**League of Women Voters of New Mexico**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**March 2, 2024**

**6739 Academy Road, Albuquerque and Via Zoom**

**Board Members Present**

Kathy Brook, Co-President

Hannah Burling, Co-President and Ed Fund President

Barbara Calef, Second Vice President

Judy Williams, Past President

Rebecca Chaiken, Secretary (via Zoom)

Kim Sorensen, Treasurer and Ed Fund Treasurer (via Zoom)

Dick Mason, Voting and Elections

Akkana Peck, Action Chair and Webmaster (via Zoom)

Meredith Machen, Special Projects (via Zoom)

Edwina Jaramillo, Voter Services (via Zoom)

Karen Douglas, Nuclear Issues

Janet Blair, Communications (via Zoom)

Donna Sandoval, LWVCNM President

Felicia Orth, LWVLA President

Jo Galván Nash, LWVSNM Co-President (via Zoom)

Jody Larson, Archivist and LWVSFC Liaison

**Guests**

Starlyn Brown (via Zoom)

Linda Miller

Anne Galer

Betsy Carlson

**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**

One minor change was made to the agenda. Donna moved that the amended agenda be approved, and Meredith seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Karen moved that the January 20, 2024, minutes be approved, and Dick seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

**Co-Presidents’ Reports**

Hannah is working on a membership welcome piece. She hopes to be able to include links to all the local League’s websites and to have a link to it included in all local Leagues’ messaging to new members.

As a reminder, the LWVUS convention will be held in Washington, D.C. from June 27 to June 30 at the Washington Hilton and online. Every League is entitled to at least one delegate. Leagues with 50 to 99 members can have two delegates; Leagues with 100 to 149 members can have three delegates, and so on. LWVNM can send three delegates. Dick and Hannah would both like to attend. Hannah noted that those who wish to attend the convention must pay for their own travel expenses. Barbara added that local Leagues do not always send their full complement of delegates, so if a League member wishes to attend and vote, it can be arranged.

The Election Integrity Project, which is an outgrowth of the Democracy Project, is starting up again. It is not a formal coalition, but organizations and businesses working together to improve civil discourse and candidate good behavior.

Joanna Velasquez continues to coordinate our JEDI committee but is constrained by her job clerking in the Court of Appeals. We are looking at scheduling DEI training for the board.

League Day at the Legislature was a great occasion. We had at least 45 guests including several reporters. There were four legislators and several people from state agencies. Many volunteers showed up to help and we made lots of new connections. The speaker at the event (Raúl Torres) was great, but the venue (Rio Chama) was quite poor and very expensive. Next year we will explore a new venue, such as La Fonda or The Drury. Hannah asked for a couple of volunteers, who are not on the Action Committee, to explore the options and help with the planning for next year.

During a webinar on voter intimidation, LWVUS has asked us to recognize, track, and report to them (in addition to Common Cause) any attempts at voter intimidation in the upcoming election. One member should be the point person and we have been promised support from the LWVUS legal team should a lawsuit become necessary.

Kathy reported that there have been important changes in personnel at LWVUS. With the death of Deborah Turner, Sania Irwin has moved from the Vice Presidency to serve as our new President. Alma Couverthie (Chief of Programs) and Kelly McFarland (Chief of Staff) have agreed to serve as interim co-CEOs while a search is conducted to fill the position vacated by Virginia Kase Solomón.

The transition to a new membership system is scheduled to begin in November 2024. Once the new joining system is in place beginning in January 2025, member dues will come to LWVUS via ChapterSpot and be split, with 47 percent sent to state Leagues and 20 percent sent to local Leagues. State and local Leagues will be able to determine the frequency with which funds will be transferred from their League “Stripe” account to their bank account. This will allow Leagues to limit the number of transfers and make it easier for treasurers to reconcile their accounts while not restricting cash flow. Also, there will no longer be a distinct household membership. This should simplify record keeping and reinforce the idea that all members of the League have equal status. Members joining from the same household can choose to pay lower dues in the pay-what-you-can model.

The new DEI policy reads as follows: “*Discrimination or harassment of any kind will not be accepted within the League, including but not limited to race, socio-economic status, age, ability status, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, or marital status. The League is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging for all people. The League is an organization that respects and values the richness of our community and our members. The collective sum of our individual differences and life experiences represents not only our culture, but our reputation and the organization's mission and achievements as well*.” A DEI webinar is scheduled for March 5 beginning at 2:00 p.m.

