

HELPFUL HINTS FOR NEW PRESIDENTS



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

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THE PRESIDENT DOES NOT DO IT ALL!

While the president does not do it all, the president shares in the total responsibilities with other board members and also has the following duties specific to the office of League president

- Speaks for the League
- Presides at meetings (board and general)
- Represents the League at state and national meetings
- Signs all official letters
- Promotes the League
- Supports League activities
- Promotes leadership development
- Reviews final copy for all publications (Annual Meeting Workbook, Voter, Voter Guides, etc.)
- Stays informed about work of committees and board members
- Ex officio member of all committees except for Nominating
- Does not do it all!

TOTAL BOARD RESPONSIBILITY

- Make plans and set goals (calendar planning)
- Promote membership
- Foster leadership development
- Increase communication (internal and external) and visibility
- Fund the League and manage League funds
- Set and follow policies
- Determine consensus
- Evaluate the League

"Dreaming is wonderful, goal setting is crucial, but action is supreme. To make something great happen you must get busy and make it happen."

FOR THE NEW (and not so new) BOARD MEMBER

It is an honor to serve on a League board but there are no honorary positions.

Each board member has a dual assignment. She/he is a director first and holds a portfolio or specific assignment second.

Since everyone is expected to share equally in fundraising and member recruitment and retention, as well as attending meetings, the burden of running an effective League is lightened.

The Board works together to set goals, make policy, and develop long range plans.

If you are a new board member, you may be uncertain of your responsibilities and wonder if you will ever know as much as others seem to know.

Here are some suggestions to help you hasten that process...

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Attend all board meetings, be on time, and stay until the end. All board members take part in decision-making. You are needed!

Participate in all policy decisions. Work to develop an understanding of all elements of League. Come prepared for board meetings. Read your agenda material and other reports forwarded to you between meetings. This will allow for more intelligent decision-making.

Carry out your own portfolio assignment.

Safeguard the League's reputation for non-partisanship.

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

Get the files and advice on procedure from the preceding director. Training on a one-to-one basis between the outgoing and incoming director is vital. While a new director will want to try new methods and will have fresh ideas, it helps to know how things were done in the past, to be given some tips on getting the job done most effectively, and to know the rationale behind past board decisions that affect the portfolio.

Study the relevant sections of *In League in Florida*

Attend a board training sessions (Council, Convention, Regional Workshops, etc.).

Regularly check the websites for national League (www.lwv.org)

Subscribe to appropriate state and national listserves.

Develop a committee to assist you and encourage member participation and leadership. Stay in touch with your committee--use its members.

Report to the board any plans made by your committee. Request board authorization to carry them out.

Keep a record/file for your successor.

Prepare bulletin, program, and annual report material as needed.

Know what funds your portfolio has been budgeted and find out how you are reimbursed for expenses.

Get help when you need it. League leaders all over the country are facing the same problems as you
Enjoy serving on your League board!

REPORTING TO THE BOARD

Setting the agenda for a board meeting is an extremely difficult task. If you have a report, be sure to let the president know so time will be set-aside for you. Send copies of your report to all board members (including your secretary) ahead of time.

What Should Be Reported

Progress in organization of a job or in getting it accomplished;

All reports or consensus meetings and proposed position statements;
Decisions reached by a committee, and any action taken so that other board members will be informed if elected officials or others mention the item(s);

Problems encountered in getting a job done or reactions of members to a project;

Information on resources that are significant to the League. (e.g., another organization pursuing an issue that the League is working on may be a resource, partner, or co-sponsor);
Important information from state or national Leagues relating to your job (e.g., LWWUS has entered litigation as a friend of the court or LWWF is participating in a state-wide coalition on an issue).

When Should You Ask For a Board Decision?

When you are going to spend more money than budgeted;
When you want to publish something or distribute materials to members or to the public;
When you want to make any demand on the League's time, money, or reputation;
When you want to establish a policy or solve a problem;
When you are not sure whether you should ask for a board decision.

What Is The Procedure When You Need a Board Decision?

Be sure your report includes any motions you may plan to make.
At the beginning of your report, state what you are going to do (e.g., "I'm going to ask the board's approval for a letter to the city council," or "I'm reporting on the committee's progress and some of the problems we have encountered.").
State clearly and briefly what has led up to your request (e.g., "The Citizens' Master Plan Committee has asked for comments from other organizations at the school board meeting next Wednesday. The report recommends that...").
Be aware of time! The president has to get through the agenda on time.
Make a recommendation. Offer relevant information and be prepared to answer questions. Participate in the discussion.
Accept the board's decision – total board responsibility sometimes dictates another course despite your recommendation.

TIPS FOR MINIMIZING BORED BOARDS (OR COMMITTEES)

Establish targets and goals. Don't waste each other's time: If the person who called the meeting can't say, "This is what we have to achieve by the end of the hour", the gathering is not only unnecessary, it's a waste of time.

Use written reports or emails to convey information – meetings aren't necessary for this.

Keep the topic as narrow as possible. If the subject can't be covered in a limited time, (with some exceptions) it is probably too broad.

Avoid repetitiveness. People love to say something more than once.

Focus on solutions, not the problem. (Research shows that, on average, people in meetings make 10 statements about the problem for each statement about how to fix it.)

Don't dwell on the past or enshrine the problem with belabored discussion. Spend at least twice as much time creating solutions as explaining a problem's origins and consequences.

