**League of Women Voters of New Mexico**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**November 18, 2023**

**Via Zoom**

**Board Members Present**

Kathy Brook, Co-President

Hannah Burling, Co-President and Ed Fund President

Barbara Calef, Second Vice President

Rebecca Chaiken, Secretary

Kim Sorensen, Treasurer and Ed Fund Treasurer

Dick Mason, Voting and Elections

Akkana Peck, Action Chair and Webmaster

Meredith Machen, Special Projects

Edwina Jaramillo, Voter Services

Karen Douglas, Nuclear Issues

Janet Blair, Communications

Donna Sandoval, LWVCNM President

Felicia Orth, LWVLA President

Kathe Kanim, LWVSNM Co-President

Jo Galván Nash, LWVSNM Co-President

Heather Balas, Director at Large

Jody Larson, Archivist and LWVSFC Liaison

**Call to Order and Introductions**

Kathy called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. All members introduced themselves and explained their position with the LWVNM.

**Approval of Agenda and Approval of Minutes**

Kathy noted one correction to the agenda. Meredith moved that the amended agenda be approved, and Dick seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Rebecca noted one correction made to the September 16, 2023, minutes. Dick moved to approve the amended board meeting minutes and Barbara seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

**Co-Presidents’ Reports**

Hannah was part of a working group organized to assess League capacity, which will be vital going into next year. The group discussed finances, communication, structure, operations, policies, allies, and Inter League Organizations (ILOs). Strategic planning will be essential. The group was made up of several state Leagues, including Montana and Utah.

Hannah also asked all local League presidents to fill out the LWVUS survey.

Hannah was invited to speak at the LWVCNM board meeting. This League was unaware of the new dues structure, which the LWVNM board discussed in July. Barbara said that she is still confused about this new plan for dues and is skeptical that it will work. Barbara specifically is uncertain about who makes the decisions, what platform will be used, and how the dues will be collected. Donna asked how donations would be handled. Dick suggested that we get a written report from LWVUS to share with the local League presidents. [Kathy subsequently sent a report on the new dues structure via email.]

Kathy reported that LWVNM received a ~$13,000 grant from LWVUS for work on communications in preparation for the 2024 election. Quarterly reporting will be required, with the next report due on January 15, 2024. Kathy suggested that any contacts Leagues have with the public on issues related to voting would be very helpful for these reports.

The Executive Committee met at least once since the last board meeting, and it was decided that our board meetings need more formality. Going forward, Kathy will try to call on board members before they speak. Furthermore, once a motion is made, seconded, and repeated by the meeting chair, any subsequent amendments need to be voted on.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer's Report for the time frame of May 1 to November 18, 2023, was shared. Kim detailed several line items which differ between actual amounts and budgeted amounts. The actual income totaled $13,434 and the actual expenses totaled $1,687, for a net balance of $11,747.

Kim noted that we have a substantial cash balance ($48,670.72) and she suggested that a portion of these funds should be put into a Certificate of Deposit (CD). Dick moved that the Executive Committee should decide the amount of the CD and Rebecca seconded this motion. Jo then moved that the Executive Committee also decide the length of the CD, and Jody seconded this motion. All voted in favor of Jo’s motion, after which all voted in favor of Dick’s motion.

Kim asked how many Members at Large we have and if she should be receiving their dues. Hannah said there are between 8 and 10 of these members. Kim will ask Lynn Jones for the specifics.

**Action Committee**

***Redistricting***

Hannah said that LWVNM is at the advocacy stage on this topic, and nothing has been filed yet. Draft legislation to create an Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) has gone to the Legislative Council Service. She noted that, despite our earlier victory on this topic, it will be a “long slog” because legislators do not like to give up the power to create their own districts. Heather said that Dick, Hannah, and Fair Districts staff have worked with clarity and conscientiousness on developing three different versions of draft legislation, one of which is favored by the League. Furthermore, the New Mexico Supreme Court will be hearing the case on Republican charges of gerrymandering Congressional District 2 (CD2) on Monday morning. Felicia will listen to the arguments on our behalf.

***Legislative Modernization***

Judy was not present for this meeting, but she submitted a detailed report. This report noted that the contractors hired by the Legislative Council Service to study staffing for legislators has wrapped up. Of the $2.5 million appropriated for this project, just under $2 million remains. It is not known what the balance will be used for. Three main models are being considered and surveys sent to legislators had a good response rate. The majority of Democrats support having year-round staff while only a minority of Republicans are in favor. Depending on the model, estimated costs range from $4.1 million to $13.9 million. Issues for the legislative session will be in the areas of staffing and session length.