In response to a question posed by Karen, Kathy responded that LWVUS will have a “donate” button for donations to go to the state or local League. However, if the donation is made as part of a dues payment, it will be split amongst LWVUS, the state League, and the local League. Leagues will need to be mindful of this and educate members on the best way to donate. In response to several questions posed by Barbara, Kathy explained that members will still be able to pay by check, but this will involve more work by the local League. Stripe is the payment infrastructure and ChapterSpot is the organization LWVUS selected to manage membership. Meredith added that all questions related to this new system will be explained in detail at the LWVUS Convention.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Kim provided the Treasurer’s Report dated March 2, 2024. Since January 20, LWVNM has incurred $5,790.07 in expenses, including $308.48 for Zoom; $65 for the Make Democracy Work award; $4,200.43 for the Legislative Reception; and $1,216.16 for the public relations contract for social media. There were no revenues.

The Alcohol Harms Remediation Act fiduciary account has a balance of $3,227.12. We are holding these funds for the coalition. It does not affect our balance or revenue.

The LWVNM Make Democracy Work grant has a balance of $15,065.09.

The bank balance is $57,624.02. Checks totaling $5,582.47 are outstanding.

The unrestricted fund balance is $33,749.34 ($57,624.02-$3,227.12-$15,065.09-$5,582.47).

In response to a question posed by Edwina, Kim said that the $5,000 owed to LWVUS for Vote411 was paid by the Ed Fund.

Judy asked what we are going to do with the Make Democracy Work grant balance. Hannah said the money can be used for Vote411 publicity and public service announcements. Dick suggested the money be donated to the Ed Fund. Kathy noted that the grant was to LWVNM, which is 501(c)(4).

Judy asked to see the spreadsheet which includes actual and budget income and expenses. Kim said she is happy to oblige, but her target dates for providing this information are April and October. Kathy said we will need this information for the April Council, but otherwise this can be revisited.

**Action Committee**

Akkana reported that the legislative session was short but eventful. Our top priorities were Voting and Elections and Ethics (including Redistricting); Modernization of the Legislature (meaning longer sessions and paying legislators); Budgets and Taxes; and Gun Safety. In addition, the Action Committee tracked bills on Education, Health Care, Environment, and a few other topics. The Action Committee had high hopes at the beginning of the session, but by the end of the session a lot of good bills stalled, either in committee or on the House floor.

Some of the bills we supported that passed included: HB182, Election Changes, which was about fraudulent AI-generated publicity; SB108, Distribution to the Election Fund; SB5, Firearms Near Polling Places; SB 137, School Board & Charter School Governing Council Requirements; HB171, High School Graduation Requirements; HB 41, Clean Transportation Fuels Standards; and HB91, Geothermal Resource Project Fund.

Akkana added that the budget that passed looks good, and included a lot of programs we support.

The Action Committee was disappointed that none of the legislative modernization bills passed, along with only a few from each of our other priority categories. In particular, the Paid Family and Medical Leave bill was defeated on the House floor. In the debriefing at the end of the session, many advocates expressed frustration at the inefficiency of the legislature. The short 30-day session might not be such a problem if so much time wasn’t wasted on memorials, recognition certificates, and filibustering. The Action Committee is working on a wish list of improvements they would like to see, which they hope to advocate for before next year’s session.

Meredith said that a special session on Public Safety was likely. Judy heard a rumor that there may be a special session on Hydrogen.

Regarding Redistricting, Hannah said that the Senate and House joint resolution stalled due to timing. It did not get to the legislators in time for a vote. Because Liz Stefanics moved to table it, it still has some form of life. Dick said that legislators will need to tell us what their objections are. Hannah added that the coalition was thrilled to welcome the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission.

**Program**

In advance of Council, Judy said we review LWVNM positions to determine if any changes are needed and to consider concurrences with other Leagues’ positions. We also review LWVUS positions with the same purposes in mind.

LWVVT asked us to “…support putting ‘Concurrence at LWVUS Convention: Update the US Privatization position by adding the Vermont position’ on the agenda for discussion and voting…” Dick moved that we concur, and Meredith seconded this motion. For various reasons, Judy, Barbara, and Jody all spoke against concurring with Vermont. Our guest, Ann, suggested that it is an important issue, and she asked if Vermont could redo their position. She was told that this is an option in the pre-convention process. Akkana spoke in support, noting the issue is important and some people are left without health care due to privatization. Edwina added that Canada and other countries have better health care because the administrative costs of health care in the U.S. are skyrocketing. Jody was strongly opposed to the position because, she said, it was essentially calling for government-run health care. The current LWVUS position calls for government-run health care insurance (single payer). The vote was 3 in favor and 13 opposed. The motion failed.

