**League of Women Voters of New Mexico**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**September 16, 2023**

**Via Zoom**

**Attendees:** Kathy Brook, Karen Douglas, Dick Mason, Edwina Jaramillo, Jo Galvan Nash, Hannah Burling, Judy Williams, Felicia Orth, Jody Larson, Kathe Kanim, Donna Sandoval, Janet Blair, Barbara Calef, Meredith Machen

**Call to Order and Approval of Agenda**

A quorum was established. The meeting was called to order at 11:00 by Co-President Kathy Brook. Motion to approve the Agenda by Janet Blair was seconded by Donna Sandoval. All present voted in favor.

**Approval of Minutes**

Discussion regarding the minutes of the July 15th meeting minutes centered on dues structure. However, it was decided to set aside the discussion until Kathy Brook receives clarification. The minutes were approved without any changes.

**Co-Presidents’ Reports**

Hannah Burling reported on the Election Integrity Project, in which the League is a partner. Jo, Janet, Dick, Edwina and Hannah have participated. This is an outgrowth of the 2023 Democracy Project which included a video produced by Janet Blair and airedby KNME discussing election security. This year Janet and Jo went to election camp, which is sponsored by the Secretary of State (SOS). Eighteen people filmedshort videos including fourteen in English, three in Spanish, and one in Navajo to be shown during the election season. Hannah thinks this is an attractivefunding opportunity. The League is working with a coalition that includes NM First, KNME, and the SOS. Janet praised the group’s work. Janet Blair provided media training for the NM county clerks. Dick addedthat Hannah will be presenting this on October 14 to the Sandoval Democratic Party.

Kathy Brook reported on the August state leader meeting with LWVUS. The new dues structure will probably be launched in 2025.

LWVUS has a moonshot goal to abolish the Electoral College, but is not planning to publicize it at present. LWVUS projects this will take decades to accomplish and state LWV responses have not been definitive.

The Carter Center, which is funding the Election Integrity Project and the Democracy Project, asked if the League would like to participate in a study of election work. We will be invited to a meeting with other groups.

Kathy asked whether LWVNM should convene a strategic planning session. Meredith said she would vote against devoting one or more days to this effort. Donna reported that the CNM facilitated strategic planning meeting was 3½ hours and resulted in agreement on their top goals. Dick agreed with Meredith. Hannah said a strategic plan could assist with fundraising for the 501c4. She noted that Felicia had facilitated the SFC meeting. Judy felt it could focus our work.Barbara mentioned that the prior effort facilitated by Martha Romero did not result in major changes and that we discuss priorities before every legislative session. Dick commented that the League needs flexibility for new opportunities when they arise and should not be limited by a strategic plan. Hannah agreed with Dick, but felt that the plan could allow for flexibility. A strategic plan is not be the same as current legislative priorities. Jody said that the problem was not with the previous planning process but a lack of implementation. High performing and excellent organizations have strategic plans. She would support another effort, but it must be implemented. Barbara said the current LWVNM Strategic Plan was produced in 2020. Dick asked that it be distributed for discussion during a future LWVNM Board meeting. Meredith said there is an edited 2021 version. Kathy suggested that it could be helpful for new board member orientation.

Kathy said that LWVNM needs to review its financial policies and procedures and requested assistance. Dick and Hannah volunteered to work with her. Dick raised an issue concerning funds that have been approved but not spent. The committee will address that. Kim Sorensen, as treasurer, should be included.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Kathy led the discussion of the treasurer’s report in Kim’s absence. The current fund balance of $47,745 includes a deposit of $3,000 from the Ed Fund, which Hannah explained was the remainder of a $5,000 grant from Thornburg after CNM was paid for printing the Native American Voter Guide in 2022.

Kathy said the liability insurance premium related to our office rental was due. Hannah approved the payment and Kathy will mail the check.

In her report Kim pointed out that the balance is close to $50,000, which is more than 30% of the budget. She suggested the board may wish to put some of the funds in CDs. (Kathy noted that $11,000 of that is from a grant from LWVUS.) Judy said that should be an issue for the revision of our financial policy. Should would like to see a project-related budget and suggested that a strategic planning activity could help focus the spending of some of the funds. Hannah said $2,500 was part of a donation for 501C4 functions. She agreed that funding should be assigned to projects. Jo recommended that unencumbered funds be invested in CDs soon as interest rates are currently high. Kathy said the board has no indication of how much is encumbered, which is a serious problem.

