**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW MEXICO**

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**NOVEMBER 20, 2021**

**SOCORRO PUBLIC LIBRARY and VIA ZOOM**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Hannah Burling, President

Barbara Calef, Second Vice President and LWVLA Co-President

Dick Mason, Action Chair

Rebecca Chaiken, Secretary (via Zoom)

Suzanne Ronneau, Treasurer (via Zoom)

Judy Williams, Past President

Kathy Brook, Program

Meredith Machen, Education/Immigration/Special Projects (via Zoom)

Akkana Peck, Webmaster (via Zoom)

Karen Douglas, LWVCNM Co-President and Spent Nuclear Fuels

Donna Sandoval, LWVCNM Co-President (via Zoom)

Eileen VanWie, LWVSNM Co-President (via Zoom)

Becky Shankland, LWVLA Co-President (via Zoom)

Susan Haase, Membership and Events (via Zoom)

Janet Blair, Communications/*La Palabra* Editor (via Zoom)

Rebecca Álvarez, JEDI (via Zoom)

Renny Ashleman, Voting and Elections (via Zoom)

**CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS**

Hannah called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m. All members introduced themselves and explained their position with the LWVNM.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA and APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Hannah provided a revised agenda prior to the meeting. Kathy moved that this agenda be approved and Judy seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Renny moved that the September 11, 2021, board meeting minutes be approved and Meredith seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Hannah recognized the passing of board member Pat Hawkins. Pat was a remarkable woman with decades of work in the State Department including as an ambassador. Judy wrote a great memorial for Pat and this may be published in the next *La Palabra*. Pat was the second valuable board member we have lost this year.

Changes to the League are in our future. We have secured our 501(c)(3) non-profit status but the related tax status remains pending. The board for the non-profit, currently composed of Hannah, Suzanne, and Kim Sorensen, will hold its first meeting this week. Once regular funding is forthcoming, we will need additional help with data management, social media, and the like. Hannah will be asking the local Leagues for outreach to the membership in this regard.

Hannah also noted the resignation of Diane Goldfarb, who was given a note of thanks and a nice sendoff.

Hannah is enthusiastic about our portfolios. Going forward, she wants the committee chairs to know that help is available. Hannah will help find people as needed.

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Suzanne presented the Treasurer's Report showing an ending balance of $28,720.05. This account is held at Wells Fargo Bank. In addition, LWVNM collected $155 for a thank you gift for Diane Goldfarb and gave her a gift of $150.

**ACTION REPORT**

Dick reported on the Citizen Redistricting Committee (CRC) and upcoming special legislative session, which begins on December 6, 2021. This effort on redistricting has involved more than two years of work and organizing. Two committees in each house will hear the bills and review the maps (in the Senate, the Rules and Judiciary Committees and in the House, the Judiciary and State Government, Elections, and Indian Affairs Committees). The Governor will need to sign any legislation. Dick and Hannah met with two members of the Governor's staff who were enthusiastic and very complimentary of the CRC. To encourage support, the CRC is asking for telephone calls to legislators, letters to the editor, and published opinion pieces.

The CRC is asking three things of the legislature: 1) to accept the CRC maps; 2) if they amend the maps, to provide a full explanation; and 3) to hold all meetings in the spirit and letter of the Open Meetings Act. Dick noted that the League is not recommending any particular map. Three maps were submitted for each branch of the government (Congress, New Mexico Senate, New Mexico House of Representatives, Public Education Commission) and all are free of partisan gerrymandering and reflect public comment.

The main issue for the 2022 legislative session will be the budget. The recent Supreme Court decision ordered the Governor to work with the legislature on how to spend the relief money. Renny has not heard anything on this issue other than speculation. Eileen asked if we were going to advocate for funding priorities. Dick responded that we typically do not advocate for specifics because of conflicting priorities. There was a general discussion and agreement that funding for better pay for teachers and school staff is essential. Kathy expressed concern that cutting taxes, especially given our strong financial situation, would be a mistake because it is very difficult to raise them again. Dick said that legislative staff salaries will be in the feed bill this year.

