

THE CAPE COD VOTER

VOLUME 53 ISSUE 5

JANUARY 2013

CALENDAR

Tuesday, January 8
9:30 am

General Meeting/Board Meeting
Cape Cod 5 Dennis

Thursday, January 10
1:30 pm

Environment Committee
Cape Cod 5 Dennis

Monday, January 14
1:00 pm

Supporting Youth Committee
Karen Mazza Home in Dennis

Tuesday, January 15
1:30 pm

County Government Committee
Cape Cod 5 Dennis

Many Thanks to the Cape Cod 5 Bank for Hosting our Meetings

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

**Start the year with joining us at the General Meeting on January 8
and adding your voice to our planning decisions**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members:

The beginning of the New Year always brings the usual set of personal resolutions for more exercise, healthier eating and more time with friends and family. As an organization of concerned citizens our New Year together brings the opportunity for renewed energy and commitment to engage citizens in education and advocacy around civic issues of great importance for our collective future. Here are a few of the ways that we will be working together.

On **Tuesday, January 8 at 9:30 AM** we will have a special meeting of the Board at which we are inviting the membership to join us to discuss your input into the selection of program priorities for both the LWVMA and our League chapter here on the Cape. If you would like to participate, please review the LWVMA Program Planning Guide that has been posted on our website at www.members.lwvcapecod.org. Page 5 of that guide lists the suggestions from the LWVMA Planning Committee and we will be reacting to those ideas as well as ideas of our own. The Appendix in this document lists current LWVMA and LWVUS positions on a wide range of issues. If you would like to join us please send me an e-mail at (www.lwvccapres2012@gmail.com) so that I can plan appropriately for bagels and coffee. You can stay for just this section of our Board Meeting or see how we conduct our business and stay for the whole meeting. We meet at the upstairs conference room of the Cape Cod Five Bank in Dennis on Route 134. From Route 6 take exit 9A and we are a very short distance on the right. **If you are not able to attend, but would like to offer your input I would be happy to receive suggestions via e-mail.**

Our committees will be renewing their work and several committee meetings have been scheduled for January. If you have wondered what our committees do and would like to attend a committee of your interest please send an e-mail to the committee facilitator to let them know and join us for an upcoming meeting. In January the Youth Support Committee, Environment Committee and County Committee will be meeting. Please see the Calendar for dates, times, locations and facilitators. Other programs presently on the drawing board will be announced as details are completed.

As a gentle reminder, if you have not already responded to the November letter requesting **donations to the League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area to support our work, or to The Helen S. Aaron Educational Trust for the LWVCCA**, please consider a donation at this time. Donations can be mailed to our Treasurer, Debbie Aikman and her address is listed in the member handbook.

As we watch the presidential inauguration later this month, we know that there are many important issues facing our nation and our Cape Cod community. Impasse in Washington reminds us of our ongoing commitment to effective democratic government. The importance of fair and accessible elections, gun control, environmental protection, health care, and the future of our youth are only some of our pressing issues. As President Obama has said, "We have more work to do."

Sincerely, Karen Mazza

BOARD NOTES - DECEMBER 4, 2012

- Dues to the **Chatham Alliance** raised some questions. Karen Mazza will ask Nancy Erskine to make a report on the organizations.
- Phyllis Walsh contacted people who have agreed to be **liaisons from** the various towns and received a very positive response from them about contacting other League members.
- Karen Mazza led a lengthy discussion of the **LWVMA State Program Planning Guide 2013 – 2015**. Further discussion will ensue at the general meeting.
- The **GENERAL MEETING** will be held January 8, 2013 at 9:30 to discuss the LWVMA State Program Planning Guide 2013 – 2015. The board meeting will follow the general meeting and members attending will be invited to stay.
- The **PROGRAM COMMITTEE** is planning a forum on money and politics for March or April.
- The **MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE** is looking for a new venue located in the Barnstable area for a membership event. Please contact Betsy Bray if you have any ideas.
- Harriet Klebanoff has extra copies of **DVDs from** the healthcare, environmental and wastewaters **forums**. Please contact her if you would like to borrow a copy.
- Betsy Bray will set up a date for a meeting with Karen Mazza, Kathy Cockcroft of Brewster Ladies Library and the school liaison to talk about a **possible joint project for youth** to coincide with the appearance of Doris Kearns Goodwin in October 2013.