Open up possibilities – and minds with questions, not statements.

People simply either agree or disagree with assertions. Questions, because they're open ended, invite input. Ask, don't tell.

Avoid stray talk. Make comments and suggestions that build upon both the overall subject and what's previously been said. Task specific meetings need sharp focus.

Set a time limit and stick to it. Always adjourn on time, even if that means scheduling a followup.

Five minutes before adjournment review new tasks assigned during the meeting as well as expectations before the next meeting.

Distribute meeting minutes (including assignments) as soon as possible.

BOARD PLANNING MEETING

Purpose: To develop priorities and program for the coming year.

- What is your mission?
- What is your role in your community?
- What has your League done well in the past twelve months?
- What have you done that needs improvement?
- What did not get done?
- What do you want your League to do this year? Include things you have never done but would like to do?
- What are your current resources? People? Finances? Other?
- What can your League do? What is "do-able?"

Plan activities around your priorities. **You don't have to do everything.**

Do your plans fit your priorities and resources?

What does the community need you to do? Make choices after a thoughtful look at your community.

Focus. It can be study; it can be voters service/community education; it can be advocacy.

A. For each goal/activity agreed upon, ask:

Who will be responsible?

What needs to be done to accomplish it?

When will it happen?

Where will the money come from?

Why is this important to the League? to the board? to the members? to the community?

B. Stick to your choices.

C. Evaluate throughout the year.

D. Channel energies, but don't let them dominate.

Responding to Common Meeting Problems

BEHAVIOR - Person dominates the discussion, is overly talkative

REASONS WHY

eager beaver
wordy by nature
well-informed
show-off
lonely-needs to feel accepted

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

interrupt with... "That's a point, what do other people think?"
ask others for different perspectives
interrupt and summarize
interrupt and indicate that comments are not related to discussion
seat the person near you to be responsive to body language
call a straw vote

BEHAVIOR - Person is argumentative, overly aggressive

REASONS WHY

feeling pressured, upset
aggressive personality
argumentative by nature
has not been acknowledged
has been dismissed or ignored in the past

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

do not get angry as well
summarize valid points made, then move on
solicit group support by asking if others agree, then move on
talk to person privately, try to develop cooperation
seat the person beside you so that you can more easily control him or her

BEHAVIOR - Person is dictatorial, wants own way, makes decisions
without committee

REASONS WHY

may not know how to delegate
believes own way is best
needs power
very controlling nature

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

ask for input from other members
talk with person privately
do not establish eye contact
encourage expression of opinion, then move back to the group

BEHAVIOR - Person is a discourager, always responds negatively
To new ideas

REASONS WHY

long-time member may feel has tried all ways
may be threatened by new people, ideas
may want to cling to power of "tradition"

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

encourage person to share why it didn't work
use humour to defuse discouragement
acknowledge past experience
be supportive of the other members' ideas

BEHAVIOR -Two people have an argument

REASONS WHY

each believes other is wrong
strong/directing personalities
can split group

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- emphasize points of agreement
- refer to meeting objectives
- request input from another member
- ask a specific question related to topic
- request personal issues be withheld

BEHAVIOR - People having a side conversation

REASONS WHY

- may be related to subject, but person has not been recognized to speak
- may be personal comment
- may be “Doubting Thomas”
- may be the perennial “down putter”

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- direct a question to one of the people involved
- intervene and remind that only one person has the floor
- encourage people to use a note pad so as not to lose thoughts
- keep a pad to record order of speakers and enforce it
- interrupt, restate last remark made by group and ask person's opinion of it

BEHAVIOR - Person who promises to do something
and doesn't follow through, often misses meetings

REASONS WHY

- procrastinates by nature
- unable to set realistic goals
- has good ideas, can't put into practice
- lack of confidence
- may not know how to do task

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- be sure person understands what is expected
- set guidelines/timelines mutually

offer support
talk promptly, one-to-one about attendance
inform person before meeting that a report is due

BEHAVIOR - Person who rambles, talks about irrelevant issues

REASONS WHY

wants attention
loses train of thought

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

thank person and summarize what was said
ask person to briefly summarize
interrupt, remind what objective is and move on
smile, comment that point is interesting, but must move on to topic being discussed
refer to time allowed for discussion of issue
appoint an observer to assess participation

BEHAVIOR - Person who is very quiet, does not contribute to the discussion

REASONS WHY

may be shy by nature
may simply not have anything to say
may be there but really "on holiday"
may not be clear about expectations re participation

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

seat near you, look for cues indicating person might like to comment
check at break to affirm his opinions are sought
if aware of a helpful point made in another context, ask if she will share that with the group

BOARD STRUCTURE

A variety of job descriptions and listings of responsibilities as well as thoughts regarding mindset and best practices have been included for many potential board portfolios. It is important to note that local Leagues can and do operate under a wide array of board structures. It is not necessary to fill each of the following roles with one individual per role. Positions can certainly be combined, shared between more than one member or even eliminated in the case of more obscure positions in order to meet the needs of the local League given the availability of volunteer resources.

