

League of Women Voters of Appleton
Lively Issues
January 28, 2017
Appleton Public Library
10:30 – 12:30 p.m.

Members present: William Kelly, Miriam Douglass, Beth English, Sara Companik, Elizabeth Laux, Helen Nagler, Sharon Fenlon, Jeanne Roberts, Jacqui Klimaszewski, Penny Robinson, Marti Hemwall, Cheryl Reissmann, Sandy Hubert, Marcia Hittle, Sue Waltman, Karen Bachhuber, Barb Kelly and Gayle Hardt

Guest: Patrick Casey

I. Welcome & Introductions

President Stephanie Malaney called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m. and welcomed members and guest. Attendees introduced themselves.

II. Overview of State Program – Stephanie Malaney

Stephanie referred to the LWVWI website and the information available to members including the state's position statements and the various issues the state is working on. Currently the state league is active with the roll out of online voter registration and natural resources – water quality.

III. Local Program – Gayle Hardt

Gayle Hardt, Vice President Programs reminded members that the recommendation coming out of the Lively Issues meeting last year was to update the education position statement. The board of directors reviewed that recommendation, and instead recommended that an ad hoc committee be formed to review the League's current position in order to identify portions of the position statement that need to be updated through study in 2017-2018. Their decision was based on the following reasoning: a review of the current position on education would provide focus for the study, the current study on land use planning and downtown Appleton was not completed, engagement by members was not at a level to carry out all that we needed to accomplish, strategic planning was underway, and the remainder of 2016 would require extensive efforts to register voters and turn out the vote.

A. Report and Recommendations by Education Review Committee – Marti Hemwall

Marti Hemwall presented the findings of the ad hoc committee. Committee members included Marti Hemwall (chair), Jim Bowman, Miriam Douglass, Sharon Fenlon, Jeanne Roberts and Gayle Hardt. The committee found the current positions to be dated and were frustrated by the absence of background materials from previous studies and updates to the current position.

Highlights of the report shared by Marti follow:

The gaps were:

- School funding – review LWVWI position on this topic
- School choice – tied to local control and school funding
- Local control – consider incorporating LWVWI position
- Early childhood education – can be addressed by expanding K-12 references to include, for example, “Birth to Grade 12”, or it could be a separate study if a more specific position is desired.

Suggested changes were:

- First section on definition - doesn't require full study but clarification of “equity”
- Curriculum portion of statement is largest and contains gaps as well as need for clarification in some places.
 - Alternative school choices – Greater depth of information needed.
 - Common Core – We don't have a position on this and it would require a study to determine if we need a position and if so, what? Addition of common core could affect entire section.
 - Education for students with exceptional needs – Clarification and consistency with federal legislation is needed. This section needs to be expanded.
 - Gifted and Talented – Review with local district and update rather than study.
 - Family Growth and Development – Revisions are being made by the school district to this program and this section needs updating.
- Staffing – Needs clarification in many places. Do we want to support mentoring of new teachers?
- Administration Quality – Needs clarification specifically in evaluation portion of this statement.

Discussion:

- Significant conversation about the study being focused on the Appleton school district followed the presentation by the committee. It was suggested that focusing on Appleton makes sense because our league is based in Appleton and we need to be respectful of other districts and other leagues. The position could be written in general terms to allow advocacy for effective public education by members living in other districts.
- Use LWVWI and LWVUS positions in our position statement.
- To address suggestions and recommendations offered by the committee, perhaps one group could undertake the editing, clarifying and including state positions, and a second could conduct a study.

B. Criteria for Lively Issues Discussion – Gayle Hardt

The purpose of Lively Issues is to plan for the 2017 – 2018 program year.

Recommendations from the meeting will be sent to the board for review and clarification and will then be voted on by members at the annual meeting scheduled for May 18th.

- Does the issue require a new position?
- Does the issue fall within LWV principles?
- Can LWV have an impact? Can government have an impact?
- Is the issue timely?
- What resources are needed for study and to take action?