HOLIDAY BRUNCH

Our Holiday brunch was a big success. Again the Riverway was a lovely setting as we greeted each other and enjoyed the morning. Our speaker, member Jan Hively, who has moved recently to the cape, told us of the many skills she gained in volunteering. Through these experiences she built an impressive career, serving many voluntary, elected, and paid positions. Karen passed the microphone and many league members relayed all the very valuable work they are doing as well as being dedicated and active members of our league. We salute our members and value their contributions to our community and treasure what they bring to us! If others are looking for volunteer opportunities we are listing here the contact information for Cape Cod Volunteers, which is an organization that will match individuals with organizations that are seeking volunteer help: www.CapeCodVolunteers.org/

COUNTY COMMITTEE REPORT

It's been a busy month, with lots happening. The responses to our committee's activities have been gratifying; our observer role and comments do help make a difference. We made several presentations to county government and we are now following the charges of violation of open meeting requirements filed against the County Commissioners when they voted to veto an ordinance passed by the Assembly of Delegates apparently after the meeting ended. That ordinance requires the creation of a position of Finance Director separate from the position of County Administrator and actually carries out recommendations of the Special Commission on Governance and the MMA on structure report paid for by the County. Our presentations are included in this issue.

The League received press attention on the statements and two articles from the Barnstable Patriot are also included in this edition of the Voter. Please read them because they explain in more detail the issues involved and our role. The Cape Cod Times also made mention of the League's actions in an article published on Dec. 21.

The responses of both the Commissioners and the Assembly to our statements were positive. And now that the election is over, the Commissioners, as promised, have begun the process of strategic planning and have contracted a facilitator to assist in the process, beginning in January. That plan will also include action on the Commission on Governance recommendations. We also note that they are seeking a vendor for developing a new county website for which we have advocated. Another important if small step has been to include in the Commissioners' weekly agendas the actual subjects formerly just labeled routine actions.

As always, we invite all interested League members to join our committee. Perhaps members might just like to come along to observe the Assembly or County Commissioners in action without actually joining the committee. The Commissioners meet every Wednesday, the time varies each week. The Assembly meets at 4pm the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Just call or email me. (jari2@comcast.net)
Jari Rapaport Co-Chair

SUPPORTING YOUTH COMMITTEE

This committee has been participating in the strategic planning effort sponsored by the Cape Cod Foundation to create a network for collaboration among social agencies, schools, government, civic groups, the business community and philanthropic organizations around goals that would support the success of youth. The strategic plan is now being presented to constituent groups to invite fine tuning and a commitment for participation. Our League committee is focusing on the goals that fall within the mission of the League as our way of contributing to this collaborative effort. Our January committee meeting is scheduled for **Monday, January 14 from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM** at Karen Mazza's home in Dennis. At this time we will focus on the objective to support schools in civic education and identify services that we can offer schools to support their efforts. This list of services will be presented to Cape Cod School Superintendents. If you are not presently on the committee but would like to consider joining please call Karen Mazza at 508-694-6843.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WASTEWATER PROGRESS- A LWVCCA PRIORITY

Environment Committee member Paula Bacon (Dennis) was able to attend the December 12, 2012 conference “Using a Regional Approach to Solve Cape Cod’s Wastewater Challenge” held at the South Yarmouth Cultural Center. Paula reported the room was filled, an important sign of interest. Cape Cod Commission executive director, Paul Niedzwiecki, began by describing some of what the Barnstable County Regional Wastewater Plan, to be released by the end of December (after our Voter deadline), will incorporate. There will be a great deal of data, but the plan does not presuppose or overlay a specific regional solution. Rather, the plan presents information that the individual towns can use to develop their own plans. *Regional* aspects of the plan will be “regulatory and policy in nature” and NOT a regulatory “authority.” The plan will emphasize savings – up to \$1 billion Cape-wide -- that towns can achieve by sharing resources and mutual cooperation with one another verses “going it alone.”

