**League of Women Voters of New Mexico**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**July 20, 2024**

**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

Dick Mason, Voting and Elections

Akkana Peck, Action Chair and Webmaster

Meredith Machen, Education Chair and Special Projects

Edwina Jaramillo, Voter Services

Karen Douglas, Nuclear Issues

Janet Blair, Communications

Starlyn Brown, LWVCNM President

Felicia Orth, LWVLA President

Jo Galván Nash, LWVSNM President

Jody Larson, Archivist

Debbie Helper, LWVSFC Liaison

**Call to Order and Introductions**

Kathy called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. All members introduced themselves and explained their position with the LWVNM.

**Approval of Agenda and Approval of Minutes**

Minor changes were made to the agenda. Meredith moved that the amended agenda be approved, and Karen seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Barbara moved that the April 27, 2024, Council minutes be approved, and Jo seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Jo moved that the April 27, 2024, board meeting minutes be approved, and Dick seconded this motion. Debbie, Starlyn, and Jody abstained, otherwise all voted in favor.

**Co-Presidents’ Reports**

Hannah reported that she attended the LWVUS Convention in person, which she strongly recommends for future events. It is an excellent way of making helpful connections. The new President (Dianna Wynn) and CEO (Celina Stewart) were presented, both of whom will provide great leadership. The former CEO (Virginia Kase Solomón) now leads Common Cause, and she will be in New Mexico in August. One excellent speaker at Convention was Kimberly Teehee, the Cherokee Nation representative to Congress.

The Democracy Project continues. We are looking for money to pay for publicizing the “Get out the Vote” videos, which were produced last year.

The Communications Committee has been meeting and is working towards determining what public relations firm will be the best fit to publicize League activities. In response to a question posed by Starlyn, Hannah said that local Leagues will be welcome to tap into this resource.

Kathy’s written report indicated that, in May, League members received links to the items on LWVNM.org pertaining to the role of interim legislative committees. Also in May, Jeanne Gassman presented a webinar on “downwinders”. This League-sponsored event provided attendees with an overview of the impact of atomic testing and uranium mining on populations in New Mexico and beyond in the face of the sunset of the Radiation Exposure and Compensation Act in June 2024.

In late June, there was an online meeting of delegates to the LWVUS Convention. Those who attended breakout sessions were asked to provide brief summaries. These are currently shared with those who attended Convention either in person or virtually. CNM recommended that a Zoom meeting be held sometime in August for delegates to share what they learned at the Convention. Starlyn thought this was a great idea, and Karen suggested that the meeting be held either on a weekend or during the evening. Kathy will work on a date for this event for those who wish to participate.

State Leagues throughout the country were asked to sign a letter to Congress and the President in support of incorporating the Equal Rights Amendment into the Constitution.

In July, Kathy was interviewed by Tania Soussan-Watt, a freelance writer working on a story for *Prime Time* magazine about the upcoming election and safeguarding democracy. She contacted LWVNM as a “good source of nonpartisan information.”

As noted elsewhere, the Executive Committee met twice (July 5 and July 11) in the period since the last board meeting.

We have been notified of a Making Democracy Work (MDW) grant in the amount of $12,000 from the LWVUS Ed Fund, and the Executive Committee has voted to accept it. A requirement of the grant is quarterly reporting on the activities of our Leagues with respect to the focus areas of voting rights, improving elections, redistricting, money in politics, and popular election of the president.  Kathy asked that each local League designate a contact who can assist in compiling the data requested, such as number of meetings held with local election officials, number of partner organizations, voters registered, and information provided to voters. In response to a question posed by Starlyn, Kathy said the grant runs through March or April 2025 and LWVUS wants a report every three months. Kathy also told Debbie that she will provide a list of topics on which the data is needed.

Kathy also asked everyone to review the LWVNM Conflict of Interest policy, sign the form, and return it to her as soon as possible. A scan of the last page is sufficient. Hannah suggested that the form be made so that it can be signed electronically.