Dick reviewed the LWVNM 2022 Action calendar. As noted, the start of the special session on redistricting is December 6. The Advocacy Workshop, which is open to the public, will be held virtually on December 11. The LWVNM Legislative Prep, which is open to League members only, will be held virtually on January 13. On February 2, it is hoped that there will be tables at the Legislature. The Legislative Reception will be held in the evening on February 2 at Rio Chama and will be in honor of Justice Chavez. League Day will be February 3 at the New Mexico Land Office.

Judy reported on several meetings and issues. The Ethics Coalition, which works to ensure that the New Mexico Ethics Commission is properly funded and free from meddling by the legislature, met on November 10. Jeremy Farris, the executive director of the Commission, reported to the Coalition that they are working to rewrite the Campaign Reporting Act to expand what has to be reported.

Common Cause reported on their conversations with legislators. Senator Ivey-Soto wants the Ethics Commission to set salaries and Representative Ely wants an independent salary commission. Representative Rubio is also expected to submit legislation. However, on November 15 when the Modernizing the Legislature group met to discuss further public information campaigns, Common Cause reported that legislators and their campaigns have strongly recommended that no more publicity be given to salaries for legislators or any of the other modernizing items. Common Cause then said that they would withdraw from the group. Working to pass a constitutional amendment on the subject would take a lot of money and none of their usual funders want to help. In addition, the polling numbers are not good. Common Cause said the Albuquerque election results were a wake-up call and has dramatically changed the calculus. This is an about-face by Common Cause and the rest of the group is trying to figure out what to do.

Judy said that another topic has arisen recently. Governor Lujan Grisham is pushing for a Hydrogen Hub for New Mexico and is hoping to get federal funding for it from the Infrastructure Act. The goal of this program would be to produce Blue Hydrogen (Green Hydrogen uses water to process, but Blue Hydrogen uses natural gas). The process produces methane and is no better at reducing carbon dioxide than is natural gas. Many observers believe this contradicts the Governor's stated climate and clean energy goals. Finally, the proposal is mostly tax breaks for the oil and gas industry. After a brief discussion, it was determined that the League can and will oppose the initiative.

Dick ended his report with the announcement that Akkana is now the vice-chair of the Action Committee!

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Janet had nothing new to report other than to remind the group that she has a public address system in her garage for our use.

**WEBSITE and DOCUMENT STORAGE**

Akkana had nothing new to report.

**PROGRAM**

Kathy submitted a written report that indicated the Tribal Law Study Committee held an information meeting on October 16 via Zoom. Approximately 16 people participated and the recording of the meeting is available for those who missed the live event. Reports on law and policy related to tribal economic development, criminal justice, education, and healthcare are on the LWVNM web page. Kathy asked for guidance on the timing of bringing the study to a conclusion. After a brief discussion, it was determined that, because it is a one-year study, it should be concluded by March unless more time is needed. It was also noted that the completed interviews will be posted to our web page and two additional interviews are expected, including one with a representative of the Navajo Nation. In response to Dick's concerns, Rebecca Á. added that the final report will include a strong statement in support of tribal sovereignty.

Regarding the proposed concurrence with the California League's position on criminal justice, LWVCNM held a meeting on November 9 featuring representatives of the Albuquerque Police Department, the Albuquerque Community Safety Department, Disability Rights New Mexico, and League member and professor of criminal justice Rebecca Álvarez. Speakers had been given the California League's concurrence statement in advance and no particular concerns about it were expressed. Points made during the discussion included the availability of crisis intervention training; encouragement of officers and their families to take advantage of available clinicians to assist with stress-related issues; and the need to strive to prevent entry into the criminal justice system (e.g. diversion for non-violent offenders). It was noted that there is a state ban on marijuana use in the previous three years for those applying for law enforcement positions and this has excluded a lot of good candidates.

LWVSFC recently held its meeting, and LWVSNM is planning to meet later in the winter to discuss the California position. Kathy is working on getting the statement of the California League position along with the "crosswalk" of how it relates to the LWVNM positions added to the Program portion of the LWVNM web page.

