



Board Meeting Via Zoom

Friday, September 22, 2023 @ 12:00 PM (Zoom)

MINUTES

Voting members in attendance: Kristen Carlson, Linda Donaldson, Carole Essy, Karen Freeman, Jessie Gomez, Ben Graffam, Bobbie Boatwright Harris, Breezi Hicks, Ashley Lauretta, Lynn Paredes-Manfredi, and Eileen Swiler.

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

A quorum was confirmed. The meeting was called to order at 12:06 PM.

Linda Donaldson moved to approve the minutes for meetings in July and August. Carole Essy seconded. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report:

- There is \$22,799.89 in checking and \$250.71 in savings. The payment for the national dues will be going out next week, ~\$3,000.

President's Report:

- Special thanks to Eileen Swiler who is stepping down as cochair of the Reproductive Health and Justice Committee. Her service to the committee has been stellar and an inspiration.
- Hello to Jen Cordova, the new cochair of the RHJ Committee.
- Recently Ben Graffam floated an idea to eleven LWV members about possibly involving our membership with the decreeing of proclamations now that the PCSB is no longer going to do that. Based on feedback from those members, it was decided that this is not the right time to move on that idea.
- Our local membership selected Education, Reproductive Health and Justice, Healthcare, and National Popular Vote, respectively, as our four "extra" legislative nominations for the LWV FL. This decision was passed onto state who will add it to the other local leagues' votes. Voting rights and Election Reform is always our top priority.
- Bobbie Boatwright Harris will conduct the second of six educational sessions on African American History on October 17 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Coleman Bush Building on Martin Luther King Blvd. in Lakeland.
- Welcome to Kristen Carlson, now back from a four-month adventure. The transfer to her being treasurer will happen soon, right after Terry Lauretta gets back from her vacation in Mid October.

Standing Committee Reports:

- Returning Citizens Restoration of Rights: Larry Rankin was not present, but a message he left reported that the League has been actively participating in the statewide postcard campaign. Nine members and one non-member have mailed 958 postcards in three months.
- Communication: Ashley Lauretta is still working to solidify our system of getting our message out, not only to League members, but to other organizations. Ashley will be on vacation until October 18, during which time Jim Byrd will be overseeing MailChimp and Jessie Gomez will oversee Facebook and Instagram. 107 on our email list right now, and when those go out about 60

to 70% read (open) them. With social media, the posts that are seen most are those that include photos. Jessie Gomez suggested that each committee might get better traction if they made a thirty to forty second video about upcoming events. Those videos could be placed on our website and set out through social media.

- Climate Action: Saturday, September 23, there will be an Electric Vehicle Event in Munn Park, and Karen Freedman thanked Trudy and Larry Rankin, Carole and John Essy, Ben Graffam, and Michael Murray for their volunteering for that event. Karen also put out a warning about the new law allowing PragerU videos in the classroom. PragerU is not an educational institution but rather a conservative corporation. Their videos on issues like Climate Change are full of inaccurate information.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The book group's next meeting will take place on October 2nd and the book discussed will be *Orphan Bachelors*, a daughter's memoir of growing up with a father who endured the Asian immigrant experience.
- Education: we are still without a committee chair. However Carole Essy and Nancy Simmons have monitored state calls for this committee, and the “hot topic” issues continue to be Vouchers, Book Bans, and Partisan School Boards. A Lunch and Learn will be lead by the second vice president of the state LWV on October 6 about Book Banning.
- Gun Safety: Trudy Rankin reported the recent successes of the Gun Safety Committee, sharing with us the materials they are distributing to the groups receiving the locks. She also spoke of the committee's desire to hold a fundraiser, a request that they be allowed to use Mailchimp to contact members and receive funds. Their event/fundraiser would be held on October 24. There would be a \$15.00 charge, and the whole thing would be on Zoom. It will be a “faux” comedy show. A long discussion occurred and three motions were made, seconded, and passed. The first motion was made by Trudy, and it sought the LWV PC's approval of a fundraiser/volunteer recruitment for the Gun Safety Committee. (Katy informed that a motion by a committee need not be seconded.) This motion passed. The second motion, also Trudy's, moved that the advertisement for the event will be changed to meet with LWV specifics. Jessie seconded. This motion also passed. The third motion was also Trudy's. She moved that the script for the “faux” comedy event be viewed by members of the board. Breezi seconded. This motion also passed.
- Healthcare: (1:41:35)Paula Mims was not present at our meeting
- Reproductive Health and Justice: Jen Cordova reported that an event featuring the documentary film, “Plan C,” was scheduled for October 17 at the Universalist Unitarian Church on Troy Avenue in Lakeland, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. This would be a fundraiser for the ballot initiative to amend the Florida Constitution, putting abortion rights on the ballot in November, 2024.
- Voter Services: Jo Shim was not present, but her report of last month's meeting did address several on-going aspects of this committee. Several voter registration events are occurring—at Lakeland Regional Health Center, with the SOE for National Voter Registration Day, and at Winter Haven. New stickers promoting “Vote Your Values” are being handed out. Politics in the Park will occur on October 10 at the Coleman Bush Building from 4:30 to 8:30 PM. And on November 1, there will be a workshop for VOTE 411 with Heidi Davis of the State voter Services Team on Zoom.
- Membership: Linda Donaldson reported that Sunday, September 24, the film Ruby Bridges will be shown for all membership at the Beacon Hill Fellowship Hall. We are still in search of a monthly place to hold face-to-face “hot topics” meetings (see new business). Linda spoke of “Circle Stickers,” to purchase a certain amount and sell as fundraisers at Membership meetings for donations of \$5.00.
- Speaker's Bureau: Trudy reported that several invitations have been offered and filled for upcoming dates. Five speakers have even been scheduled into the next year. Ben Graffam added that he will be speaking at the Lakeland Democrats on October 5, something arranged by Mike Murray.