**Board List**

A new version of the board list was included in the board packet. An asterisk belongs next to Akkana’s name to indicate that she is a member of the Executive Committee. Barbara noted that she no longer has a land line. In response to a question posed by Meredith, Hannah noted that the CNM address is used by LWVNM as our legal address, and Fairacres is the address Kim uses to collect funds.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Kim provided the Treasurer’s Report dated July 20, 2024. She apologized for not being present today, and she understands if the board wants to replace her. Kathy provided the board with an email she sent to Kim noting several changes needed for the 2024-2025 budget, which were agreed to at Council. These changes include income at Convention changed from $0 to $700; expense for Constant Contact changed from $550 to $750; website and Social Media changed to two separate expense line items (although the budget for Social Media was not resolved); and the expense for the Legislative Reception was increased from $2,800 to $3,500. It was also agreed that the expenses for grants should be added to the expenses section and separately by grant. Furthermore, we are expecting a $12,000 Making Democracy Work grant, and a separate $10,000 grant.

Fund balances on the Treasurer’s Report are reflected as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Fund | Balance |
| Restricted Revenue  (should be changed to Redistricting) | $1,156 |
| Diversified Membership grant | $1,740 |
| Making Democracy Work 2023 | $1,765 |
| Making Democracy Work 2024 | $8,300 |
| Unrestricted funds | $5,319 |
| Total: | $18,280[[1]](#footnote-1) |

The Alcohol Harms Remediation Act fiduciary account has a balance of $5,300. We are holding these funds for the coalition. It does not affect our balance or revenue.

The bank balance is $25,906.57. Checks totaling $2,336.86 are outstanding.

Starlyn asked where the line item for the MDW award (for Raúl Burciaga) is. Dick noted that it should be budget neutral (e.g., attendees will pay) but Kathy agreed it should be explained in the budget.

Starlyn asked for an increase in the quarterly amount LWVNM pays to CNM for the use of the office because their rent continues to increase. The use of this office space includes things such as forwarding mail, answering telephone calls, and use of the meeting room and its equipment. In response to a question posed by Kathy, it does not appear that a payment to CNM was made in the last year. Starlyn then moved to increase the quarterly amount paid to CNM by $50 ($200 per year). Dick seconded this motion, and all voted in favor.

With respect to the expenses associated with the MDW award, Karen noted that we should anticipate exorbitant fees for the use of a hotel meeting room and luncheon. She suggested that LWVNM consider subsidizing fees for some of those who wish to participate.

Jo moved that the budget include a line item for the MDW award (with no amount yet specified) and Debbie seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Judy asked that line items be added into the budget for all expenses and said that she is confused about how the budget is structured. Kathy agreed and noted that we need to better understand what our budget entails. For example, the $20,000 transferred from LWVNM to the Ed Fund at the end of the Fiscal Year needs to be noted somewhere.

With respect to the Alcohol Harms Alleviation Act fiduciary account, Kathy asked that the coalition for which we are holding the funds submit a bill promptly for any lobbying efforts undertaken and planned. She also asked that the coalition be more explicit regarding this fund and our role. She added that LWVNM is not a bank. Hannah will inquire further. According to Meredith, the fund is intended for use in the 2025 regular session since there was no time in the short budget session to revise the bill, so the lobbyist was unable to get the advocacy work done.

It was agreed that a bigger discussion regarding our budget and bank accounts needs to be undertaken.

**Ratification of LWVNM Executive Committee Actions**

Our bylaws require that the board ratify any decisions made by the Executive Committee between board meetings. The LWVNM Executive Committee met on July 5, 2024, via Zoom. The members include Kathy, Hannah, Barbara, Akkana, and Judy. All were present at this meeting.

Kathy and Hannah applied for a Making Democracy Work grant. They requested $20,000 and we received $12,000. The Executive Committee voted unanimously to accept these funds. Dick moved to ratify this action and the motion was seconded by Meredith. All voted in favor.

The Executive Committee voted unanimously to approve a request made by the Santa Fe League to hold a U.S. Senate candidate forum with the S*anta Fe New Mexican* with some form of acknowledgement of LWVNM. Dick moved to ratify this action and the motion was seconded by Meredith. All voted in favor. In response to a question posed by Karen, Debbie said that the event will be live-streamed and recorded.

The Executive Committee voted unanimously to invite Heather Balas to return to the board of LWVNM. Dick moved to ratify this action and the motion was seconded by Janet. All voted in favor. In response to a question posed by Edwina, it was explained that Heather is a key participant in redistricting efforts and also has fundraising contacts. She will be a Director-at-Large.

During a meeting held by the Executive Committee on July 11, 2024, the members voted unanimously to accept Dick’s recommendation that the LWVNM Making Democracy Work award go to Raúl Burciaga, the retiring director of the Legislative Council Service. Dick moved to ratify this action and the motion was seconded by Meredith. All voted in favor. In response to a question posed by Meredith, Dick explained that a November date, after the general election, was chosen for the award presentation so that more legislators and activists can participate. Dick added that Raúl agreed with this plan.

