



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FALMOUTH

P. O. Box 450, Falmouth, MA 02541

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Bulletin – January 2012

Member Events Calendar

January 2012

19 7:00 pm Meeting: Conversation with Julian Suso, Falmouth’s new Town Manager at the Public Library’s Hermann Room

(Dinner at Peking Palace at 6:00 p.m.)

24 7:30 pm Board Meeting at Falmouth Hospital (Board Room)

February 2012

16 7:00 pm Meeting: Combined National and Local Program Planning At Town Hall (Dinner at Peking Palace at 6:00 p.m.)

28 7:30 pm Board Meeting (check location)

LWVF BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2011-2012

STEERING COMMITTEE

First Vice-President	Betsy Fontes
Second Vice-President	Barbara Kanellopoulos
Secretary	Sylvia Szulkin
Voter Service	Alice Carey
Development	Kathy Mortenson



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Legislative	Meg Borden	Outreach	Landi Landrau
Local Study	Doris Epstein	Publicity	Marcia Easterling
Membership	Maureen Sullivan		

If you wish to join the League, membership dues are \$50.00 for an individual membership and \$25.00 for an additional household member.

Send your check made out to *LWV of Falmouth* to the address shown above.

Please include your name, address and phone number.

You do not have to be a resident of Falmouth to join

STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

Sylvia Szulkin

Looking back at the past year, we can proudly identify a number of Falmouth League accomplishments. Although we have not grown in number, we have solidified and even increased the League's positive influence in our town. Many of those accomplishments have resulted from the work of our local study committee. Early in its investigation of the effectiveness of Town government, the committee identified the need for greater citizen engagement as a priority item. Led by the indefatigable Doris Epstein, the committee put together 4 programs to encourage citizen participation in government: a meeting to identify priorities for improving town government, a meeting to connect residents with volunteer organizations addressing identified priorities, a roundtable on how to run for town government and a meeting with town leaders in all areas of civic activity to find out how they would go about addressing the town's problems. Three of the above-described meetings were open to the public. All of the meetings were well-attended.

The local study committee also met with Town Clerk Michael Palmer to gather information about the precinct meetings that precede Town Meeting. As a result of that meeting, the committee took out a one-page ad in The Enterprise listing the names of all Town Meeting members, precinct by precinct, their telephone numbers and the date, place and time of each precinct meeting. The ad urged residents to contact their Town Meeting members about Articles in the Warrant. In the same edition of the newspaper, committee representatives wrote an op-ed piece explaining the importance of precinct meetings and urging Falmouth residents to attend precinct meetings to inform themselves on the Warrant Articles and lobby their Town Meeting representatives.

Although we cannot quantify the effectiveness of the ad and op-ed piece, we can say that precinct meetings were unusually well-attended this fall. We've also heard from Town Meeting members that they received more calls from their constituents this year than previous years.

The local study committee is now reviewing the Town Charter and will make its recommendations for change to the Charter Review Committee early this year. Some recommendations center on mechanisms for encouraging citizen participation in town government. A very hearty shout-out to the local study committee—Alice Carey, Doris Epstein, Marcia Easterling, Sallie Giffen, Evelyn Gresser, Megan Jones, Barbara Kanellopoulos, Janice Perry, Maureen Sullivan, and Sylvia Szulkin—for their inspired work.

Kudos to Barbara Kanellopoulos for bringing Town Planner Brian Currier to our September meeting to discuss the concept of Smart Growth and how it relates to our town. Our appreciation to Natural Resources Chair Pam Polloni for bringing experts on environmental issues to our October meeting to answer questions, and to Alice Carey, Barbara Fanger, Judy Fenwick and Judy Stetson for putting together a thought-provoking meeting on the role of the federal government in local education.

Upcoming Events. The local study committee will host a conversation with our new Town Manager, Julian Suso, on Thursday, January 19th in the Hermann Room at the main library starting at 7 p.m. The committee has planned this as an opportunity for town residents not only to meet Mr. Suso but to inform him of their concerns.