After lengthy (and confusing) discussion and one rescinded motion, Meredith made a motion, seconded by Dick, that Kim or a designee put a total of $10,000 into one or more CDs. Jo made a friendly amendment that first it be determined that the unencumbered amount exists. Meredith accepted the amendment. All voted in favor.

**Action Committee Report**

Dick gave the Action Report in Akkana’s absence. There will be an educational presentation on reserve funds and revolving funds in November and in December Rep. Chandler will present on potential gun safety legislation. Also, in December the Action Committee will resume weekly Zoom meetings.

The Advocacy Workshop will be held on January 6, 2024, with Rep. Harper, Sen Hemphill, and Linda Siegle. The Legislative Prep will be on Jan 11; League Day will be on January 25. LWVNM will have three tables: LWVNM, Fair districts NM, and the Election Integrity Project.

Meredith thanked the Action Committee for scheduling the gun safety meeting.

Dick noted that Special Projects must be approved by the NM Board. Legislative priorities are determined by Action Committee. Judy asked about “Economic Security” in the Special Projects Report. Meredith responded that it includes the teacher shortage, the 12,000 non-citizen residents who are graduates but are prevented from working, and paid family and medical leave. Judy Williams said these activities need to be rethought. Hannah said these actions are part of the Advocacy (*sic*) Committee.

***Redistricting Report***

Hannah reported on the Amicus Brief, which concerned setting standards for redistricting and did not support either party in Republican Party vs. SOS. The trial is set to begin on September 27 in the 5th District Court and she plans to attend. The decision is expected before October 5. Dick noted that Hannah has requested that the proceedings be broadcast via Zoom but that decision is up to the judge.

***Modernization of the Legislature Report***

Judy has been participating on the Modernization of the Legislature Project. They are forming a Communications Subcommittee to educate the public regarding legislation that may pass during the 2024 session, namely a joint resolution to create an independent commission on legislative salaries. Judy was seeking volunteers to join the subcommittee. Janet Blair and Jo Galvan Nash volunteered. Meredith was already on the committee, representing AAUW.

***Redistricting, White Papers***

Fair Districts NM, led by LWVNM, is continuing to work on the joint resolution for an Independent Redistricting Commission for the 2024 session. Dick, Hannah, and Heather Balas all serve on the drafting committee.

Hannah asked if League members would be interested in helping to draft white papers in support of our positions such as budget, redistricting, gun violence, and reproductive issues. Judy asked whether legislative modernization was still a priority and Hannah confirmed this. Meredith suggested adding immigration, licensing for undocumented workers. Dick pointed out that we have documentation on the budget from NM Voices for Children and some of the other issues in the list.

Dick and Hannah recommend one-page fact sheets for legislators and advocates, to be approved by the board. Hannah indicated redistricting may not be germane during the 2024 30-day session. Meredith asked about the status of Heather Balas’s analysis of election practices in NM. No one knew the answer. Meredith also mentioned guns in public places and Dick commented that LWVNM supports gun safety in an existing position.

**Education Report**

Meredith said that Think NM will be advocating for smaller class sizes for elementary grades, but there is a tremendous teacher shortage. Teacher licensing standards need to be raised. AG Raul Torres will take over the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit.

Jo asked if the AG takeover will produce better compliance? Meredith said that the AG can enforce the requirement.

**Program**

***Tribal Law Study***

Judy is proceeding with the effort to wrap up the tribal law study. She wanted to interview someone in the Law and Indigenous People’s Program at UNM but has learned that they are only concerned with national issues. She said she is willing to summarize the reports, but does not wish to post the four or five interviews, only one of which was with a Native American.

Jody moved and Meredith seconded to terminate the tribal law study with no consensus or position. Jody said we should just accept whatever Judy chooses to post. All voted in favor.

***Nuclear Issues***

Karen Douglas reported on the Nuclear Issues Study, which includes four Tasks and was approved at Convention last April. Study committee meetings were held in August and September. The final product will be four study reports each about 5 pages in length with additional bibliography and references.

One committee member has provided a recorded interview. If interviews offering alternate perspectives are conducted to provide a balanced view, these will supplement study reports for LWVNM member education prior to the December consensus meetings.

The completed Task 4 report was distributed to the other committee members to illustrate an appropriate level of detail for these reports. Task reports are to be completed by the end of October and will be available to members prior to the consensus meetings.

There have been some staffing issues as two of the task chairs have experienced health problems.