Through email, four of the five members of the Executive Committee approved Dick’s suggestion that LWVNM join New Mexico Voices for Children and others in signing a letter to the Governor and Secretary of the Taxation and Revenue Department requesting that New Mexico implement Direct File for taxpayers. No ratification vote was held on this topic.

**Training on Harassment and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Felicia provided training on these topics as required by our policy.

**Action Committee**

Akkana had nothing to report.

Regarding Redistricting, Dick and Hannah made a presentation on this topic at the LWVUS Convention. They are working with LWVWA to build a working group with other state Leagues on redistricting issues. A survey was conducted by Fair Districts for New Mexico and a joint survey was conducted with Fair Districts, Open Elections, and Common Cause. Both surveys received good responses. Dick noted that we have picked up support for redistricting from some incumbents. Representative Figueroa is requesting a meeting with the All Pueblo Council of Governors. LWVNM will be making a presentation to the interim Indian Affairs Committee on September 5 in Las Cruces. A new House sponsor is being sought because Representative Figueroa is running for Senate. Next week, a meeting is scheduled with the Thornburg Foundation to discuss funding for Redistricting and Voter Services.

Dick also prepared the Voting and Elections report. In it, he noted that many League members participate in elections in different capacities, including neutral observers with Common Cause, poll workers, and observers for political parties. He proposes that we collect input from these participants and provide their feedback to the Secretary of State (SOS). Debbie noted that robust feedback sessions are already held by the Santa Fe County Clerk, and it is a time-consuming activity. Judy said that Common Cause already includes this sort of information in reports they prepare. Dick responded that LWVUS has asked us to do this, but he agreed we should work with Common Cause.

In response to a question posed by Starlyn, Dick explained that we publicize the observer corps and work with Common Cause on modernization of the legislature. We have no formal relationship but work closely with them. Starlyn noted that she is uncomfortable with such loose associations. Dick responded that when we agree on an issue, we work together and cooperate. Judy added that it is a multi-faceted relationship and sometimes Common Cause treats us as a rival. Hannah said that we sometimes compete for the same grants. We must be vigilant when working with other organizations regarding the use of our name. Meredith added that we have a clear policy on coalitions and there is a document explaining this on our website.

Dick recommended that the topic of coalitions be further discussed by the Action Committee. Akkana agreed. Barbara suggested that the Action Committee discuss observer reports related to elections.

**Program**

Judy provided a written report which detailed Resolutions and Studies approved at the LWVUS Convention. These Resolutions include (but are not limited to) topics supported by LWVNM including the adoption of concurrence with the LWVWA position on the Decline of Local News and its Impact on Democracy; the notion that public libraries are essential institutions for strong democracies and access is a civil right; as well as supporting legislation that will establish statehood for the people of the District of Columbia. Dick suggested that the resolution on public libraries be shared with our local libraries, which could provide us with good press.

Furthermore, a one-year study on the Federal Judiciary was approved by the LWVUS board of directors. The deadline to apply for participation in this study is July 31. It was agreed that a Constant Contact message on this topic be sent to our members. Judy will draft a message for Kathy’s approval.

In response to a question posed by Starlyn, Barbara said that the purpose of resolutions is to give direction to LWVUS advocates.

Karen submitted a detailed report on “Consent-Based Siting of Federal Consolidated Interim Storage Facility.” In it, she noted that the American Nuclear Society (ANS) was one of 16 awardees forming the Consent-Base Siting Consortia. ANS is conducting select activities related to stakeholder involvement through the University of New Mexico Nuclear Engineering Department, the only such department in a predominantly Hispanic-serving institution. Karen noted that ANS is also working with South Carolina State University, which is a Historically Black College and University; Northern Arizona University, which has a large Native American student body; and City College of New York, which has a large East Indian body of students.

**Finances**

Kathy presented the Financial Policies and Procedures for LWVNM document, which was prepared over time by a subcommittee. She acknowledged that the document is not perfect, but it is essential that it be approved. Any necessary revisions can be made at a later date. Dick moved that we adopt this document and Meredith seconded the motion.

In response to a question posed by Starlyn, Dick moved that Appendix IV: Forms, be deleted, and Judy seconded this motion. All voted in favor. Starlyn also noted that the section on Per Member Payment (PMP) will need to be changed once the new membership system is in place.

