



Board Meeting Via Zoom

Friday, July 28, 2023 @ 12:00 PM (Zoom)

MINUTES

Voting members in attendance: Charlene Bennett, Emily Crain, Linda Donaldson, Carole Essy, Karen Freedman, Jessie Gomez, Ben Graffam, Bobbie Boatwright Harris, Breezi Hicks, Ashley Laretta, and Eileen Swiler.

Non-Voting members in attendance: Katy Byrd and Trudy Rankin.

A Quorum was confirmed. The meeting was called to order at 12:02.

The minutes of the June meeting were approved.

The Treasurer's Report was delivered by Linda Donaldson, as Terry Laretta could not attend our meeting today.

- We have \$22,725.71 in our checking account.
- Regarding the gift cards remaining from last years Lakeland Solidarity event, we have 58 cards for Walmart (8@\$50.00 and 50@\$10.00) and 14 cards for Wawa (14@\$50.00).

The President's Report:

- Welcome to Lynn Paredes, a new member of the LWV PC Board
- A renewed focus of the National League of Women's Voters is for a National Popular Vote, something that Linda Donaldson learned at a LWV conference which does not require a constitutional amendment, but can work through an Inter-State compact. This will be an issue that we will need to educate ourselves on.
- Sarah Fortney has stepped down as Chair of the Education Committee. Linda Donaldson will be reaching out to members of that committee to find a new chair.
- There will be a change in the LWV fiscal year, moving the beginning of that year from April 1 to July 1. This will affect our local by-laws and the scheduling of our annual membership meeting, something we will discuss in future meetings.

Committee Reports:

- *Returning Citizens Restoration of Rights:* 492 postcards were mailed during the month of July. A Zoom meeting with the LWVFL Reinstatement team occurred where information was gleaned to be shared with Orlando and other affiliates. (Reported via email)
- *Communication Committee:* Ashley Laretta discussed and reviewed many of the improvements and adaptations she has created for our communication systems, but as she will be a part of the Board Development today, she said she'd speak more later.
- *Climate Action Committee:* Karen Freedman reported that there will be an Electric Vehicle Event at Munn Park on September 23. Karen also hopes to hold a Lunch and Learn, though she does not have a date for that just yet.
- *D, E, and I Committee:* Katy Byrd reported that twelve members of the group reviewed a number of suggested books, sharing recommendations via Zoom on Monday, July 24th. The books selected span the most diverse subject matter we've considered to date. Meetings will be held on the first Monday of each month (when possible), and the group always extends a welcome invitation to all board members.

- Education Committee: At present there is no spokesperson for the Education Committee.
- Gun Safety Committee: Trudy Rankin reported that gun locks are still being distributed at an excellent rate, another 125 locks since their last report. The collaboration with the Early Learning Coalition is ongoing, and as soon as more gun locks are received, driver volunteers will disseminate the locks to the Centers in Polk county.
- Healthcare Committee: Paula Mims was not present for our meeting today.
- Reproductive Health and Justice Committee:
- Voter Services Committee: Jo Shim was not present for our meeting today. Linda Donaldson mentioned two upcoming events: A table at Florida Southern College on August 22 for their “Blast Off” for registration of voters and recruitment of members; and a Tour of the SOE on August 14. Regarding the new laws of voter registration, hot spots (iphones) and purchasing a tablet/ipad were discussed.
- Membership Committee: Linda Donaldson reported that one new member, Melinda Maily, was added in July, putting our total membership at 128. There will be an in-person membership meeting in September, though no date has been set. Linda also put the word out that our Christmas meeting needs a home large enough for approximately 50 people. The LWVFL has created a steering committee to build an “under 40” membership. Anyone from our local league who is interested in joining this state project should contact Linda.
- Speaker’s Bureau Committee: Trudy Rankin reported that there have been two received contacts for LWV speakers, though no dates have been set for those particular requests.

Board Development:

- Ashley Lauretta, Communications Chair, outlined what she’s been doing to improve our communications systems, both via email and other social media. Our Newsletter, our social media, and our email have all been updated, and our Website has been tidied up with fonts and colors that match the National LWV guidelines. Ashley keeps track day to day of our facebook and instagram accounts. She reports that about 70% of the emails sent out have been opened, which is “pretty good.” Our email list is set to 600 people, but only 400 are subscribers and get that contact. And so Ashley’s next self-directed task will be to sort through that list and jettison some and include others so that list is more accurate and effective. Trudy Rankin expressed kudos to Ashley for all she has been doing, emphasizing that she, Ashley, is going beyond the call of duty.