Suzanne said that the Judicial Selection Committee still has not accomplished anything. They need to be able to observe in courtrooms and interview judges, which will need to wait until the end of COVID.

Akkana reported on two national-level concurrences that have been proposed. The first is for state and local Leagues to request concurrence at the June 2022 Convention with language excerpted from LWVNYS positions on Healthcare and Financing Healthcare. The New York position affirms the power of Single Payer systems, which some believe is only implied in the current LWVUS position. Judy said it is explicit in that the position says health care should be funded with taxes. The New York position has been updated and modernized based on issues that have come to the forefront over the last 30 years (e.g., telemedicine). A letter has been sent to all state and local Leagues asking for support in getting this issue put on the June 2022 Convention agenda. After some discussion, Akkana moved that LWVNM support the National Healthcare concurrence being led by LWVNY; let them list our League as being in support; and fill out the national program planning survey to call for the healthcare concurrence at the national convention. Meredith seconded this motion. All voted in favor except Kathy and Judy, both of whom abstained.

The second national-level concurrence proposed concerns digital equity. Akkana reported that the National Rural Caucus is focusing on broadband and pushing for national concurrence. Because this is such a technical and difficult issue, most Leagues do not have a position. After a brief discussion, Akkana moved "LWVNM recommends that the LWVUS Program Planning Committee puts the 'Universal High Speed Internet Access (Digital Equity) for All Residents of the United States, and Community Access and Public Affairs Media' positions on the agenda for discussion and voting at the 2022 LWVUS Convention." Meredith seconded this motion and all voted in favor.

Akkana also asked that these proposed concurrences be brought to the local Leagues.

**PROPOSED ELECTION OF KATHY BROOK AS FIRST VICE PRESIDENT**

Karen Douglas nominated Kathy Brook to be First Vice President of LWVNM. Barbara seconded this motion and all voted in favor.

**BYLAWS and POLICIES**

At the last meeting we discussed changing our policy on Advocacy at the State Legislature. Based on that discussion, Barbara amended our policy with minor changes of wording and a new paragraph. The word "advocate" is substituted for the word "lobbyist" and the word "lobby" is substituted for the word "advocate" under the section Advocating as an Individual. A new paragraph entitled Committee Amendments is proposed as follows: "If there has been a substantive amendment to a bill in committee, you are asked not to speak until it has been reviewed and approved by the Action Committee, Action Chair, or the LWVNM President." Rebecca C. moved that we approve these changes to our Advocacy Policy and Judy seconded this motion. Eileen expressed concern about the words "lobby" and "lobbyist" given our new 501(c)(3) status and she suggested using the following language instead: "If you are not an official *representative* for LWVNM, you can still *advocate* for League positions...". Rebecca Á. asked if this was a motion in which case she would second it. Akkana suggested that it was a Friendly Amendment, Eileen agreed, and Rebecca Á. seconded the amendment. Judy responded that we are a 501(c)(4) organization as well and lobbying is an important part of the League. Dick added that even with our 501(c)(3) status, we are allowed to do some advocacy. Barbara then called the question, requiring a vote on the first motion. Meredith voted against the changes and Eileen, Rebecca Á., and Donna abstained. The remaining votes were in favor and the motion passed. Following the vote, Dick noted that a "registered lobbyist" cannot serve on some boards and this will need to be dealt with at some point. He will bring it up for discussion with the Action Committee.

**EDUCATION and SPECIAL PROJECTS**

Meredith reported that the social studies standards comment situation was very interesting. The usual suspects opposed using the word "equity." She has begun working on a Public Education Commission (PEC) study memorial document. Meredith said that the PEC is a very dysfunctional body and is costing taxpayers dearly. She will send out draft text about a proposed study at a later date.

Eileen reported that three of our local Leagues are working hard to develop conversation, dialogue, and listening sessions through New Mexico Listens. It is an exciting process and an experiment in which they hope to find better ways to support residents and citizens in becoming more actively engaged in our representative democracy.