LWVWA asked us to concur with their position on support for local news as a topic of discussion at the LWVUS Convention. They conducted a study entitled, “The Decline of Local News and Its Impact on Democracy,” which showed that local news is declining at an alarming rate nationwide and is negatively impacting our democracy in several ways. LWVUS concurrence with LWVWA’s position would provide a basis for advocacy for national, state, and local legislation aimed at rebuilding independent local news outlets and expanding media literacy. Meredith moved that we concur with this position and Barbara seconded the motion. Jo argued against concurring with this position and noted that the only responsibility of the government in this regard is to provide freedom of speech. In contrast, Edwina suggested that the government could support local news organizations by reintroducing the Fairness Doctrine, which would require different viewpoints to be broadcast. Dick said the bullet points in the position are not directly related to the government, and we should support concurrence. Meredith agreed, and she noted that there is nothing nefarious in the position. Kathy responded to Edwina’s suggestion that we cannot amend the position. Barbara added that the Fairness Doctrine could be discussed, and a Resolution could be proposed. All except for Jo voted in favor.

Kathy asked to get LWVUS to modify its position on transparency and she cited the LWVUS *Impact on Issues* section entitled “The Citizen’s Right to Know.” Kathy suggested that the word “including” should be added under giving adequate notice. After some discussion, Kathy withdrew her request. Judy said, however, that she can include this topic in the survey she is filling out for LWVUS.

Anne Galer volunteered to help in any way with furthering the LWVUS plan to advocate for eliminating the Electoral College. Kathy said this “moonshot” will be announced in May. Barbara suggested that Ann could write an article for *La Palabra* and Hannah suggested she go to the Convention.

In general terms, Dick said that LWVUS must provide documentation for their positions and policy statements. As an example, they made a statement on Artificial Intelligence (AI) but there is nothing about AI in *Impact on Issues*. Documentation is needed so state and local Leagues can act on LWVUS positions. Akkana agreed, and Judy will add this to the survey.

Hannah read a request from LWVDC asking that we support legislation that will establish statehood for the people of the District of Columbia. The final resolution reads as follows: *Therefore, be it resolved that the League of Women Voters of [State/Chapter] strongly supports legislation that will establish statehood for the people of the District of Columbia.*Judy moved that we support this request and Dick seconded the motion. After a brief discussion, all voted in favor.

The Action Committee is always trying to search various positions when the issue of ethics arises. LWVCT has a broad position that would allow us to support or oppose legislation or actions. Barbara moved that we concur with this position and Jody seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and all voted in favor.

The LWVNM position on Land Use includes this statement: “Transparency and public participation in decision-making must be part of the process at all levels of government.” Barbara moved that this statement (which already went through the consensus process) be moved from Land Use to Transparency in State and Local Government. Karen seconded this motion, and all voted in favor.

**Governance**

Kathy submitted a revised draft of Financial Policies and procedures for LWVNM. This version includes changes based on suggestions made at the last meeting and explanations for the changes which were made. This will be discussed again at a future meeting.

**LWVNM Council**

Council will be held on April 27. We need to decide where this meeting will be held and what speaker to invite. Dick suggested a speaker on modernization of the legislature. Kathy suggested a speaker on the judicial system and how all the pieces fit together. Felicia mentioned that Justice Shannon Bacon spoke for the LWVLA Annual Meeting last year, and she was fantastic. It was agreed that she will be invited.

After some discussion, it was agreed that a hybrid meeting would be ideal since several board members said they could not appear in person in Santa Fe. Hannah suggested that St. John’s United Methodist Church would be a good venue for a hybrid meeting. Judy will investigate. Zoom will be our backup option. Registration will be from 11:30 to 12:00 and our speaker will begin at noon. The meeting will go until 2:30 and will be following by a board meeting at 2:40. Participants will include LWVNM board members as well as the president or co-presidents plus one additional member from each local League and one member at large.

Kathy said that at Council we need to review the budget. Our procedures suggest that adding budget lines/unbudgeted items requires some sort of action (e.g., board approval). There are no expense lines in the 2023-2025 budget for Vote411 or for Redistricting. Furthermore, we have received some grants that are not formally in our budget, and it remains unclear what grant monies remain and what monies were carried over from a previous year. According to Hannah, any changes need to be approved by the board and ratified at Council. Per Kathy, this will be clarified in the Financial Procedures document. Dick moved that Kathy work with Kim in revising the budget and bring these revisions to the Executive Committee. Once approved by the Executive Committee, the revised budget will be brought to the board for a vote. Felicia seconded this motion. Meredith said that there should be some sort of limit to what the Executive Committee can approve, but there was no support for this. All but Meredith voted in favor.