In 2011, Meg Borden, our legislative chair, put together and moderated a question and answer session in the round between League members and our State legislators, David Vieira and Tim Madden. Everyone learned a lot from that meeting, Leaguers and legislators alike. The audience was treated to a display of bipartisan collegiality and cooperation that our federal legislators would do well to employ. We are looking forward to another such meeting, probably in March.

If you are in the market for an interesting and very important study of national scope, please call **Barbara Kanellopoulos** about joining the League study on privatization of government functions. Recent news about the plight of our postal service may portend a push for privatization of financially-challenged government agencies. Is privatization a one-size-fits-all solution to government deficits? Are

some government agencies more likely than others to flourish under private ownership? What government functions should never be privatized? What has been the history of privatization in this country? The LWVUS has put together materials directed at the preceding questions. Through study and discussion with Barbara's committee, you can be ahead of the curve when these issues become part of the national election-year debate.

And don't forget TO SAVE THE DATE for our Annual Meeting, which will be held on May 17th.

With best wishes for a Happy New Year!



PUBLIC EDUCATION STUDY CONSENSUS MEETING SUMMARY

Alice Carey

On Thursday evening, November 17, 2011 a Public Education Study Consensus meeting was held in the Civil Defense room of Town Hall. Thirty participants responded to three separate sets of questions.

General Questions:

1. Participants agreed that the current role of the federal government in public education is too small
2. The federal government's role in public education was **prioritized** as follows:
 - That all students preK-12 receive a quality education and that Common Core Standards should be mandated for all students.
 - That accountability measures that will study the progress of all students so that they achieve adequate yearly progress should be developed
 - That state efforts for funding should be monitored
 - That teacher effectiveness should be measured through test data
3. The group strongly agreed that a quality public education is important to perpetuate a strong and viable democracy.

Common Core Standards

Participants agreed that Common Core Standards should be mandated of all states in order to obtain federal funding for all programs; that a national assessment should be aligned with the Common Core Standards and **mandated if fully funded.**

It was agreed that National Standards should lead to a suggested structure for states and local education agencies to develop their own curriculum.

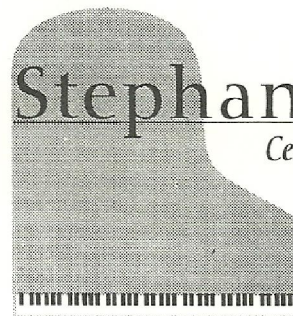
Consensus supported the importance of assessment that is prioritized in the following manner:

- Aligned to the Common Core Standards
- Providing diagnostic information on each child
- Providing information to students, parents, teachers and school districts about student achievement
- Providing criteria for determining readiness for college and careers.
- Providing comparison data showing progress toward reaching Common Core Standards

They also agreed that test data should be "criterion referenced" and clearly informative so that teachers, parents and students know how individual students have mastered criteria established at a national level.

There was **no consensus reached on how data from nationally required assessment should be used.**

In general, participants found questions focused on ranking responses from 1-5 were difficult to answer clearly, coherently or usefully. This opinion was included in report to the National League.



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Funding and Equity

Consensus was reached regarding ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) funding: it should be provided to states through a combination of non-competitive (based on need) and competitive grants (meeting certain federal requirements)

Both federal government mandates and funding should be provided if the concern is for the "common good."

Participants agreed that equity in public education means, **in ranked order**: equitable access to high quality teaching/learning; adequate and current learning materials; clean and well maintained physical facilities; food and health care; safe and secure neighborhoods and secure housing

It was strongly agreed that ESEA funding should remain targeted toward poverty and special needs.

Strong agreement supported the federal government taking a role in supporting early childhood education, birth to 5, for all children.

Consensus supported federal support for early childhood education programs that include funding for parent education and support regarding child development, child health and nutrition, and access to other supportive services, such as mental health as needed. Also, this funding should be extended to all children, with primary emphasis on special needs.

The Public Education Study Committee (Alice Carey, Barbara Fanger and Judy Fenwick) would like to extend their thanks to Mark Wilson, Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction in the Falmouth Public Schools, for sharing his expertise throughout the meeting and to Judy Stetson for acting as recorder and participating in the preparation of the LWVF final report.