An MIT student joined multiple Commission staff in developing a tool, the “multi-variant planner,” which provides watershed-level evaluations of options and costs. The plan already is so highly regarded that other parts of the country are interested in it.

The committee hopes with the completion of final reports, to be released electronically only, and the release of the MVP, the time will be ripe for the League to strongly encourage towns to move forward with planning. To consider just how the League can help expedite meaningful progress, the committee will meet on January 10th at 1:30pm at the Dennis Cape Cod 5 bank.. Also to be discussed will be the possibility of collaboration with other groups and organizations with a wastewater solution priority. Ed DeWitt of the Association to Preserve Cape Cod says 27 such organizations exist.

Although there are many important environmental issues in which our committee could be involved, the committee is ***focusing solely on the wastewater issue for the current time.***

Judy Thomas and Renate Sands, co-chairs

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE CAPE COD AREA

December 12, 2012

Presentation to the Board of County Commissioners

I am Jari Rapaport, co-chair of the LWVCCA County Government Committee. We wish to bring to you the following issues.

- 1- We were appalled to learn that the ordinance passed by the Assembly recently to require the appointment of a County Finance Director in addition to the Administrator's position was rejected by the Commissioners without public discussion, and was not even noted as an agenda item for the November 14th meeting. Further the letter of rejection was signed by commissioners after the adjournment of the meeting and included signatures of a commissioner not present at the meeting.

We ask that procedures be developed and made public immediately to assure full compliance with the Open Meeting Law. The League of Women Voters believes that real transparency in the conduct of public business is essential to our democracy and to ensuring public understanding and trust of elected officials.

- 2- There is continuing concern about the practice of not listing items presented for commissioner's signatures. We understand the reason for not including the many routine administrative requests for individual payment of expenses, vacation days, etc., but there are occasionally items of interest regarding official county functions which are included, and we ask that such a listing be available along with the agenda at each meeting.
- 3- The need for an improved pathway for communication between the Board of Commissioners and the Assembly of Delegates is apparent. The division of responsibilities is rather sharp, yet it requires that both bodies actively work for exchange of information on an ongoing basis. With regard to the Commissioners' role, we have observed frequent statements that offer a kind of partnership with the Assembly on some issues, but we have not been aware of actual steps taken to offer such a platform. We suggest that representatives of the Assembly be invited specifically to discuss with the Commissioners, or a designated representative, the ways in which communication can be improved. This issue also brings to the fore what we and others have considered the limitations of our current County structure.

While we have focused on current problems that need swift attention, we want to assure you of our respect for the conscientious and hard work of both the Board of Commissioners and the members of the Assembly of Delegates. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you on these issues.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE CAPE COD AREA

STATEMENT PRESENTED TO THE ASEMBLY OF DELEGATES

December 19, 2012

Good afternoon. I am Jari Rapaport, co-chair of the LWVCCS Committee on County Government. I have distributed to you copies of the League's statement to the Board of Commissioners on November 29th in regard to several outstanding issues. You may have seen references to it in the press recently and we wanted you to have copies of the full statement for clarity.

Of particular interest today is our call for better communication between the Commissioners and the Assembly of Delegates. The League has great respect for the members of the Assembly and for the Commissioners as individuals with real dedication to their respective roles and effective government. Recently there has been a serious breakdown in clear and timely communication.

Today, we have a suggestion to help restore the needed working relationship. We urge that there be a joint committee composed of representatives from the Commissioners and the Assembly designated to discuss current avenues for communication, sources of the breakdown and then, most importantly, to develop new processes and pathways to enhance and foster both a good working relationship and mutual respect between our two branches of county government. We realize the Charter delineation of powers does set some parameters, but in the interest of effective government, the League believes that both branches need to take a fresh look and fresh start so that information flows and the concerns and knowledge of all members of our elected officials are shared. There will always be differences in opinions, but the free flow of ideas is essential to our democracy and serves the interest of all our citizens.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to bring forward this suggestion.