***Calls to Action***

Hannah reported that it will be crucial to activate our membership for the 2024 election. We already have a tool used to do this called OutReach Circle (ORC) which is free for us to use. However, there is no one on the board with the necessary time or expertise, so she suggests that we hire a social media contractor for this job, which would include text banking. In New Mexico, social media managers are typically paid $30 per hour, but the contractor currently being explored (Leila Selim) charges $40 per hour. While we estimate our need to be 12 hours per week from December to the end of the session in February, Ms. Selim is only available for 10 hours per week. The $4,000 this project would cost has already been allocated, so no vote needs to be taken on this expenditure. Despite no vote being needed, Hannah said that she would provide the board with background on Ms. Selim.

Dick noted that we have already approved $10,000 for advocacy, but only $2,500 has been spent so far. Our current processes do not deal with such carry-over of unspent funds and Dick maintains that this process needs to be put into place. He asked that when expenditures are approved, a new line item be added and carried over into the next fiscal year.

Edwina suggested that a social media contractor will be needed until the 2024 election, not just through February. Voter Services will need a public relations person for help on Vote411. Kathy expressed concern about the lack of documentation on these commitments and said we need to do better going forward. With changes made to the makeup of the board, not everyone was present when these decisions were made. Heather said that she is happy to help with a subgroup working on closing out grants and rolling over leftover funds. Jo suggested that before any vote is taken on the expenditure of funds, the amount should be specified along with a short outline of service.

Kim said that, from an accounting perspective, she needs to know what has been appropriated from grants for projects and she needs to know how much to deduct from each grant. Unspent funds will automatically carry over. Barbara asked that the Treasurer’s report include these details so the board can keep track.

***Action Calendar***

On Wednesday, November 29 at 6:30 p.m., there will be a Zoom meeting with Charles Sallee, the director if the Legislative Finance Committee. New Mexico’s Reserve and Revolving Funds will be discussed.

On December 5 at 6:30 p.m., there will be a Zoom meeting with Representative Christine Chandler, who will provide an outline of expected gun legislation in the 2024 session. The Governor is expected to put gun safety on her call. The Courts, Corrections, and Justice Committee has been hearing presentations on various gun safety issues.

On December 6 at 6:00 p.m., the first Action Committee Zoom meeting will be held.

The dates for next year’s legislative session and our advocacy events are as follows:

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| January 2 – January 12 | Legislation may be pre-filed |
| January 6 | Advocacy Workshop (10 to noon) |
| January 9 | LWVNM board meeting to set priorities |
| January 11 | Legislative Prep for League members (via Zoom) |
| January 16 | Opening Day at the Legislature |
| January 24 | LWVNM Reception |
| January 25 | League Day at the Legislature (redistricting and budget) |
| January 31 | Deadline for Introduction |
| February 15 | Legislative Session ends at noon |
| March 6 | Legislation not acted upon by Governor is pocket-vetoed |

Meredith asked that Zoom links be included in the calendar.

**Ed Fund**

***Ed Fund Report***

According to Hannah’s report, the Ed Fund board has been meeting monthly to set up the structure, policies, and procedures which will be needed as we move forward. Felicia was welcomed as a new board member.

The latest Thornburg grant, in the amount of $60,000, was approved and the funds have been deposited. The money will be spent on redistricting efforts, along with voter information, education, and publicity.

The Fundraising Committee, which was formed in April 2023 during the LWVNM Convention, continues to meet. Fundraising materials are being developed and committee members are beginning to reach out to organizations for the funds we will need for 2024.

The Election Integrity Project videos and audio have been circulated. Radio and Spotify are being used in rural areas.

***Collaboration Policy***

The Collaboration Policy, which was provided to the board in advance of this meeting, is an internal document and continues to be revised. The policy continues to go back and forth between the LWVNM board and the Ed Fund board. Hannah thanked Meredith, Barbara, and Felicia for their work on this document.

Prior to this meeting, Kathy provided some input on this document to Hannah and Meredith. One sticking point is the phrase “…and not influence the outcome of an election,” the second to last bullet point on page 2. As Heather noted, Fair Districts *is* trying to influence the outcome of an election. Amending or deleting this wording was discussed. Dick clarified that in our proposal to Thornburg, it is specified that we are working with our partners so they can educate and advocate.

Felicia noted that the entire point of this document is to protect the 501(c)(3) status of the Ed Fund. The language comes from IRS guidelines and from a similar document prepared by LWVIL. She explained that there are some activities the 501(c)(3) organization will do on its own, and some activities the 501(c)(4) organization will do on its own. But it is entirely appropriate under IRS guidelines for the 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations to do some things together. Felicia said that our documents need to delineate responsibilities and expenditures.

***Thornburg Grant Administration***

Before our 501(c)(3) Ed Fund was established, LWVSFC acted as fiscal agent for Thornburg grants. It was recently learned that SFC never took administrative fees to which they were entitled. Hannah spoke to their treasurer, who will go back into their records to determine their costs. Typically, they would be entitled to a 10 percent fee.