Unfinished Business:

- Regarding Lynn Paredes joining our board, Carole Essy moved that we accept her as a new board member; Breezi seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.
- Regarding Gift Card Use, Trudy Rankin requested that five gift cards (Wawa \$50.00 Cards) be made available to her committee to compensate the milage for those drivers. Breezi Hicks moved that the LWVPC distribute 1 Wawa gift card to each of the five drivers. Jessie Gomez seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. Several other potential events are in planning stages, including with Brian Haas, state attorney, and the Campfire Girls/Boys of Lakeland.
- Regarding the Polk Legislative Delegates Meeting, Sue Schultz sought information for the Polk Meeting of the Legislative Delegation, informing them that we would like to attend and make a presentation. She found that the meeting will occur sometime in November or December, though no date has yet been set. They did tell Sue that they would contact us when dates were established. Linda Donaldson will contact the committee chairs to clarify initial ideas about our presence at this meeting. Jessie Gomez and Breezi Hicks will handle the administrative side of the delegation meeting. According to Breezi, historically these meetings post their agendas about two weeks before the meeting, and they allow people three minutes to speak, a time that might be provided to a speaker from each of our committees. More information on this in our August meeting. This will remain a consistent issue on our agenda for the next few meetings.

New Business:

- Regarding the current emphasis being placed on whether the County Commission will keep the non-partisan status for specific county positions, we need to become more aware of upcoming agendas for County Commission meetings. We should also be educating ourselves regarding the importance for non-partisan positions. The LWVFL only makes one stand: that all SoE should be nonpartisan. For us that means that Lori Edwards does her work from a non-partisan position. However, if our county commission makes changes, Lori will face a challenger with name recognition next time around, Melony Bell, who will run as a republican. There also seems to be a motivation for Commissioner Neil Combee in that he is running against Gow Fields for Property Appraiser. So it may be that the commission will work fast to get this changed. It seems by several members' thoughts that our job is very much an educative job for this: clarifying the importance of non-partisan positions, locally and historically; the difference between them and partisan positions; and what No-Party-Affiliation (NPA) or registering as an independent in the midst of this might mean. Perhaps a panel discussion/forum would be a good way to bring this issue to the voters. It was suggested that perhaps an event at The Well with Lori Edwards leading a educational session on the nature of nonpartisan vs partisan might be valuable. It was recommended that Linda Donaldson "take the pulse" of other similar groups regarding their stance on the partisan/nonpartisan constitutional offices so we can know how to move forward. This will remain an issue for us for a few meetings.
 - We will be provided with a tour of the Supervisor of Elections offices on August 14, 2023, after which we will have lunch at Old Man Frank's Diner. Please contact Ashley Laurretta to get on the list of attendees.
 - There will be a Membership Meeting in late September (date not yet set) at the Beacon Hills Fellowship Hall. We will invite the NAACP, and we will show the "Ruby Bridges" movie. Refreshments will be served.
 - As indicated above, Lynn Paredes was elected to our current Board.
 - Regarding Past President Gloria Brooks, whose husband died recently, there is no standard procedure for the league sending out condolences, so individual members should express theirs independently.
 - Trudy Rankin suggested a statement reporting on an event in February of 2020 (Black History Month) that featured Pastor Eddie Lake speaking on "The History and the Present," and Haines City Commissioner Anne Huffman speaking on "The Stolen Girls of Leesburg Stockade" to be placed in our newsletter. She will forward this information to Ashley Laurretta.
 - Karen Freedman updated us on a name change for the Electric Vehicle Outreach. It will now be called Polk clean Energy Alliance. She wondered if our Climate Action group could merge with this new group. There is a minor problem in that the "Environmental Democrats" are involved, which might situate our group in a partisan way. At the same time, there may not be an issue, as we can keep our logo off any documentation and there seems to be no candidate connection to these events. If we remain fully transparent and invite all comers we should be fine.
 - Jessie Gomez updated us on several law suits and legislative actions. Jessie also informed us that she is being moved into the role of treasure for the state-wide league. Also at the state level, Jessie has been asked to chair the state D,E,I Committee. They need fresh blood as that committee has been dwindling. Jessie is going to be contacting Bobbie Boatwright Harris and Katy Byrd to get some major pointers. Also, Jessie has been taken out of her director position and move into the treasurer position.
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- Our next meeting will be on August 25.
 - This meeting was adjourned at 1:52.