THE PRESIDENT AND THE JOB

JOB DESCRIPTION: PRESIDENT

OBJECTIVES: To oversee and coordinate the activities of the League and to ensure that the League continues to serve the best interests of the community and of its members.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Plan, coordinate, and preside at meetings of the board and at the annual meeting.
2. Identify and recruit members for League responsibilities.
3. Represent the League to the public, government officials, the media and other levels of the League.
4. With the assistance of the board, set policies and goals.
5. Serve as a catalyst to encourage activities which are in the best interests of the League.
6. Seek ways to cooperate with and use the expertise of individuals and groups to further the goals of the League.
7. Advise, assist, and encourage individual board members as needed. Supervise work of board members to ensure meeting of deadlines and competent performance.
8. Review and approve all major League publications before printing.
9. Serve as an ex officio member of all committees, except nominating committee.

ENTHUSIASM, TACT, PATIENCE and HUMOR are perhaps the four most valuable assets one can bring to the job of president of a local League. It helps to be well organized, get to the mail PROMPTLY, read it and have a plan for delegating what needs to be done. In the final analysis, the success of the League during a president's tenure will depend on the way the president handled the job and interacted with others, rather than on the excellence of the filing system.

Remember to have fun!

Confidence and a genuine enthusiasm for the League's program will be reflected in the attitudes of the board and the membership. Let people know that their contributions are valuable and that their thoughts and ideas are needed. This will make it easier to enlist directors and committee members. Conversely, negative messages from the president will generate similar attitudes. Try to be as professional as possible. Expect excellence and work to get it.

It is natural that the president receives the acclaim for jobs well done by the League. Be sure to give praise, credit and encouragement to others wherever possible.

Together with the successes will come the inevitable mistakes. When the League is in error, be prepared to accept responsibility and rectify the error. This will add to your stature as a League leader and eliminate the kind of recriminations that help no one. Use the opportunity to guide the League toward the kind of constructive analysis that will avert future mistakes. Good board discussion of failures as well as successes leads to better planning.

Avoid the trap of making decisions alone or of doing the work for which someone else is responsible. The League will be stronger at the end of the president's term if everyone has shared in the responsibilities and satisfactions of the total League effort. It has been found that a League works most effectively when its president*:

- Is quick to help when things go wrong and praise when they go well.
- Coordinates various activities of the League.
- Is efficient as an administrator.
- Understands the views and sentiments of the members.
- Knows what she/he is doing.

Remember that the president is not alone. Neighboring Leagues are willing and eager to interact. The state League liaison or membership vice president is also there to help. When in doubt, call.

Many local League presidents have discovered that, while the job seemed overwhelming at first, as time went by they found themselves developing greater resourcefulness, understanding, efficiency and assurance. It is a challenge during which leadership qualities emerge and there is a tremendous sense of personal growth.

COMMUNICATIONS

League Basics (In League): (LWVUS) is the basic reference for all League activities. Most questions will be answered there. For answers to additional questions, consult other League publications, liaison or membership vice president.

Presidents should receive files from their predecessors, including a job description and a list, by month, of the most important work/deadlines. If not, develop both the job description and the list immediately.

Determine the best method to contact board members. Make a list work/deadlines and distribute it to the board.

Develop a regular system for conferring with board members in order to make plans and to check on their implementation.

PLANNING THE BOARD MEETING

Careful planning is needed to avoid the board meeting that goes on indefinitely and fails to reach conclusions on matters that need immediate decision. As soon as the board meeting ends, start preparing an agenda for the next one. If the vice presidents are used in supervisory roles, consult with them about those portfolios under their supervision that need the most time; otherwise, confer with each director about the time she/he will need, as well as the nature of the discussion and the decisions necessary at this time. Every meeting should include a membership report and a treasurer's report, and the treasurer can estimate how much time at the board meeting needs to be spent on financial matters.

Some local Leagues use an executive committee to plan the agenda for the board meeting. However, this will add another meeting to your schedule and, if not careful, could turn into a mini-board meeting which is not advisable. Policy decisions should be made by the whole board.

Agree on the amount of time needed to complete the agenda, and prepare and distribute a timed agenda to board members ahead of the meeting, along with the minutes of the previous meeting. Much time can be saved if Board members circulate written reports (usually by e-mail) prior to the meeting, so that allocated time can be spent on discussion rather than on describing the content of the report.. Absentees should notify the president (or designated person) before the meeting, send written reports, and inform themselves of pertinent matters after the meeting.

The president acts as discussion leader, to keep discussion focused, not to intrude personal viewpoints. Simple parliamentary procedure is advisable for clarity and brevity. Keep a record of things to do and things which have been assigned to others. Start and end on time. Good minutes help everyone do a better job. Having someone review the draft before duplicating will minimize the need for corrections. Minutes should contain the board's decisions, who will do them, and when.

INTERACTION WITH THE PUBLIC

All statements and official letters should carry the name of the president and, if desired, the appropriate director.

All public statements should be checked with the president and, if there is anything questionable, cleared with the board.

All public meetings, communications and publications (including bulletins) should be approved by the president or a designee. Reports should be kept of all meetings and on interviews conducted.

PAPERS, PAPERS, PAPERS

Monitor all League communications and address personally or delegate to the appropriate person.

Maintain a record of all documents required for League and IRS compliance and keep everything that your League would need for its historic record. Save state and national League materials only as long as they are current or until they have been replaced by updated materials. Be sure that each board member also maintains appropriate files. Ask for, and keep year-end reports.

INTERACTION WITH THE STATE LEAGUE

Do not hesitate to call upon the members of the state board and staff for assistance in carrying out your responsibilities as president of a local League.