{This statement was also presented to the County Commissioners}

Assembly wants it in writing, and maybe its own counsel



Written by Patriot Staff

After receiving a verbal response regarding its inquiry into the disapproval of an ordinance on Nov. 14, the Assembly of Delegates authorized its chair to seek a written response that can be reviewed.

At the Dec. 19 meeting, Speaker Ron Bergstrom indicated that County Administrator Mark Zielinski called Assembly Clerk Janice O'Connell to explain the procedure. Acknowledging that his version was third-hand, Bergstrom said that Zielinski indicated the commissioners routinely approve things after the close of meetings.

The commissioners took that action on Nov. 14 after the conclusion of their regular meeting without including any public notice or discussion during its regular meeting of that day. The *Patriot* filed an Open Meeting Law complaint regarding that meeting on Dec. 12.

Along with the lack of a written response, Assembly members expressed concern over what matters would be approved in such a fashion.

Harwich Delegate Leo Cakounes was among the more vocal members on the subject, saying that if that was the commissioners response, "Then quite frankly, I want to know what else is in that file."

Barnstable Delegate Patrick Princi said that while getting a written response was fine, he'd prefer to have the commissioners regularly meeting with the Assembly and establish a dialogue.

That's in line with suggestions made earlier in the meeting by the League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area. On behalf of the League, member Jari Rapaport of Eastham said that there has been a "breakdown in clear and timely communications" between the Assembly and commissioners. The League suggested that a joint committee composed of both the assembly and the commissioners be established to establish new pathways to better communication.

None of the commissioners attended this week's meeting or the previous Assembly meeting on Dec. 5.

The manner in which that disapproval came about remains a concern for the Assembly, which may still yet take further action. It also raised questions about the Assembly's ability to retain its own legal counsel.



David Still II photo

DISAPPOINTED – Jari Rappaport of Eastham and co-chair of the League of Women Voters county government committee, reads a statement from the League expressing concern about the openness of how the county commissioners reached a recent decision.

Questions continue to be raised about the manner in which a letter of disapproval on a recent ordinance was drafted and unanimously approved by the three members of the Barnstable County Commissioners.

The Nov. 14 letter disapproved an ordinance that would require that the county administrator and finance directors positions be filled by separate individuals. It was approved by all members of the Assembly present and voting Nov. 7. The Assembly overrode the rejection last week, but questioned how the commissioners came to sign and draft the disapproval.

As reported in the *Patriot*, there is no record of any discussion or vote on the letter at the Nov. 14 meeting or prior. The letter was also signed after the Nov. 14 meeting adjourned and included commissioner Sheila Lyons, who was absent during the Nov. 14 meeting.

Reading a statement from the League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area at the Dec. 12 meeting, Jari Rappaport told the commissioners, “We were appalled to learn that the ordinance passed by the Assembly recently to require the appointment of a County Finance Director in addition to the Administrator’s position was rejected by the Commissioners without public discussion and was not even noted as an agenda item for the Nov. 14th meeting.”

Rappaport, who co-chairs the League’s county governance committee, is a regular attendee and observer at Commissioners’ meetings, and attended the Nov. 14 meeting.

The league asked that “procedures be developed and made public immediately to assure full compliance with the Open Meeting Law.”

Other issues raised by the League included the form of the commissioners’ weekly meeting agenda, which does not specifically list items presented for the commissioners’ action and signature, and improving communication between the board and the Assembly of Delegates. While critical, Rappaport offered assurance of the League’s continued “respect for the conscientious and hard work of both the Board of Commissioners and the members of the Assembly of Delegates.”

At the start of this week’s meeting, the *Patriot* presented an Open Meeting Law complaint to Commissioners’ chair Mary Pat Flynn of Falmouth regarding the creation of the disapproval letter signed on Nov. 14.

