

Democracy Maine Boards of Directors Meetings

Saturday, October 28th, 2023 ♦ 9:00 am - 11:00 am
Via Zoom

Board present: Pamela Cox, Ellen Dohmen, Maya Eichorn, Ben Gaines, Susana Hancock, Ann Luther, Rick Lyles, Melissa Murphy, Alex Newell Taylor, Alison Smith, Jill Ward, and Tobin Williamson

Absent: Abdikhadar Shire

Staff present: John Brautigam, Senior Advisor & Counsel, Anna Kellar, Executive Director and Nadya Mullen, Finance and Operations Director

The LWVME Board was called to order at 9:02 am.

Pamela Cox opened the meeting acknowledging the tragedy in Lewiston this week. Tobin Williamson noted the sad and dark time for the community and hopes the state policy makers can make an impact.

Anna Kellar noted that there was immediate outreach from LWVUS with support and from many other state and local leagues. LWVME issued a statement via email and social media coordinated with LWVUS. The League does have a long standing position on the ban of assault weapons but Maine has not been specifically active on this issue. We'll have updates as to how Maine can get more involved. During the lockdown time we were concerned about the impact on voting however this is less of a concern now that it has been lifted, though there is concern about consolidation of polling places for security as we do not support consolidation as a rule. The Trust in Elections team will be looking at this. The Brunswick candidate forum last night was canceled and we're working to get video statements from the participants. Tobin Williamson reported that the Lewiston Mayoral Forum planning team will evaluate on Monday what to do. Ellen Dohmen suggested focusing on the yellow flag v red flag law when we pick up the discussion in Advocacy. Anna noted that former intern Lianna Holden is active in this area.

Administration (Pamela Cox)

- **Note of email vote:** Minutes of the July 29th, 2023 meeting were approved. Ann Luther moved, Susana Hancock seconded. **All voted in favor.**
- **Note of email vote:** The Board approved LWVME endorsement of Question 6 and Question 8 - Ann Luther moved, Alison Smith seconded. **The motion passed without objection.**
- Ann Luther and Nadya Mullen presented the Compliance Checklist.

Treasurers Reports (Ann Luther)

- Ann presented the combined organizations' statement of cash flow, cash forecast, and budget v. actual reports, as well as the restricted funds accounts.
- The Board received the financial reports from the Portland Area and Downeast chapters.
- Ann reviewed the local chapters funds held. Brunswick is inactive and has been so for several years. The funds were still being held in the hopes that a new leadership team would emerge but this has not happened. **VOTE:** Ann Luther moved to dissolve the

Brunswick chapter's account and designate the funds to the State league. Jill Ward seconded. The board discussed the next steps and agreed to a subsequent discussion with LWVPA about its involvement in supporting the membership in the Brunswick area. **All voted in favor.**

- All reports were received and filed for financial review.

Pamela and Anna have discussed reaching out to each of the new board members to check in after their first months of board membership and will do so in the period following the election.

Development Committee (Anna Kellar)

- Anna presented the Development Progress report noting that we have had some good results in major donor outreach and with two national funders. These are meaningful given that our cash flow situation remains precarious. We are in a strong position with Unite America, which is the single largest funder in the RCV and open primaries arena.
- Anna also noted that we have very few funders that give general support and that the biggest upcoming fundraising opportunity is around working on the state voting rights act. They also aim to focus on getting support for non-advocacy work.
- During the next month we will be focusing on individual donors to build relationships and secure further support. Where possible, Anna would like board members involved in these meetings/calls.
- We have some smaller campaigns going on (MSV appeal and increasing monthly donors to the Education Fund) that are bringing in some funds.
- Rick Lyles, Melissa Murphy and Jill Ward were instrumental in getting corporate sponsorship for Vote411. It's a great start to build on for the Voter Guide sponsorship in 2024.
- We have one confirmed house party in Portland in February and intend to add more in the next couple of months.

Governance (Jill Ward)

- Jill reported that the Committee discussed the plan as was presented at the retreat and would like endorsement from the Board to proceed. Nadya will have to do some work on planning the next steps and the Governance Committee will have this on their agenda for their next meetings. **VOTE:** Jill Ward moved that we move forward with the corporate restructure plan. Alison seconded. **All voted in favor.**
- Jill presented the updated Revised Conflict of Interest disclosure form. The edits make it a more "in the moment" disclosure rather than forward-looking. **VOTE:** Ann Luther moved to adopt the revised Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form. Rick Lyles seconded. **All voted in favor.**
- The LWVME Issue Forum Policy was presented. **VOTE:** Jill Ward moved to adopt the revised LWVME Issue Forum Policy, Melissa Murphy seconded. Ann Luther's query about where we need to differentiate between forums where we have neutral positions v. where was resolved. At a subsequent meeting the Committee will address any feedback from the post-election forum debrief. **All voted in favor.**
- The DM Nonpartisan Political Policy was presented. It was revised to strengthen the central importance of nonpartisanship and to clarify the restrictions on board members serving in partisan political roles. **VOTE:** Jill Ward moved to adopt the revised DM Nonpartisan Political Policy. Susana Hancock seconded. Alison Smith raised an objection to "at any level" in the section "POLITICAL PARTY OFFICE – Board members and

trustees shall not serve as officers of a political party at any level.” The board discussed where situations could be nuanced and the importance of external perceptions noting that this language does not preclude serving on a committee or being a delegate. Alison’s proposal to change to “chair” rather than officer at the local level was not supported. **The motion was carried with Alison Smith voting no.**