Members of the state board prepare reference materials for local League board members on a regular basis.

There may be a state board report that could be available in its entirety on the League website and is distributed to the local League presidents list serve five times a year. In addition, appropriate sections are distributed to other board members via the topical list serves.

The state and national Leagues provide periodic area training meetings which all local League members may attend.

Workshops on both program items and administrative areas are generally offered. Encourage your members to attend--the interaction with board members and with other local League members sharing the same interests is stimulating and informative.

Participation at state and national League conventions and councils held in alternate years is restricted to delegates, although additional members are welcome and may attend as observers. It is important for your League to be represented at these meetings, and it is, therefore, essential to budget for travel, hotel, meals and registration fees for your delegates in your League budget. The knowledge and enthusiasm acquired by delegates is well worth the expense.

RESOURCES

- *League Basics (In League)* (LWVUS): An essential tool for League leaders.
<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm>
- *President's Packet* (LWVUS): Describes responsibilities of the president and the relationship between local and national League.
<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm>
- *Simplified Parliamentary Procedures* (LWVUS): Useful for local League annual meeting, and by other groups. <http://store.lwv.org/detail.aspx?ID=10>

CO-PRESIDENTS/STEERING COMMITTEE

Some local Leagues choose not to have a single president but rather an alternative to the traditional board structure. Two of these alternatives are co-presidents and a steering committee.

CO-PRESIDENT

Key to the success of co-presidents is a clear chain of command to avoid duplication of effort and responsibilities "falling through the cracks." The division depends on the individuals but needs to be spelled out to avoid confusion between themselves and the rest of the board.

Pluses

- shared responsibility
- efficient use of the talents of two people
- back-up leadership
- incentive for newer members to serve
- leadership development
- opportunity for differing age and/or geographical representation

Pitfalls

- personality conflicts
- uneven division of work
- confusion about the chain of command
- gaps in communication
- duplication of effort
- more time required for coordination
- co-presidents may assume too much responsibility

Possible Alternatives

- one year presidency
- better utilization of vice presidents

CHECKLIST FOR LOCAL LEAGUES

The following is a list of items that need to be done as you start your League year:

- Confirm that all board members have received files from previous director.
- Plan the year's calendar.
- Plan membership campaign.
- Prepare or update membership handbook.
- Begin voter service work for November election.
- Review with your board your local nonpartisan policy.
- Plan finance drive or other fundraising activity.
- Appoint members to nominating and budget committees, and bylaws committee if necessary.
- Organize observer corps.
- Urge board members to recruit committee members.
- Order state and national publications board members will need for their portfolios.
- Maintain contact with your state board liaison and arrange for board training, orientation, prospective member meetings, program speakers, or assistance as needed.
- Remember to share good news with your state League office!

SAMPLE BOARD MEETING AGENDA

(Please note: Comments in () are informational, do not include in agenda.)

LWV of _____ Board Meeting Date:

Place:

Time:

Directions:

AGENDA

7:00 P.M.

COFFEE (optional)

7:15 P.M.

MINUTES (Any additional corrections?)

M.

Patterson

TREASURER'S REPORT

J. Smith

(Previous balance, expenditures including PMP's, income, current balance, and new membership data if not covered by a membership report)

PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & CORRESPONDENCE

T. Blair

(Correspondence from national, state and other leagues, invitation, local concerns, etc.)

7:30 P.M.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

R. Corby

(Current paid members, number of new members since last report, drops, total current membership compared to last year, prospects for getting and involving new members, plans for orientation, etc.)

7:45 P.M.

PUBLICATIONS

S. Hall

(Distribution of new material, plans for local publications, etc.)

FINANCE

M. Miller

(Progress of finance drive, plans for campaign, prospects, follow-up)

8:00 P.M.

LOCAL PROGRAM

(Statements to local boards, plans for meetings, review of consensus on local issues, etc.)

STATE PROGRAM

(Review of progress on state issues, action and studies, etc.)

NATIONAL PROGRAM

(Same as above, status of studies and action, meetings, etc.)

8:30 P.M.	BREAK (optional)	
8:40 P.M .	BULLETIN	E.
Page		
(Content, deadlines, mailing help)		
8:45 P.M.	VOTER SERVICE	H.
Rubin		
(Plans, decision as to meetings, format, speakers bureau, distribution of FACTS FOR VOTERS, etc.)		
9:00 P.M.	OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS	
(e.g.: Bylaws, Nominating, Budget, Social evening)		
9:20 P.M.	GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING	L.
Lake		
(Speaker, hospitality, place, etc.)		
9:30 P.M.	NEW BUSINESS	

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sept. 15 Primary Election Day
 Sept. 19 - 9:30 am Finance Drive letter writing -- Smith's
 Sept. 23 - 7:30 pm Master Plan meeting -- Johnston's
 Sept. 28 - 7:00 pm Board Meeting
 Oct. 4 - 8:00 pm New Member-Meet the Mayor Meeting -- Pell's

OCTOBER BULLETIN ASSIGNMENTS

(to E. Page by Sept. 15th)
 Linda Lake - General Membership Meeting
 Helen Rubin - Candidates Forum
 Miriam Miller - Finance Drive "Thank You"
 Ruth Corby - Membership Renewal Reminder

PLEASE call Terry Blair (111-1111) if you cannot attend. PLEASE bring your written report for the secretary.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR SECRETARIES

JOB DESCRIPTION: SECRETARY

OBJECTIVES: To document and maintain the official record of all business conducted by the League.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Take minutes at all decision-making meetings of the League and at the annual meeting.
2. Maintain records of attendance at all board meetings.
3. Prepare and distribute minutes in a timely fashion.
4. Maintain a hard copy file of all minutes with corrections and written reports.
5. Assist with League correspondence as needed.
6. Sign official papers.