Consensus questions will be considered for approval at the November LWVNM Board meeting. Karen is planning on two consensus meetings in December, one evening and one weekend. Results of our study will be available to other states in 2024, assuming that the consensus meetings support adoption of a Nuclear Issues Position by the LWVNM Board at the January meeting. There were no questions about Karen’s report.

**Governance**

Two items needed to be ratified by the Board:

The Executive Committee had agreed with Lora Lucero to ask for LWVUS Action in support of the Children’s Climate Change case. Dick moved and Judy seconded to ratify the decision made by the Executive Committee. All voted in favor.

The board had voted electronically in favor of participation in the Amicus Brief concerning the District Court gerrymandering case. Barbara moved to ratify the decision and Kathe Kanim seconded. All voted in favor. In response to a question from Meredith, Barbara said that the bylaws require ratification at a regular board meeting following emergency polling of the Board.

**Ed Fund Report**

Hannah thanked Meredith for her work on the collaboration document and the forms. She said that the ED Fund Board does not need LWVNM Board approval for its actions although it is driven by the state Board. The ED Fund Board members include Hannah, who is the president, Kim, Jody, Meredith, Karen Wentworth, and Rebecca Chaiken, all of whom are League members. The details will be in quarterly reports. The treasurer and accountant will be the same as for the state Board. Barbara recommended adding Felicia to the Ed Fund Board. Barbara said there were grammatical errors and redundancy in the document and offered to send her edits. Felicia commented that the document distributed was not transparent as there was no explanation for denial of funding. She added that Barbara and Akkana have also proposed edits and that the ED Fund must maintain an arms-length relationship for protection of the LWVNM Board. She said she had offered to help draft the document and is willing to help edit it. Meredith indicated that she would be happy to receive edits.

During the discussion Kathe recommended that funding requests come from NM Board. She was concerned that the Ed Fund Board would change the direction of the state Board. Dick was concerned about a request for funding from outside the state League. He does not want such requests to be considered. Hannah pointed out that the proposals must be approved by the state Board. Kathy Brook requested that this issue be discussed during a separate meeting.

**Membership**

Hannah was part of a group called “Midwestern Leagues.” She saw a “nifty document” that was sent to new members and proposed that we do something similar. Judy pointed out that Lynn Jones maintains NM roster and could send the list of new members to Hannah. Barbara said that Akkana has offered to prepare an orientation document for new members. Kathy Brook said that SNM does a new member orientation twice a year and they have a PowerPoint presentation for that purpose.

**Fundraising**

Hannah said that all fundraising has moved to the ED Fund. Raising 501C4 funds will continue with Hannah and Dick. Data collection would improve efforts and stories of interest would be appreciated. JEDI would appreciate swag for their tabling events.

**JEDI**

No report.

**Voter Services**

Edwina reported that the Voter Services Committee has met four times so far to exchange information and has met with the Communications Committee. Our intern uploaded Vote411 information for all the local Leagues but encountered a problem with some of the race names. The local Leagues were able to send out their letters, but the letters for the candidates in the remaining 21 counties were delayed. (There are three elections for irrigation districts on a different schedule.) At present there is no one assigned to do a coordinated communication strategy. They will need funding for the effort in 2024. Also, they will need funding for Voter Guides in Spanish and Navajo.

Judy commented that Maya is a very effective professional, not a student intern. The election proclamation race list differed from the Vote 411candidate portal information. Megan Brown at LWVUS should find a method to avoid this during the 2024 general election. Hannah said that the Ed Fund could be used for translation but Navajo translations are for PSAs only. The League cannot translate candidate responses.

Akkana wrote that all the local Leagues have been coordinating well and Maya has decreased the workload for local Leagues. Edwina has been very well organized. Edwina said that Maya has been a godsend. Janet announced that the CNM Voter Guide for Mid Rio Grande Conservancy District was going live on September 16.

**Special Projects**

* Reducing Alcohol Harm: Governor vetoed this bill as too difficult to administer. Currently working with Representatives Sedillo-Lopez and Ferrari. Meredith will distribute.
* Jo asked that any further information about gun bills be sent out prior to the presentation in December. Meredith will send it out. (Dick objected to calling “gun safety” a special project.)

**Local League Reports**

Submitted in writing and will be included in the next edition of *La Palabra*.

**Announcements, Initiatives, and Other Business**

The next LWVNM Board meeting will be on November 18 via Zoom.

The *La Palabra* deadline is September 19.

Barbara moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:58 p.m. and Jo seconded.

Written by Karen Douglas (October 24, 2023)

Edited by Barbara Calef (October 28, 2023)