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CONVERSATION WITH OUR TOWN MANAGER

JULIAN SUSO

COME MEET AND GREET HIM ON

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19 AT 7 PM

IN THE HERMANN ROOM OF THE FALMOUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY

WARM GATHERING, LIGHT REFRESHMENTS, GOOD VIBES!

Sponsored by the LWVF Local Study Committee
LOCAL STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT
Doris Epstein

As our large committee continued to focus on Falmouth's Home Rule Charter we noted the many parts which were clear and worked well. However, tweaking is needed so we are suggesting greater clarity, some deletions and recognition that oversight is often missing. So one of our major conclusions is that the Charter, functioning as the Town's Constitution requires great citizen attention (what the League does well) to have it work optimally. Compilation of suggested changes will go to the Charter Review Committee in January as well as to LWVF members. Comments from you are welcome.

As a vital stakeholder in effective town government the League is sponsoring " A Conversation" with our new Town Manager. It will be at Falmouth Public Library on Thursday, Jan. 19th at 7PM. We are hoping for a good

turnout of our members and the entire community to meet and greet. So come with your entourage of family, friends and neighbors to make it an evening of warm welcome.

Two more agenda items await our committee. In 2012 the Town must redo its Strategic Plan and we shall study it shortly. We shall also work again at increasing interest in the April Town Meeting and knowledge about warrant articles. It has occurred to us that much of what we've been involved in both the past year and this year are on-going items which make for effective or ineffective governing. With this realization we suggest that LWVF have a standing committee on Effective Local Government. What are your thoughts?

LWVF FRIENDS FOR 2011-2012

Dorothy and Duncan Aspinwall
Frank Egloff
Sally Fritz
Avery Funkhouser
Christina Jacobi
Winnie and Bill Mackey
Polly Montgomery

Dorothy Ryder
Robert Schneider
Deborah G. Senft
Andrew Szent-Gyorgyi
John and Freddy Valois
Helen Wilson

THE FALMOUTH AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU!!

The Town's Affordable Housing Committee provides information and advice to the Board of Selectmen on affordable housing needs and opportunities in our town. The Falmouth League supports housing affordable for those who could not otherwise afford to reside in Falmouth, including town employees, employees of small businesses, and entry-level teachers and support staff at local hospitals and scientific institutions.

There are now three openings on the committee. Unless interested residents step forward to apply for this important committee, the committee will have difficulty getting a quorum for its meetings. For further information on the Affordable Housing Committee, please call Sylvia Szulkin.

LWV OF MASSACHUSETTS ACTIVITIES

Joan Boyer

Several local Leagues in Massachusetts (Concord-Carlisle, Sudbury and Amherst) are working together to focus public attention on the 2010 Supreme Court decision below and its impact on our election process. For more information on the court case, go to the web site at the end of the article.

CITIZENS UNITED v. FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION 2008

Facts of the Case

Citizens United sought an injunction against the Federal Election Commission in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia to prevent the application of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) to its film *Hillary: The Movie*. *The Movie* expressed opinions about whether Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton would make a good president.

In an attempt to regulate "big money" campaign contributions, the BCRA applies a variety of restrictions to "electioneering communications." Section 203 of the BCRA prevents corporations or labor unions from funding such communication from their general treasuries. Sections 201 and 311 require the disclosure of donors to such communication and a disclaimer when the communication is not authorized by the candidate it intends to support.

Citizens United argued that: 1) Section 203 violates the First Amendment on its face and when applied to *The Movie* and its related advertisements, and that 2) Sections 201 and 203

are also unconstitutional as applied to the circumstances.

The United States District Court denied the injunction. Section 203 on its face was not unconstitutional because the Supreme Court in *McConnell v. FEC* had already reached that determination. The District Court also held that *The Movie* was the functional equivalent of express advocacy, as it attempted to inform voters that Senator Clinton was unfit for office, and thus Section 203 was not unconstitutionally applied. Lastly, it held that Sections 201 and 203 were not unconstitutional as applied to the *The Movie* or its advertisements. The court reasoned that the *McConnell* decision recognized that disclosure of donors "might be unconstitutional if it imposed an unconstitutional burden on the freedom to associate in support of a particular cause," but those circumstances did not exist in Citizens United's claim.