The secretary records all plans, proposals and decisions made by the local League board. Minutes, the historical legal record of the organization, are kept of all meetings where business is conducted: board meetings, annual meetings, and any others at which decisions are made.

MINUTES - THE RECORD OF LEAGUE POLICY MAKING

It is helpful to understand the uses to which minutes may be put:

- To remind present board members of decisions made and actions which they should take.
- To tell absent members what happened at the meeting.
- To tell future interested people why certain decisions were made and what the League's reasoning was at the time.

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED

- Name of League, type of meeting, date, time and place.
- Name of presiding officer, those in attendance, those absent.
- Record of all corrections to minutes.
- A treasurer's report - the previous balance, income and expenditures and present balance.
- A membership report - current number including new members and drops.
- All motions, in their entirety, including the name of the mover, whether it was seconded and the final vote.
- All pertinent discussion and policy decisions.
- All dates of activities.
- Names of those suggested for committees and jobs.
- Identify each person completely the first time they are mentioned in the minutes; use last name thereafter.
- Record subjects in the same order as they appear on the agenda. (It is helpful to use paragraph titles and capitals for each item - e.g. TREASURER'S REPORT, ANNOUNCEMENTS, etc.)

- Copies of communications directed to League (not material from LWVState/US unless specific to the local League).
- Time of adjournment.
- To serve as the legal record of the League's operations and authority to act.

Helpful Hint: Because the minutes often contain 'to do' lists for board members, it is helpful to circulate them as soon as possible after the meeting."

SAMPLE MINUTES

The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of _____ was called to order by _____ (name and League position) on _____ (date) at _____ (time) at _____ (place).

PRESENT: Blinton, Alcott, Brown, Cotton, Dent, Drake, Shepherd, Newton, White.
 ABSENT: Ebers, Winters.

MINUTES: June 5, 19____, minutes, page 2, line 17, were amended to read "the finance drive total was \$665," instead of "\$645." Motion to approve the minutes as amended by Binton, seconded by Alcott. The minutes were then approved as amended.

TREASURER - Kathy Dent (Report on File)

September 1 balance \$1,495.78. Income for the month \$325, expenditures \$450, including the third PMP to LWVState of \$212.50, leaving a balance of \$1,370.78 as of September 30. Dent reminded board members to submit their expenses for reimbursement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Invitation from Chamber of Commerce to attend an all day conference on citizen involvement in government was read. Payment of a registration fee of \$15 for two board members was authorized; others may attend on their own.

MEMBERSHIP - Mary Cotton

Membership last year 140, current membership 145. There are five new members this month and 2 drops.

Prospect list of 25 is receiving the monthly bulletin. Orientation meetings for 15 new members and several others scheduled Oct. 14, 8:00 PM; Oct. 15, 1:00 PM. Sheet for board help circulated. Meetings at charter member's home - Mrs. Brisco, Devon Rd.

PUBLICATIONS - Ruth Drake

Publications service was described for new board members since it had been omitted from the board orientation for lack of time. Drake called attention to the newly printed *Action for New York*. The board discussed the idea of cooperation among public relations, publications and program directors for better promotion of useful League publications. Drake will submit a plan in November.

PUBLIC RELATIONS - Estelle Brown

Brown reported that the *Daily Times* did print a story on the high school students attending LWVNYS Legislative Conference, but there was no success in getting the newspaper story on the new study of urban renewal. Barbara Tate suggested that the PR committee meet with the urban renewal committee before the next board meeting to see if a plan could be worked out for developing community understanding. Tate will set this up

VOTER SERVICE - Betty Shepherd (Report on File)

An indecisive interview with Henry Mencken, the managing editor of the *Daily News*, was held re: publication of candidates' questionnaires. It was agreed that there must be a clear understanding with the paper before the work of collecting candidates questionnaires begins. Shepherd will follow up, with a decision to be made no later August 20. An order for 25,000 FFV has been placed, including an order from the Marion Steam Shovel Company and another from the State Bank of the Finger Lakes, totaling 15,000. It was agreed that the demand for election material this year is heavy and that we should get more FFV if available.

LOCAL PROGRAM - John Newton

There was a disappointing turnout of three at the first meeting of the new local item committee despite great interest at the annual meeting. There was a brief discussion of steps to take - calling new names secured from membership interest records and offering rides; better time for meetings; serving food to make it an enjoyable social occasion as well; laying out tentative plans and asking each potential committee member what part he/she would like to undertake. Newton will follow up on these suggestions. Next meeting scheduled for October 11.

After discussion Newton MOVED that "urban renewal reference materials, not authorized in the budget, in an amount not to exceed \$20, be purchased for the use of the committee." SECONDED and CARRIED 6-2.

