



Board Meeting Via Zoom

Saturday, August 26, 2023 @ 10:00 AM (Zoom)

MINUTES

Voting members in attendance: Carole Essy, Jessie Gomez, Ben Graffam, Lynn Paredes-Manfredi, and Eileen Swiler.

Non-Voting members in attendance: Jo Shim and Trudy Rankin.

A Quorum was not established, so no voting could occur. The meeting was called to order at 10:04.

Jo opens with a question about our League signing on to support the Floridians for Dental Access. It may be an added agenda item. The LWV FL has signed onto this issue and there is a push to get local leagues to sign on. We put this in our last newsletter. Jo is hoping to sign on for the PCLWV.

We decide to continue though we cannot vote.

The minutes of the July could not be approved (no quorum).

Treasurer's Report: Terry Laurette was not present, so there was no report.

President's Report: Linda Donaldson was not present, but Jessie Gomez related information Linda had shared with her. Linda informed Debbie Chandler what was happening in our area regarding the shift from non-partisan to partisan elections for county officials. The Legislative Delegation meeting will be held in early October, and all committed chair people have been informed about preparing themselves to deliver a talk at that meeting. Linda has been signed up to speak for our league. Signing up is tricky, because the website takes a long, long time. Our local league is in contact with many groups to discern both interest and action in collective focus on the partisan changes in local elections. Contact has also been made with SUN NEWS to discover pricing for ads that could be purchased as a way to reach out and educate. The League is hoping to find a member to revive the Hot Topics meetings, hopefully to make those face-to-face gatherings. Lynn Paredes suggested the facilities at the General Federation Women's Club, just off Lakeland Highlands.

Standing Committee Reports:

- Returning Citizens Restoration of Rights: Larry Ranking was not present.
- Communications: Ashley Laurette was not present, though it was mentioned that a community mailing list is being developed by Ashley.
- Climate Action: Karen Freedman was not present.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Katy Byrd and Bobbie Boatwright Harris were not present.
- Education: This committee still has no chairperson, though Carole Essy and Nancy Simmons are going to "audit" the state education meetings. There are lots of talking point papers on book-banning, charter school, and partisan school board elections. Some discussion ensued about the PCSB discontinuing proclamations, and that there may be a call to other groups—NAACP and Parents for Public Schools (not their actual name). We should be there to counter Citizens Defending Freedom at the School Board meeting of September 5.

- **Gun Safety:** Trudy Rankin reported that 500 gun locks will be delivered to eight day care centers around Polk County starting Monday. Things are moving forward for this project, with the next focus on Church Day Care Centers. Getting their educational material out is costly and they are planning a Zoom meeting fundraiser soon. Trudy hoped that education materials would be available in Spanish, and it was agreed that the education material the Gun Safety Committee used would be sent to Jessie Gomez who would give it to her daughter, who has done some significant legal translations with other documents. Trudy also felt that a map (on our website?) that showed where certain LWV events occurred—gun locks delivered, voter registration events, etc.—would be a valuable document.
- **Healthcare:** Paula Mims was not present.
- **Reproductive Health and Justice:** Jo Shim and Eileen Swiler reported that amendment petitions continue to be a major push and that several were signed at the Florida Southern Blast Off event on Tuesday night. Three League members are still regularly volunteering as escorts at Lakeland’s Women’s Health Center. Several members were present last Tuesday at the LWHC to donate blankets (it can be cold in the center!) and books.
- **Voter Services:** Jo Shim reported that two significant voter registration events occurred this past week: Florida Southern College and Southeastern University. And one is coming next week in Fort Meade (inside!!). The event at Southeastern may turn into an opportunity to visit a class to discuss voting and continue registration of students. The success of voter services is often based on how many volunteers we can get.
- **Membership:** Linda Donaldson was not present, but a finalized schedule for the showing of “Ruby Bridges” at the Beacon Hill Fellowship has emerged: Sunday, September 24 at 2:00 PM. The event is being promoted at NAACP by Terry Coney. There is also a request from this committee for the League to purchase four-inch, round LWV PC stickers for fundraising. Because there was no quorum, no vote could be taken.

Unfinished Business:

- The Polk County Legislative Delegation Meeting will be held MONDAY, OCTOBER 2nd @ 1:00 p.m. - Polk State College Center for Public Safety, 1251 Jim Keene BLVD. Winter Haven 33880. As was mentioned in the president’s report, committee chairs have been notified to prepare themselves to speak at that meeting.

New Business:

- On September 19, the National Voter Registration Day will be held across Polk County. The Supervisor of Elections offices have made minor changes in the process this year, and our League will assist at the Lakeland Regional Hospital. We will need three to five volunteers, who have already signed up: Ben Graffam, Larry Rankin, Mike Murray, Carole Essy, Linda Donaldson, and Beaty Raymond. Information from Sonya Miller (SOE) will be coming regarding meeting time and specific place at the hospital. Ben Graffam is the league’s contact.
- Linda Donaldson has asked that all local league members take part in a survey that establishes our legislative priorities. Ashley Laurette sent out an initial contact email, and at the time of this meeting 11 members had replied. All replies are to go to Ben Graffam, who will be asking Ashley to resend the email/survey information. The deadline for contacting Ben is September 8. We then send the information to the state offices. There is a listening session on August 30 at noon about all the options.
- We are still awaiting details regarding the Politics in the Park event of October 10. Nichole Martinez is the coordinator of that event, and she reached out to us. A table will cost us \$100.00, and that has us thinking about return value for our input. We do want to be a part of this, but right now there is not enough information/structure for us to move forward.

Just prior to adjournment, Jo Shim mentioned that on September 18, some league members will be staffing a table at Florida Poly-Tech, for Constitution Day. Following that announcement Trudy Rankin offered kudos to all League members—their energy and dedication are inspiring!

It was decided to hold an “emergency” meeting on Monday, August 28, in the hopes of being able to vote on issues that could not be decided at this meeting due to a lack of quorum: The Stickers with LWVPC info; Table space at the candidate forum in October; Signing on to support Floridians for Dental Access.

Today’s meeting was adjourned at 10:56 AM

Addendum:

An “Emergency” meeting was held on Monday, August 28 at 5:00 PM by Zoom. In attendance were Jessie Gomez, Linda Donaldson, Emily Crane, Carole Essy, and Charlene Bennett. Once again there was not a quorum. However, those present discussed and understood that since each committee is allotted \$100.00 in expenditures, the three items could be accounted for within particular committees. Thus, no vote was needed and we moved forward on the Stickers, the Table space, and the support for Floridians for Dental Access.