C. Open Discussion of Local Issues

Gayle Hardt led the discussion. Members were asked to address issues according to the format of our position statements: local government, natural resources, and social policy. Suggestions may include ideas for a new study, or updating of a current position, or expansion of any of our positions. Suggestions may also include any current positions where action may be needed.

1. Local Government

Helen Nagler suggested that the state should go back to county plans for redistricting. Stephanie commented that LWVWI has been involved in the redistricting effort and is supporting a plan, in partnership with other non-partisan organizations, for how it could be done.

2. Natural Resources

There were no suggestions. Stephanie commented that LWVWI is active in this area.

3. Social Policy

- Immigrants and refugee resettlement was suggested for study by Jeanne Roberts. Our league doesn't have a position statement on this issue.
- Helen Nagler recommended that we undertake a review of our position on the local juvenile system. Helen commented that best practices of the past are no longer working. Funding for the system and moving to regional centers for housing should be looked at. This could be an opportunity to work with other leagues.
- Members agreed that updating our education position based on recommendations of the review committee should be added to the list for consideration.

IV. **Overview of National Program 2016 – 2018 Biennium – Sara Companik**

Sara attended the LWVUS 52nd National Convention in Washington D.C. this past June and provided a report.

- Chris Carson of California is the newly elected president.
- "Campaign for Making Democracy Work" is the national program for the next two years and includes action on the following: supporting voter protection and voter rights in states and local communities, restoration of the Voting Rights Act, online voter registration, expansion of early voting, money in politics, and redistricting.
- Sara reviewed other items acted on during the convention.
- The convention will be held in Chicago in 2018.

Members expressed their appreciation to Sara for her contribution to the league by attending the national convention.

V. **Apply Criteria and Vote for Recommended Study**

Motion by Marcia Hittle that the league adopt a study to update the education position as necessary based on the recommendations of the review committee and to be done at the discretion of the board. Second by Barb Kelly. Motion passed.

Motion by Helen Nagler that the league review our position on the local juvenile system. Second by Penny Robinson. Motion passed.

Motion by Jeanne Roberts that the league study refugee and immigrant resettlement in the Fox Valley. Second by Elizabeth Laux. Motion passed.

It was consensus by members present at the meeting that we should move forward with study and updates to our education position. This information will be forwarded to the board.

Concern was expressed by Helen Nagler that it seemed as though decisions on the outcome of the Lively Issues meeting had been made before the meeting. Members were reminded by Gayle Hardt that the recommendation from last year's Lively Issues meeting – to update and study our education position - was taken under consideration by the board. The board then developed a recommendation to first conduct a review of the current position in 2017 with study and update to follow in 2017 – 2018. This was approved by membership at the 2016 annual meeting.

VI. Action Discussion – Stephanie Malaney & Penny Robinson

Stephanie talked about the importance of taking action on issues as individuals. There are many forms of taking action such as letters to the editor, calling and writing legislators. The national and state leagues provide email alerts to the membership when action is required. Penny shared information on how to sign up on the national website for legislative updates.

As part of the strategic plan, Stephanie and Penny are forming an Advocacy Committee. A meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 1st at 6:00 p.m., at the College Avenue Copper Rock. All members are invited to attend. Public hearings by the Joint Finance Committee will be scheduled this spring, and the league would like to have a voice. One priority is the need for transparency in government. Helen Nagler commented on the need to monitor resolutions at the state level. Sara Companik stated that the Wheeler Report is another way to keep informed and one can sign-up on line. Stephanie reminded everyone that we are a non-partisan organization.

Jacqui Klimaszewski shared information about an upcoming WILD training - a leadership training - that will be available in Kaukauna in February. The training will provide extensive education on the process of public hearings. She will be sending information on the training via Mail Chimp.

VII. Adjournment

President Stephanie Malaney adjourned the meeting at 12:33 p.m.