APPORTIONMENT - Judy Lane (Report on File)

Three units, attended by 32 people, agreed that population should be determining factor in one legislative house. Twenty-seven of them had attended the previous general meeting. The fourth unit was very vocal, very divided, and resorted to a count: 4-one person, one-vote, throughout; 5-population, 1 house; 6-just don't know. The board further discussed the prevailing opinion in the League.

Lane MOVED that the League report to the state League its consensus on population as the determining factor in one house. SECONDED and CARRIED 5 yes, 3 no.

JUDICIAL - No report this meeting.

BULLETIN Deadline - Saturday, November 4.

Patricia Ebers sent word by Brown that she needed material about plans for Community Day in connection with the business finance drive. It was suggested that the bulletin carry new members' names each month. Brown will take the ready bulletin material and this suggestion to Ebers.

ADJOURNMENT - 10:40 PM

RESOURCES

- *League Basics (In League)* (LWVUS): An essential tool for League leaders.

GUIDE FOR BOARD ORIENTATION

Every League board should schedule an annual board orientation meeting. A thorough orientation gives new board members greater confidence in carrying out their responsibilities and minimizes problems for the board later on. Provide this orientation with local League experienced personnel, or request the state League liaison or membership vice president to assign a trainer to lead the discussion.

Plan to hold the board orientation as soon as possible after the new board is formed. See that board members have the files and tools of their predecessors and that they look at them before the meeting. Each should also have League Basics (*In League* (LWVUS)), appropriate information from this *In League in New York State: A Guide to Managing Local Leagues, For the New (and Not So New) Board Member*, and a copy of *Welcome to the League* (LWVNYS).

POINTS TO BE COVERED

I. Nonpartisan Political Policy (Bylaws: Article II, Sec. 2)

- A. Discuss why it is necessary
- B. Review League Basics and section dealing with nonpartisanship in *In League in NYS*.
- C. Review current policy
- D. Discuss responsibility of board members to bring problems of individual nonpartisanship to Board

II. The Role of the Officers

- A. The president
- B. The vice-president
- C. The secretary
- D. The treasurer

III. The Role of the Board - a board member's twofold responsibility

- A. Total board responsibility
 - 1. To advance League goals
 - a. Voters service/citizen information
 - b. Program - study, discussion, consensus, action
 - 2. To plan and guide League policy
 - a. Set goals and priorities
 - b. Schedule activities (calendar planning)
 - c. Make all policy decisions
 - d. Approve plans of committees
 - e. Review and evaluate
 - 3. To promote membership growth and involvement
 - a. Provide variety of opportunities for participation (spot jobs, study groups, action

- campaigns, administrative committees)
 - b. Provide oversight and assistance in recruitment and orientation
 - c. Be certain the year's activities will provide a satisfying membership experience
- 4. To manage finance matters and keep the League fiscally sound
 - a. Help plan and assist with finance drive (both member and community)
 - b. Watchdog monthly expenditures and income
 - c. Know what the budget allocation is for portfolio
 - d. Meet state and national (and ILO, if applicable) PMP obligations
- 5. To determine consensus
 - a. Role of committee
 - b. Role of board

B. Individual Portfolio Responsibility

1. Form a committee
2. Pre-plan with committee
3. Present proposed plans to board
4. Give periodic progress reports to board
5. Carry out board and membership decisions
6. Be up-to-date on publications in the field
7. Keep a notebook or file for present use and future reference. This should include job description, plans, reports and action, and other materials which facilitate turning over of portfolio to a substitute or successor

IV. Board Meetings

- A. Written agenda, with estimated timing, sent out ahead of meeting
- B. Parliamentary or at least business-like procedure
- C. Importance of attendance or proper notification if knowing you will not be able to attend
- D. Full discussion and consideration of all proposals
- E. Policy-making and exchange of information. No committee work
- F. Full minutes taken for reference
- G. Begin and end on time
- H. Clear assignment of responsibility
- I. Evaluation of League activities

V. Interrelationships

- A. Among neighboring Leagues—program cooperation, shared administrative jobs, possible examples being joint bulletins, fund raising, voters service and publications ordering.
- B. Between local, ILOs (where they exist), state and national boards
 1. Sending in bulletins, bylaws and program proposals
 2. Suggesting candidates for nomination
 3. Sharing information and techniques

4. Attending national and state conventions and council
5. Asking for assistance with problems and concerns

BEST PRACTICES - SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL LEAGUES
June 2007, League of Women Voters of the United States

In this listing of best practices, items 1 through 7 are the official requirements for Leagues as voted by the 1994 LWVUS Convention. Following each item is suggested implementation — the optimal level of operation.

1. The League must have bylaws, the first three articles of which must be consistent with those of the LWVUS. The remaining articles must provide for democratic procedures.

Best practices: A League committee reviews the bylaws to check actual practice for conformity and to consider possible amendments prior to the annual meeting.

2. The League must establish and maintain a nonpartisan policy.

Best practices: The League board reviews and discusses its nonpartisan policy annually at its first organizational meeting. At a minimum, board members who hold “sensitive” portfolios are not involved in partisan activities. Each League considers its own community and its political environment when stating specific allowed and prohibited activities. The board’s policy may be printed in the local League newsletter.

3. The League must hold an annual business meeting of the membership.

Best practices: The League holds an annual business meeting of the membership to adopt a budget, bylaw changes, and local program and to elect officers and directors. In order to encourage member attendance and participation, there is a “special” aspect to this meeting — a speaker, an award to a member or community leader, and/or a time for attendees to socialize.