Executive Director’s Report (Anna Kellar)

- Anna informed the Board that this has been a challenging election period for the staff primarily related to capacity issues, particularly in the period between mid-September through mid-October. They noted how difficult it is to get volunteers plugged in over the summer. We need to be aware of the number of projects we commit to but also work creatively to pull in additional resources during that period. A number of staff have been working very long hours and will need to take time off before the end of the year. Plans are in place to stagger this time off. Looking ahead it will be incumbent on the board committee chairs to adjust to this capacity issue. There are opportunities for Board members to get involved in some of these projects, eg. with partner organizations.
- Anna noted ongoing challenges when working with partners who do not have the same nonpartisan approach as we do.
- Maya Eichorn is attending the National Voting Summit as Allyson Gardner will not be able to attend.

Council of Local Leaders (CLL) (Rick Lyles)

- Rick Lyles reported that the CLL has been quiet during this period. A meeting scheduled at the time of the Retreat was canceled in favor of attendance at the Retreat. Peg Balano and Evan Murray created a training module for the naturalization ceremony volunteers, which is an excellent example of a local league providing leadership and resources for the other chapters. Tobin Williamson is attending a USCIS Portland Stakeholder meeting next week and will be listening to how they view our ceremony and registration efforts. Rick noted that the CLL could potentially be working to support Vote411. Alison noted the opportunity for local leagues to engage in Vote411 and use this to grow both membership and leadership. Ann noted that financial investment by chapters is also support for the volunteers and the value of their work.

Program Committee Report (Melissa Murphy)

- Melissa reported that the Program Committee is working to better define its role to focus on supporting, not directing, staff. They are working to identify programs and ensure alignment with the case for support and to refine the timing of reporting on programs so they don’t fall at extremely busy times for staff.
- Ann said the advocacy team will be looking at the gun safety issue and digital democracy issues in its upcoming meeting.
- Ellen Dohmen has been in touch with Planned Parenthood regarding digital privacy issues. Since the League does not have a specific position in this area the team is looking at ways to make novel use of our current national positions to develop our policy position to stand against the incursions into privacy.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Membership Committee Report (Ann Luther)

- Ann referred the Board to the Membership Report and Volunteer Dashboard included in the meeting papers.
- The new membership of the Committee started probing discussions about the meaning of each of the principles in the committee name, including diversity, and how these interact. In light of the importance of elevating diversity along with other principles the Committee has renamed itself “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Membership Committee.” The Committee will bring recommendations to the board in the future of concrete steps to take. Alison spoke about the importance of developing emerging new members and leaders.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:10 am.

MCCE

The meeting was called to order at 11:10 am.

Administration (Pamela Cox)

- Note of email vote: Minutes of the July 29th, 2023 meeting were approved. Ann Luther moved, Susana Hancock seconded. All voted in favor.
- **VOTE:** Alison Smith moved to approve moving forward with the corporate restructure plan and to adopt the amended Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form, and the amended DM Nonpartisan Political Policy en bloc. Ann Luther seconded. All voted in favor.

Treasurers Reports (Ann Luther)

- C3 reports were presented.
- All reports were received and filed for financial review.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:14 am.

LWVME Education Fund

The meeting was called to order at 11:14 am.

Administration (Pamela Cox)

- Note of email vote: Minutes of the July 29th, 2023 meeting were approved. Ann Luther moved, Susana Hancock seconded. All voted in favor.
- **VOTE:** Alison Smith moved to approve moving forward with the corporate restructure plan and to adopt the amended Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form, and the amended

LWVME Issue Forum and DM Nonpartisan Political policies en bloc. Ann Luther seconded. **All voted in favor.**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:15 am.

MCCE Action

Alison Smith called the meeting to order at 11:15 am.

- Note of email vote: Minutes of the July 29th, 2023 meeting were approved. Ann Luther moved, Susana Hancock seconded. All voted in favor.
- VOTE: Ann Luther moved to approve moving forward with the corporate restructure plan and to adopt the amended Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form, and the amended DM Nonpartisan Political policy en bloc. Ben Gaines seconded. All voted in favor.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:16 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Nadya Mullen, Operations Director