Program: Linda Donaldson spoke on the possibility of having some informal coffee gatherings so that there are always times for people in the LWV not only to know what we are doing, but also to grow in the ways of the league, to develop the abilities to take part and lead some of our events and activities. Linda is hoping that this will come into shape after the first of the year. Another idea is modeled on the St. Pete Membership handbook. Can we create a way to have our handbook on line?

Unfinished Business:

- We are still waiting to hear back about our application for Linda Donaldson to speak about the purpose, goals, and successes of the LWV PC at the October 2 Polk County Delegation Meeting. This meeting begins at 1:00 PM and will be held at Polk State College Center for Public Safety, 1251 Jim Keene Blvd. Winter Haven. Linda hopes to use this time to celebrate the League as well as to bring attention to the many things our state legislators are NOT doing to take advantage of opportunities—case in point, DeSantis refusing money that would help our state in improving our preparation against climate control.
- Another issue is how we collection, organize, and distribute the money we collect in fundraisers so that it is useable by the committees who have “done the work” What if somebody writes a check? And then it gets deposited . . . how will we know what that money is for? There is surely a simple way, Linda thought, but we don’t seem to have one right now.

New Business:

- Carole Essy reported that a potential site for the “hot topics” could be the General Federation of Women’s Club, at 1515 Williamsburg Square. A nice building, in a quiet area. It will cost us \$100.00 per session, with an added charge if we need special “set up.” It is much larger than the meeting site we use at Beacon Fellowship, and it has all the basics and “stuff” that we would need. However, weekends are not available. The third Tuesday is available. Linda and Carole visited recently suggested by Lynn Paredes-Manfredi. If we want to use it regularly, we will have to sign a contract. Beacon Hill Fellowship is still available to us, and they are very accommodating, so there are still some issues to work out on this over the next month or two. Jessie added that there are budget concerns, because we did not budget this for this year.
- Linda continues to recruit an Education Chair for that committee. Carole reminded us of what she and Nancy Simmons have been doing, that she’s willing to keep that coming, but we do need a committee chair. Ancillary to this issue is that Carole has found it difficult to get information out to everybody, and she wonders if that is an issue of all committee chairs.
- Carole Essy is putting together a carpool to Sarasota on September 30 for a live panel discussion of the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—what happens when we ignore it? She is planning on going and is willing to take some members with her.

The next meeting will be on October 27, 2023.

This meeting was adjourned at 2:10 PM.

Addendum:

On October 5, at 12:31, an added meeting of the board (Kristen Carlson, Linda Donaldson, Carole Essy, Jessie Gomez, Ben Graffam, Emily Crain, Bobbie Boatwright Harris, Charlene Bennett, Eileen Swiler, Breezi Hicks, Karen Freedman, and non voting members Trudy Rankin and Jen Cordova were present.

Three motions regarding upcoming grants were considered:

1. Linda moved that the chair person for the committee requesting a grant would be responsible for following all grant guidelines and reporting to the board each month of the grant's duration. This was seconded by Kristen and it passed unanimously.
2. Trudy moved that the LWV PC Gun Safety Committee apply for a grant from GiveWell, a Lakeland Organization which offer support for local non-profits working in the community. This grant will be applied-for through LWVFL Education Fund under the assistance of Leah Nash, LWVFL Executive Director. This was seconded by Jessie and it passed unanimously.
3. Linda moved that LWVPC Voter Action Committee apply for the LWVFL Young Adult Voter Engagement Grant, the largest award being that of \$2,000.00. This was seconded by Breezi and it passed unanimously.

Regarding Trudy's Gun Safety grant, Jessie is going to check in with some of the state-level officers to be sure that timelines and other logistics can be met, as the deadline is October 15.

This meeting was adjourned at 1:03.