4. The League must hold regular board meetings.

Best practices: The League holds regularly scheduled board meetings with written agendas and minutes distributed ahead of time. For better and more efficient meetings, a timed agenda is used, which provides opportunities for developing plans, acting on committee recommendations and evaluating progress and results.

5. The League must meet its financial obligations to the state and national levels of the League.

Best practices: The League budget provides (either through dues or fundraising) for the League’s per member obligations to the state and national levels of the League, and payments are made promptly.

6. The League must have a plan for membership growth and retention that encourages a membership as diverse as the community.

Best practices: The League develops and implements a written plan, with attainable goals and specific strategies, to increase its membership and to achieve diversity in members, leadership and program.

Board members always carry membership information with them, ask others to join, and promote the League at every opportunity.

The board adopts a board policy that affirms a commitment to diversity. The League plans outreach to a variety of groups in its community through networking, coalitions, joint projects, and other collaborative efforts. In order to promote retention of current members, the League provides a variety of opportunities for them to participate in deciding and carrying out League activities and goals. Annual renewal notices are sent out several months in advance; personal phone calls and other methods of contact are used to follow up with those who have not responded prior to the due date.

7. Any advocacy pursued by the League must be consistent with League principles, positions and policies.

***Best practices:** The League sets priorities for timely action on local positions before taking action. The League responds to action alerts from other levels of the League and encourages grassroots member involvement in action where appropriate. The League president (or designee) is the official spokesperson for the League.*

The League has developed an understanding of the appropriate level of government at which action maybe taken and, if in doubt, consults with the state or national League office. When appropriate, the League coordinates action with other affected Leagues.

The League informs its members and the community of action taken through a variety of means (e.g., electronic media, newspaper articles, fact sheets).

Items 8 through 19 describe characteristics of healthy Leagues, followed by suggested guidelines for optimum practices that League boards may decide to adopt.

8. The League sets priorities, develops plans and evaluates activities.

***Best practices:** The board holds an organizational meeting after the annual meeting to plan the League calendar for the year ahead. Priorities are set so that the League can focus on a limited number of activities. Plans are developed that include an outline of activities and the board member/committee responsible for each. The board's responsibility includes an evaluation of each activity. Plans and evaluations are included in written reports submitted to the board for use in future planning.*

9. The League has a membership sufficient to maintain League viability.

***Best practices:** The League has a membership chair and committee that develop a plan each year to attract new members and to encourage their participation. League leaders are assigned specific new members to make contact with them and encourage their involvement. The president makes a welcoming phone call to each new member.*

New members are invited to a special program to orient them to the League's basic organizational structure, history, present activities and opportunities for member partici-

pation.

The national League member database is updated regularly. A local membership file is updated regularly with information on members' special interests, achievements and League involvement; this file is shared with the nominating committee as positions need to be filled.

10. The League holds regular membership meetings.

Best practices: *Regularly scheduled meetings are held on issues of League concern or under study. These meetings are both informative and participatory for members. The League provides opportunities for members to interact socially as well.*

11. The League carries out citizen education/voters service activities.

Best practices: *The League works to increase citizen participation in the election process on all levels by undertaking election-related voters service (e.g., registration drives, get-out-the-vote campaigns, election guides, candidate forums). The League undertakes citizen education efforts on issues of importance to the community, not necessarily ones on which the League has positions. This can take the form of holding public forums, distributing fact sheets or publications, running media campaigns, or organizing discussion groups.*

Such activities are often done in cooperation with other organizations.

12. The League establishes positions on public policy through member participation and agreement.

Best practices: *The League participates in study and consensus meetings on state and national program. When possible, Leagues share responsibility for study committee activity and consensus meetings with neighboring Leagues in order to lessen the workload on individual Leagues. The League has a plan for periodic review of its local program positions and updates its membership on these positions through meetings or newsletter articles.*

13. The League publishes a newsletter.

Best practices: *The League has a method of regular communication with members. It distributes its newsletter to appropriate community leaders and to prospective members. To facilitate a uniform image of the League, the newsletter is called *The Voter* and features the League logo.*

The League newsletter includes schedules of meetings, information on League positions, action alerts, and any other items necessary for a member to be informed and to act effectively; it avoids reprinting information from every-member League publications (e.g., state and national Voters). The newsletter contains a welcome to new members with a brief write-up on each one.

14. The League practices sound fiscal management and adopts a budget.

Best practices: *The League treasurer prepares written reports for the board at least quarterly and reports annually to the membership. The League has written policies re-*

garding responsibilities for fiscal decision-making. League financial records are reviewed or audited annually. The League aggressively pursues fundraising income from members and the community.

League budgets are set to provide adequately for the implementation of League program and activities. The League's budget committee recommends the adoption of a budget that reflects the League's priorities for the year and basic support for operating the League, including attendance at state and national conventions and financial support for the state and national Leagues.

