

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FRANKLIN COUNTY - MAL UNIT
December 16, 2017 MINUTES

Date: December 16, 2017 **Time:** 3:00 p.m. **Place:** Greenfield Public Library

Board Members in Attendance: Marie Gauthier, Marge Michalski, Joannah Whitney

Guests in Attendance: 1

Members in Attendance: 16 (Marie has sign in sheet for count)

Call to Order:

At 3:08pm, Marie Gauthier opened meeting and welcomed members, and gave brief overview of meeting agenda.

Ellen Berson and Gretchen Krull introduce their ideas for a women's bail fund in Franklin County:

- Inspired by book club discussion of Just Mercy
- GK works with Voices from Inside, a writing group for women who are or have been incarcerated. From them, she learned about the impact that bail had on them. 70% of women have children who the women may lose, along with their jobs and housing, while the women sat in jail awaiting trial. Most are eventually found not guilty.
- Many tasks LWV could undertake re: needs of these women. GK and EB have done much research already.
- EB: Idea of bail fund seemed like an easy thing to do. Met with Bar Advocates, who advised starting a 501c3 nonprofit. A MA bail fund exists in Cambridge but their work takes time to resolve a case which defeats the purpose. There is no one currently serving western part of state. If it starts in Franklin County and succeeds, it could expand to rest of western MA.
- Thought a core group of women could work together, forming groups for 3 months at a time. If a woman is apprehended, a bail representative has to be there to speak up and pledge bail. Since LWVFC published EB and GK's names, several people have approached them with interest.
- Not sure LWVFC is the appropriate group, but if some people agree to work together on this, it might be enough.

QUESTIONS:

- 501c3: Formal org must exist so the Bar Advocates can contact org about a woman in court. Also, donations would be tax deductible.
- Comment: NELCWIT is daily in court and could be a great org to coordinate with
- Marie: LWVFC cannot take this on as an organization, but would support as in important issue re: addressing criminal justice reform. Perhaps our E & J committee would be interested. LWVFC could hold an event where a speaker addresses this. Perhaps hold a Voices from Inside event. Also many Women's Clubs in the county might be interested.

Community Outreach — Christine Turner:

- LWVFC contingent volunteered at Stone Soup on Dec 2. Helped serve, clean up, etc. There was a bounty of volunteers that day, but that's not always the case. Also, can get credit at

Green Field's Market for volunteer work. Would like to bring LWVFC to Stone Soup again. Also, let Marie know of other needs in the community we might serve.

Voter Services Committee — Ruth Odom:

- A busy autumn: We hosted Civics Trivia Night, Candidating Night, Candidates Meet & Greet at Hawks & Reed, a Legislative Coffee in Shelburne Falls. Events were well-attended and some voters were registered. We also marched in Franklin County Fair parade.
- Town meetings are coming up. Will be preparing for these, updating e-book on local town governance.
- LWVMA Video contest for HS students runs Feb 1 - March 31. Theme: GOTV. \$500 prize and ceremony in Boston.
- Continuing with voter registration. Hoping to do workshops with HS students re: voting

Membership Committee — Joannah Whitney:

- Would the video contest be something committee could utilize to reach new members.
- Also of vital importance, how can we reach people of color?
- Letters going out re: membership renewal, via email and snail mail. Reminder: membership includes local, state, and national Leagues.

Other committees:

- **Information/Media Literacy:** could develop their own areas of expertise and visit schools and other libraries. There's a sense that with the level of attention now being paid to "fake news," their efforts might be redundant.
- Possibly committees formed so quickly last spring, members would like to reevaluate their selections. Could hold a "re-sorting" at next open meeting. Committees needn't be permanent, but form and disperse as needs dictate.
- However, teams need leaders. Perhaps they could explore rotating leadership so that no one person has to take on the task.
- If a goal is not concrete, it's harder to assume leadership.
- Perhaps committees could be project-centered and/or more geographically-centered

Other topics:

- **Pat Leuchtman:** Idea for League-sponsored column in *The Recorder*, where we invite different people to write about civics-specific topics. Pat would be willing to coordinate this. Strictly non-partisan, explaining process etc. We would line up an assortment of authors/topics before approaching *The Recorder*.

Marie thanked members for coming and next meeting was scheduled.

Next Meeting: January 20, 2018, 2:30 PM, following the Women's Rally being held at Greenfield Town Common
Location: Greenfield Public Library