Decision:

5 votes for Citizens United; 4 votes against

Retrieved at:

http://www.oyez.org/cases/2000-2009/2008/2008_08_205

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Meg Borden

HB 1106 : An Act to Establish Election Day Registration - Testimony in support was provided to the Joint Committee on Election Laws on 11/2 by Elections and Voting Specialist, Linda Freedman.

HB 3815 : An Act Enhancing the Practice of Nurse Midwives , the current version of a bill supported by the League, was reported favorably out of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing on 11/16 and referred to the House Committee on Hearing, Policy and Scheduling to be voted on by the House. Health Care Specialist Judy Deutsch will continue to take action on this bill.

SB 2078 : the current version of An Act Relative to Information Technology Producer Responsibility , which incorporates bills supported by the League, was reported favorably out of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture and referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means on 11/21. Environment Specialist Launa Zimmaro will continue to take action on this bill.

SB 2079 : the current version of An Act for a Competitive Economy through Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals , which incorporates a bill supported by the League, was

reported favorably out of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture and referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means on 11/21. Environment Specialist Lynn Wolbarst will continue to take action on this bill.

HB 2109 & SB 566 : An Act Regarding Higher Education Opportunities for High School Graduates in the Commonwealth was reviewed by the Board and approved for support on 11/21. This bill will allow students who have graduated from a high school in the state (or its equivalent), with at least 3 years of in-state attendance, to attend state colleges and community colleges at the resident rate. Education Specialist Terry Yoffie is preparing testimony to be submitted to the Joint Committee on Education.

HB 3807: An Act Establishing Expanded Gaming in the Commonwealth was finalized by the House and Senate Conference Committee, passed in the House and Senate on 11/16 and signed by the Governor on 11/22. The controversial Senate amendment that would repeal the 1984 ban on "happy hour" in bars and restaurants and allow them to offer free or discounted drinks if they are allowed in casinos was removed from the bill.



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OBSERVER CORPS REPORT ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS 2010 – 2011

Yolanda Landrau and Jacqueline Webster

The Zoning Board of Appeals hears and decides appeals, special permits, and variances with respect to the Falmouth zoning regulations. Members are: Chairman Mathew McNamara, Vice Chair Dennis Murphy, Clerk Patricia Favulli, Voting Members Ronald Erickson & Kenneth Foreman, and Associates Michael Freeman & Patricia Johnson. The Board delegates some of its powers and duties to the Zoning Administrator, Sari Budrow.

Meetings are held two or three times a month on Thursdays at 6:30 pm, and are recorded on FCTV. They follow the State Open Meeting Law, with agendas published ahead of time and minutes approved and posted in a timely fashion. Members of the Board treat the public respectfully. Meetings begin on time, follow the published agenda, and are usually completed by 9 pm.

The members work well with each other, and with the Zoning Administrator, in handling the decisions and issues associated with the difficult job of interpreting the zoning regulations. The Board delegates some of its powers and duties to the Zoning Administrator; this allows efficiencies and concentration by the Board on significant decisions. In addition, the Board encourages the

Administrator to take an active role in assisting citizens with their applications, which enables further efficiencies.

Members take their duties seriously, although occasionally, for various reasons, there is difficulty obtaining a quorum. Each member is diligent in preparation for the agenda items -- reading the files, visiting the sites, and thinking through the issues involved. They are careful to follow the Falmouth regulations, and yet still allow full discussion, both amongst themselves, and with Falmouth citizens. Recently, there have been issues regarding public process and the zoning by-laws. The current by-laws need to be reviewed by the town to address inconsistencies in the regulations.

The Board is pro-active in its approaches. They review, in open meetings, their policies and procedures to ensure that they are ahead of the curve with current happenings in the world. They communicate with other Town boards by holding joint discussions on overlapping matters with the Planning Board (wind turbine regulations), the Board of Health (nutrient flows), and the Board of Selectmen.

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