Regarding funding priorities in the upcoming legislative session, Eileen wants us to advocate for funding for teachers and school staff, through a change in the funding formula. School systems are in crisis mode and the situation with substitute teachers is also dire. She recently attended a school board meeting during which it was clear that teachers and other school staff are overworked, exhausted, and having difficulty living month-to-month. Rebecca Á. put in the chat feature that there is a proposal that teachers receive a 15 percent salary increase. Eileen agreed but added that school staff needs an increase too.

**JEDI**

Rebecca Á. had no official report to share, but she noted that Brittany Dutton-Leyda and Donna Sandoval piloted the recruitment/research questionnaire she discussed during our last meeting. This outreach event led to 23 law students filling out the questionnaire, 18 of whom expressed interest in joining the League.

**MEMBERSHIP**

Susan asked for guidance when someone joins LWVNM as a member-at-large but they live in an area with a local League. Hannah suggested that she get in touch with the new member and let them know that they qualify for membership in their local League as well.

Rebecca Á. then asked if the state and all local Leagues could make student dues $0. She noted that most local Leagues have this clear in their membership materials but CNM still has a fee. Donna looked at the CNM website and it reflects student dues of $12. Based upon Rebecca Á.'s request, Karen Douglas agreed to bring this issue to the next CNM board meeting. Once this issue is resolved, Rebecca Á. will recruit the 18 law school students who expressed an interest in joining the League and Akkana will update the website. During this discussion, the consensus was that students should not be asked to volunteer in exchange for free membership.

**SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL**

Karen D. provided a written report in which she reported that LWVNM is seeking concurrence from the other state Leagues for the 2021 SNF Storage Safety Position with the goal of having this position adopted by LWVUS at the 2022 Convention. Members of Congress in Illinois and California are seeking national legislation to reevaluate the Nevada Yucca Mountain permanent geological repository for spent nuclear fuel, so outreach to those states was a primary consideration. Her report also noted that the Federal government's approach to selecting alternative spent nuclear fuel permanent repository sites may again propose, "Consent-Based siting" which led to the establishment of a site in southeastern New Mexico.

Karen D. learned yesterday that the NRC has reviewed Holtec's responses to the inadequacies in the Nuclear Safety Analysis and she expects the NRC to request additional information from Holtec. She does not expect the final application for operation to be deficient.

**VOTER SERVICES**

Judy said we are looking for a replacement for her as Voter Services Chair. She would also like to have the League hire someone during the next election cycle to help the state, and possibly local Leagues, on the nuts and bolts of Vote411. Finally, she is planning to convene a meeting of all who worked on Vote411 in the 2021 election for a debriefing. Meredith noted that Jo Galvan Nash said she would help. Dick added that we have funding to hire someone.

Judy reported that the Secretary of State should have the GIS data on the website in January.

Judy also spoke with the Carter Center about election observers and challenges in New Mexico. The Center is considering sending observers to some areas of New Mexico.

**VOTING and ELECTIONS**

Renny submitted a written report in advance of the board meeting and he had nothing more to add. Two important items remain pending: reinstating the voting access rules in SB4 that have since expired, and doing more to help ex-felons vote. The other issue that led to some discussion was obtaining access to email addresses for judicial candidates so we can send them questions for our Voter Guide. These issues will be addressed with the Secretary of State during a meeting with Renny and Judy on December 10. Eileen asked if there was any more information on possible reforms for third party voter registration agents. Renny responded that there is someone interested but he does not know, at this time, if a bill will be presented.

Dick brought up barriers to voting in tribal areas, noting that at times tribal members have to go to three different locations to vote. The State of Washington has addressed these issues through their Native American Voting Rights Act, which led to the establishment of ballot boxes at tribal offices. Renny agreed that this might be our business to support, but not to initiate.

**WOMEN'S ISSUES**

Bobbi could not be present to make her report.

**LOCAL LEAGUE REPORTS**

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

**ANNOUNCEMENTS, INITIATIVES, AND OTHER BUSINESS**

Barbara reported that the deadline for La Palabra articles is December 10.

The next board meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2022, in Albuquerque, with an option of participation via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

Written by Rebecca Chaiken (November 26, 2021)

Edited by Barbara Calef (November 27, 2021)