**Program**

***Nuclear Issues Study***

Karen provided proposed consensus questions for the board to consider for the expedited Nuclear Issues Study LWVNM is undertaking. Four tasks were previously identified and agreed to by the delegates at the LWVNM convention. Each task chair was asked to propose consensus questions. In addition to the draft questions, the board was also provided with the reports prepared by each task chair, along with interviews conducted with four experts in the field.

Before the consensus questions were discussed, there was extensive discussion on the study itself. Jody asked what we are hoping to accomplish with this study and what happens if the outcome of this study differs from the LWVUS position. Karen responded that we have guidance from LWVUS to conduct the study and develop a position, with the hope that other states will concur at the 2024 Convention.

Dick moved to approve the consensus questions provided and Barbara seconded this motion. Subsequently it was decided to review and vote on each question individually. After each question was discussed and changes were proposed, a motion to accept was made and seconded. A vote was then taken, and a majority voted in favor of the question or revised language. The following questions were approved in this manner:

**Task #1 – Chair Karen Douglas**

***Summarize the current contribution nuclear energy provides as both a baseload and a greenhouse gas free source for domestic/international energy production.***

1. Should both baseload energy sources and variable/renewable energy sources be weighted in the energy mix to ensure power is available to consumers when needed?
2. As limiting carbon emissions is a prerequisite for minimizing global climate change, how important should the total carbon footprint be when considering a GHG-free energy option?

**Task #2 – Chair Kathy Brook**

***Identify deterrents to nuclear energy expansion and any proven and effective remedies (consider the LWVNM Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage Safety Position adopted in 2021).***

1. Will the US be able to achieve its targets to mitigate climate change over the next 20-25 years without maintaining or increasing the use of nuclear power?
2. What are the most serious barriers to greater use of nuclear power generation in the US?

**Task #3 – Chair Jeanne Logsdon**

***Consider the current U.S. energy situation and domestic nuclear plant status including closures with related impacts on states.***

1. Should a combination of life extension of the current nuclear reactors and construction of new reactors of the same type be used by the US to meet its goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050?
2. What criteria are most important in deciding whether to build a new nuclear power plant?
3. How much should costs to consumers be considered in deciding what type of investments a public utility should consider in order to meet future demand for electricity?

**Task #4 – Chair George Chandler**

***Evaluate newer advanced reactor concepts with enhanced safety features and efficiency with related implementation status.***

1. Should the League support the use of Advanced Nuclear Reactors to have a positive impact on meeting the goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050?

A vote then was taken on Dick’s original motion to approve the set of consensus questions, as amended. A majority voted in favor.

**Governance**

***Ratification Item***

On November 7, 2023, the Executive Committee, with Barbara absent, met to discuss participation in filing an *amicus* brief in the appeal of the New Mexico redistricting case to the New Mexico Supreme Court. Kathy moved and Hannah seconded the motion to participate in filing the brief, contingent upon Felicia reviewing the brief and providing her approval of its contents and on receiving information about who else would be signing the brief. After receiving additional information, on November 10, 2024, the Executive Committee, with Akkana absent, voted for LWVNM to join in signing the brief. Subsequently it was learned that a deadline was missed. Regardless, our bylaws require ratification by the LWVNM board. Kathy moved to ratify the vote and Barbara seconded this motion. The majority approved ratification. Going forward, Hannah made it clear to our partners that more lead time is needed for us to make such decisions.

***Financial Policies***

Kathy provided a revised Financial Policies document but there was no time left in the meeting to discuss it. She asked for any feedback and will add it to the agenda for our next board meeting.

**Voter Services**

Edwina submitted a detailed report. She noted that it has been very challenging to get GIS files from the Secretary of State (SOS). The SOS hired a contractor to collect these files, but the process was slow, the data incorrect, or incomplete. Edwina recommends that she, Akkana, Hannah, and Kathy meet with the SOS in January or February to discuss these issues. Edwina will prepare an outline of topics to be discussed.

The list of race names was also an issue. The names used in the Proclamation sometimes differed from the names used in the race/candidate portal. Maia Pugh did a lot of work on correcting these issues.

Regarding publicity, local Leagues did their own, but none was done at the state level. Edwina recommended a communications strategy on how to reach out to the 21 counties not covered by local Leagues. Edwina hopes to meet with Janet and the presidents of the local Leagues to discuss what she sees as a five-year plan.

Akkana said that her experience with Vote411 was problematic. She had issues logging in, the type was hard to read, and it was difficult to compare candidates. If these problems continue, Akkana suggests that we opt out in the future. Edwina will bring this up at our January meeting.

**Local League Reports**

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

**Announcements, Initiatives, and Other Business**

The *La Palabra* deadline is November 27, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

Written by Rebecca Chaiken (November 22, 2023)

Edited by Barbara Calef (November 23, 2023)