With respect to Dick’s original motion, all voted to approve the Financial Policies and Procedures for LWVNM document, with the deletion of Appendix IV.

Hannah reported that the Action Committee wants a lobbying fund, and she proposed that a donation button for this purpose be added to our website. At the LWVUS Convention, she learned that Colorado has used this tool with great success. There was a lengthy discussion on this request with most board members opposed to a new button. Those opposed said it would be confusing and unnecessary, as any donations made to LWVNM, a (c)(4) organization, can be used for lobbying. Kathy added that a third button would complicate record-keeping. For now, it was agreed that only two buttons are necessary: one for donations and one for membership. Hannah may bring this issue up again during our November meeting. Barbara noted that our website needs to be changed to clarify that LWVNM is a (c)(4) organization, while the Ed Fund is a (c)(3) organization. Kathy said that any large (c)(4) donation should be reviewed and acceptance determined by the board.

Hannah also wanted to allow donors to use a credit card rather than Pay Pal. Starlyn explained that an account is not needed to use PayPal, just credit card information. Starlyn added that Square is a point-of-sale product, and it can be embedded on the website. CNM also recently launched Zeffy, a crowd-funding platform, to raise funds for their Voter Guide. She added that we will be required to move to Stripe for online dues once the new membership system is rolled out. Starlyn has requested that CNM be a beta site for testing this new LWVUS membership system.

In response to a question posed by Hannah, Kathy said that any large (c)(4) donation should be reviewed and accepted by the board. If funds are donated for a specific function, that needs to be tracked. Meredith agreed that we have the right to reject funds (e.g., a donation made by the KKK).

The topic of student memberships was also discussed. Starlyn noted that LWVUS does not intend to have a student membership, and instead they have decided on a sliding scale for all members. The minimum dues will be $20. The timeline for this new program will begin in 2025. As noted, CNM is actively engaged in reviewing this new program and has asked to be a beta testing site. Kathy suggested that one alternative to student memberships would be to subsidize students, but she is unsure of the mechanics. It was learned that Los Alamos has one student member; Southern New Mexico has five or six; Santa Fe has 10; and CNM has 12 to 15 student members. We will continue to track this issue.

**Ed Fund**

Hannah provided the Ed Fund expenses in Fiscal Year 2024-2025. She noted that this is provided for informational purposes only. Expenses have thus far totaled $2,755.65. The Thornburg grant balance is $16,313.70 and the checking account balance at Nusenda is $28,040.57.

Hannah also provided the board with the Ed Fund draft minutes, for our information only, and the LWVNM Education Fund Collaboration Agreement with Affiliated Leagues for our approval. This document was discussed at length. In response to a question posed by Starlyn, Hannah said that funds do not need to be expended by a local League before they can submit an application. The Ed Fund will, however, want receipts and an accounting of the project. Projects need to have a start and end date and the Ed Fund would not be responsible for ongoing expenses. Hannah will provide the correct reimbursement form to all local Leagues shortly. It still does not have the logo because of issues with the contractor.

In response to a question posed by Judy, Felicia explained that Ed Fund monies are intended only for the state and local Leagues, all of which will be part of this agreement. Felicia added that the funds could end up with a non-affiliated entity, as long as they flow through an affiliated League. An example she provided was a lawsuit signed on by the affiliated League, funds could go towards legal fees. The Ed Fund is not entertaining grants to non-affiliated entities.

In response to a question posed by Kathy, Hannah suggested that the reference to the League’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy could be retitled or eliminated, because all local Leagues are required to be in compliance with the LWVUS DEI policy. Judy suggested it be deleted, because it just causes confusion.

**Voter Services**

Edwina submitted a detailed report which details the efforts made by the Voter Services Committee since the last board meeting. The committee meets monthly. The meeting held on June 10 was a debrief of the primary election. Megan Brown, the Vote411 Senior Manager, will provide special training to the committee on July 24. Ms. Brown recently changed the LWVUS Vote411 email address going to candidates, so the emails are less likely to go to their spam folders.

The committee has continued to have problems obtaining contact information for Judges and District Attorney candidates from the SOS. Lindsey Bachman with the SOS provided LWVNM’s request to their information technology (IT) department, but its several attempts to comply with the request failed until Edwina asked Ms. Bachman to intervene. She sent the request to Charles Romero, Elections Deputy Director, who was able to resolve the request. Mr. Romero should be copied on all future requests for the contact information.

