sometimes of a quite detailed, specific kind, between County actions and activities and the general public. Mr. Cakounes mentioned his commentaries on TV 18 and both men noted their reports to their selectmen. Everyone agreed, however, that additional possibilities should be explored.

Other matters of discussion included an explanation of county finances –their sources and disposition – and our Delegates’ feeling that the review of the County Charter should be extended into this year. It was an excellent meeting and we were pleased to welcome a potential new member.

Kathleen Vogt, Nancy Erskine

IN MEMORIUM

We send sympathy and love to Elaine Bono, our Legislative Chair on the loss of her mother Mary Handsaker, in February, after a full and long life.

CALENDAR CANCELLATION

MARCH 12 – FORUM ON THE OPEN CAPE HAS BEEN CANCELLED

ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY MAY 14

HARBOR POINT RESTAURANT

BREAKFAST 9:30

\$15.00

LWVCCA ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST
Friday, March 25, 2011, 7:30-9:30 am
Ardeo at Kings Way, Rt. 6A, Yarmouth Port

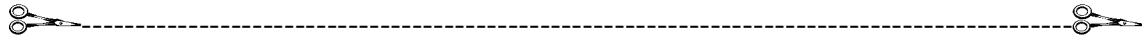
This is a special annual opportunity to meet and hear our state legislators speak on timely issues of importance to League members. Spouses and guests welcome! Don't miss it!

Coffee will be available starting at 7:30 am. Buffet breakfast will be served at 8 and includes freshly baked muffins, danish, fruit, scrambled eggs, bacon & sausage, home fries, waffles, coffee, herbal teas, and assorted juices. Cost is \$20.

Directions to Ardeo at Kings Way (via Rt. 6):

Take Rt. 6 to exit 8 (Union St. /Station Ave.). Go north on Union St. about a mile until road comes to a T (gas station in front of you). Go right onto 6A, following 6A for about a mile, passing two pizza restaurants on the right and a small plaza and Manchester Rd. on the left. Kings Way is on your left (small white sign. (If you reach Peterson's/ Rite Aid plaza or the Dennis town line, you've gone too far.) Go past the guard house and the tennis courts on your left. Take the next left into the parking lot of Ardeo.

Fill out and send in the coupon below, along with your check. **Reservations must be received by March 18. No refunds after March 18.** Any questions? Call Elaine Bono, 508-375-9421.



REGISTRATION FORM
LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST
FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 2011, 7:30 AM

Please note the location—Ardeo at Kings Way, Rt. 6A, Yarmouth Port. Cost is \$20 per person and includes a full buffet breakfast, tax, and gratuity. Make your check payable to LWVCCA and send to:

Elaine Bono, 19 Pine Grove, Yarmouth Port, MA 02675

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