15. The League sends representatives to regional, state and national League meetings and to training opportunities.

Best practices: *The League encourages all members, especially current and potential board members, to attend workshops, conferences, councils and conventions to increase skills and broaden knowledge to enhance the work of the League. Funds to cover at least a portion of delegate expenses are included in the budget.*

16. The League encourages flexibility of its administrative structure.

Best practices: *The League modifies its board structure, as needed. The League makes an effort to reduce time demands on board members, emphasizing the policy-making role of the board. The League schedules meetings to accommodate both the board and members' work schedules.*

17. The League submits reports to state and national Leagues as requested.

Best practices: *The League president takes responsibility for completing report forms on time or requests the appropriate board member to do so, checking on the follow-through.*

18. The League has an active nominating committee.

Best practices: *The committee is active throughout the year, working to ensure the vitality of the League by identifying the leadership potential of new and continuing members. The committee encourages board members to mentor and train upcoming leaders in order to build a leadership bank.*

19. The League has high visibility in the community.

Best practices: *The communications chair is chosen for writing ability, energy and enthusiasm for the League and League activities. Conscientiousness, persistence and creativity will increase the League's visibility as media responds to efforts to secure coverage in all forms of print and electronic communications, including calendar listings for programs and events. Media may include cable TV, community access and municipal TV stations, college TV and radio stations, trade association publications, bulletin boards and postings, neighborhood and minority newspapers and other communication vehicles important to the community.*

Photographs of League events accompany news articles and appear in the local papers whenever possible. League members not on the board are included in these pho-

tographs. Letters to the Editor are frequently used to inform the public of local, state or national League issues. All League news articles close with information on how to join the League and whom to contact for further information on the subject of the article.

The League is listed in the local phone book, has an email address and a website, and has either an office or a post office box. The League's website is useful to members and the public, well-designed, easily navigable, well publicized, and updated regularly. Opportunities to link the League's website to allies, coalitions, cosponsors, partner organizations, media sites, and government (election/auditor) websites are explored in order to further the reach of the League and to make contacting the League easier and more convenient.

SUCCESSFUL LEAGUES

Have a **bias for marketing** - Leagues that understand that everything they do is marketing, and who see every act, from program planning to how the phone is answered, as a marketing opportunity to pursue their mission and increase membership.

Have a **vision** for where they are going - This is so simple, yet often ignored. A strategic plan, both the process and the document are keys to success.

Are **financially empowered** - Leagues that have adequate dues and/or financial income from other sources including finance drives, grants, in-kind donations are better able to act on their mission without waiting for help.

Are **social entrepreneurs** - Leagues that are willing to take risks to perform their mission; to try (and often fail) and try again; to look at markets and provide services to support their mission rather than create bureaucracies to continue past, and possibly outdated practices.

Have a **rapid response** to changing circumstances - What percentages of your membership drives, programs, voter service, etc. were you providing in the same way (same time, same place, same method) five years ago? The world is changing and your League must have the ability to change with it.

Commitment and Marketing we believe are the keys to success and growth.

Your program is your product; it's what you offer your members, it's what attracts others to join...and it's what you do for your communities.

Packaging and marketing your product effectively is also important. People are busy, and countless other organizations, worthy causes and leisure activities are competing for their time and attention.

Commitment Number 1

Search Out Challenging Opportunities to Change Grow, Innovate, and Improve

Treat every new LWV activity as a start-over,
even if it isn't.

Question the status quo.

Send people shopping for ideas.

Put idea gathering on your own agenda.
Go out and find something that needs advocacy.
Assign people to the opportunities.
Renew LWV's committees.
Add adventure and fun to everyone's work.

Commitment Number 2

Experiment, Take Risks, and Learn from the Resulting Mistakes

Make it safe for others to experiment.
Eliminate firehosing.
Work even with ideas that sound strange initially.
Honor your risk takers.
Debrief every failure as well as every success.
Model risk taking.
Encourage possibility thinking.
Maximize opportunities for choice.

Commitment Number 3

Envision an Uplifting and Ennobling Future

Think first about LWV's past.
Determine what's next.
Write an article about how LWV has made a difference.
Write a short vision statement.
Act on intuition.
Test assumptions.
Become a futurist.

Commitment Number 4

Enlist Others in a Common Vision by Appealing to Their Values, Interests, Hopes, and Dreams

Identify LWV's constituents.
Find the common ground.
Breathe life into the vision.
Speak positively.
Speak from the heart.
Make the intangible tangible.
Listen first-and often.

Commitment Number 5

Foster Collaboration by Promoting Cooperative Goals and Building Trust

Always say we.
Increase interactions.
Focus on gains; not losses.
Form planning and problem-solving partnerships.
Go first.

Commitment Number 6

Strengthen People by Giving Power Away, Providing Choice, Developing Competence, Assigning Critical Tasks, and Offering Visible Support

Make sure delegated tasks are relevant.
Educate, educate, educate.
Organize an LWV "great huddle".
Make connections.
Make heroes of other people.

Commitment Number 7

Achieve Small Wins That Promote Consistent Progress and Build Commitment

Take it personally.
Make a plan.
Create a model.
Break it up and break it down.
Ask for volunteers.
Sell the benefits.

Commitment Number 8

Recognize Individual Contributions to the Success of Every Project

Be creative about rewards and recognition
and give them personally.
Make recognition public.
Design the reward and recognition system

participatively.
Provide feedback en route.
Create Pygmalions.
Find people who are doing things right.
Coach.

Commitment Number 9

Celebrate LWV accomplishments Regularly

Schedule celebrations.
Be a cheerleader *your* way.
Be a part of a cheering squad.
Have fun.
Determine your social network-and bolster it.
Plan a celebration right now.

Commitment Number 10

Have a Bias Toward Marketing