**LWVUS Convention**

As Hannah mentioned, the LWVUS Convention will be held on June 27-June 30 at the Washington Hilton in Washington D.C. LWVNM will qualify for three delegates. Hannah and Dick have already volunteered. Meredith moved that they represent LWVNM and Donna seconded this motion. All voted in favor. Edwina said she may also be interested in attending as either a delegate or an observer. She will let Kathy know what she decides.

**Voter Services**

Edwina, Judy, and Hannah interviewed three people to replace Maia Pugh as our professional contractor assisting with Vote411 activities. Mark Coomes of Denton, Texas, was hired and will be working part-time. Mark has experience with the Denton, Texas League as their webmaster and he also assists with their Vote411.

In late January, Edwina, Hannah, Kathy, Akkana, and Tom Krajci from Otero County met with Secretary of State (SOS) staff to discuss concerns arising from the 2023 election that may translate to the upcoming elections. Specifically, they asked for GIS shapefiles that were not published in a centralized, publicly accessible location prior to the election, and they asked for missing GIS shapefiles for the upcoming elections. Additionally, they noted mismatches between names of races found on the Proclamation, and publication of the candidate list by race in the SOS portal. This led to a labor-intensive matching of races to candidates, selection of race type, and a need to redo some of the race set-up work. They asked if races could/would be named the same in future documents. They also requested the identification of single/multiple selection/ranked choice selections on race lists; contact information (email addresses) for judicial candidates; publicizing Vote411 by providing a link on the SOS website; and assistance publicizing and distributing the Native American Voter Guides. They have not yet received a response to their requests.

Akkana noted that the SOS seemingly does not want to maintain the GIS files in a public place as required by law, and it is not clear if the files are correct. She put them on the LWVNM website but noted that we should not be the resource.

A Vote411 production schedule and timeframe has been produced and was provided to the Voter Services Committee members at their first monthly meeting on February 5. The Committee meets again on March 4.

Invitation letters will be sent to candidates on April 1. Based on input from the board at our last meeting, the letter to be sent to party chairs has been revised and has been sent to Hannah and Kathy for their approval and signatures. Karen asked for a copy of this letter.

A meeting is also scheduled with LWVUS to train members of the Voter Services Committee on bulk texting through League in Action (also known as Outreach Circle). League in Action may be used to send reminders to candidates to answer Voter Guide questions.

Edwina provided a list of possible questions to be posed to candidates for the following races: U.S. Senator; U.S. Representative; New Mexico State Senator; New Mexico State Representative; Public Education Commission; Judicial District Judges; District Attorneys; County Commissioners; County Clerks; County Treasurers; Probate Judges; County Sheriffs; County Assessors; and Magistrate Judges. Edwina selected questions that had been posed previously and that she thought were relevant.

Barbara sent Edwina some suggestions already. Hannah suggested the terms “climate change” and “drier, hotter” be replaced with less aggressive language. Instead, candidates can be asked about water and growth. We need to ensure we are not perceived as pushing an agenda. Dick suggested broader language be used, such as public safety instead of gun safety. Karen said the questions on gun laws and safety are important, and those are the questions the public wants answers to. Jo thought the questions for Probate Judge and Magistrate Judge were leading. Felicia agreed they should be more open-ended. Meredith said that climate change and reproductive choice sound partisan. Judy suggested removing questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 under U.S. Senate, and questions 3, 4, 5, and perhaps 6 under U.S. House. She also suggested asking County Commission candidates about balancing growth and water issues, and how to reform tax laws. Felicia suggested using the term “increasingly arid environment.”

Edwina will work on the suggested revisions. She will bring the revisions first to Judy, and then to the board for approval. Her deadline is March 17.

**Local League Reports**

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

**Announcements, Initiatives, and Other Business**

Kim will send membership reminders to our members-at-large.

The deadline for *La Palabra* submissions is March 4.

The next board meeting will be held following the LWVNM Council on April 27. That meeting will hopefully be a hybrid event. If not, it will be conducted via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

Written by Rebecca Chaiken (March 5, 2024)

Edited by Barbara Calef (March 5, 2024)