The Vote411 production schedule has been drafted for the general election. Candidate invitation letters will be sent to retention judges and candidates who made it through the primary election by July 30. The response rate for the primary election was very low, only about 17 percent, despite the invitation letter, a reminder letter, and follow up telephone calls. Edwina asked that the Communications Committee make some outreach effort with counties not covered by a local League to encourage candidates to participate in the Vote411 Voter Guide. Edwina suggested a news release or letter-to-the-editor, and she asked that this effort begin as soon as possible since the invitation letters will be mailed by July 30. Janet agreed to this request.

Edwina sent letters to all party chairs asking them to help get their candidates to respond during the primary. The Republican and Democratic party chairs seemed receptive, but she does not know if they followed up. With the permission of the board, Edwina plans to send the names of candidates who have not yet responded to their respective party chairs to encourage participation for the general election. There were no objections to this request.

Regarding the Native American Voter Guide (NAVG), Edwina asked if this meeting was the place to request funds for the NAVG and/or whether there was a request form that needed to be completed. Hannah noted that the Ed Fund is applying for grants from the main casino operators, and she will also reach out to the Fort Sill Apache band, which has a construction business in Albuquerque. Requests for funding for the NAVG can be made through the new form, and Hannah suggested applicants include a request for publicity funds. Hannah will forward a copy to Edwina. In response to a question posed by Starlyn, Judy explained that the NAVG has been sent to the counties with large Native American populations (12 counties in 2020 and 8 counties in 2022). Judy noted the LWVNM handled all the distribution efforts with no help from the SOS. Edwina noted that at the January meeting with SOS staff where the League requested SOS assistance publicizing and distributing the NAVG: 1) the SOS asked for a list of areas where we want the NAVG delivered and timing for delivery; and 2) the SOS suggested NAVGs could be distributed to County Clerks at their Election Conference in August. As an action item, the LWVNM was to send them the list. Hannah noted that the Thornburg Foundation has helped with funding and a future meeting with this organization will be attended by Hannah, Kathy, Dick, and Judy. Hannah added that the League has received visibility, as well as gratitude from sovereign nations for our efforts. Regarding distribution, Hannah suggested reaching out to tribal governments.

Starlyn asked for further information at future board meetings. Her specific concern was in reference to municipal elections which were not covered by any League. Jo expressed frustration with Vote411. It goes live too late, is not a good process, and is poorly publicized.

**Election Operations Project**

Karen made a presentation on the request from the Center for Electoral Quality and Integrity (CEQI) (Part of ASQ) for the League’s participation in their election operations project. ASQ requested the League’s participation for a similar, more rigorous, project over one year ago, but LWVNM declined to participate. Karen proposed working with CNM, the Voter Services Chair, a LWVNM board representative, and a respective County Clerk to determine whether the flowchart and process steps are a valid illustration of elections in New Mexico. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Dick expressed concern regarding the standards proposed by CEQI since we have not vetted those standards. He added that it would not be a voter services function but instead a board decision. In response to a question posed by Jody, Karen explained that our participation would provide CEQI with more data points. In response to questions posed by Judy, Karen said the result would be feedback and we should participate to be better educated. Jo, Dick, and Judy expressed concerns regarding the extent of this project.

Janet suggested approaching a different organization, such as the Association of Counties, rather than the League. Karen confirmed that CEQI has not approached the SOS. Kathy said this could be worth pursuing but given the lack of resources it is hard to contemplate.

Barbara noted that county clerks are all required to follow the same steps and rules. She agreed that the SOS could improve the system, but the request should go to a county clerks’ organization. Meredith added that New Mexico elections are already ranked number one in the nation by the MIT Elections Performance Index.

Meredith moved that we not participate in this project, and this motion was seconded by Dick. Barbara suggested that we do not need to vote on this at all, and Meredith withdrew her motion. Dick concurred.

**Local League Reports**

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

**Announcements, Initiatives, and Other Business**

Dick asked that the details surrounding the Making Democracy Work Award to Raúl Burciaga be handled by the Action Committee. He suggested that the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center be considered for the venue. Starlyn warned that venues are lacking in Albuquerque and costs will be high.

The deadline for *La Palabra* submissions is July 25.

The next board meeting will be held on September 21, 2024. Barbara asked that this meeting be held in person in Santa Fe. Dick preferred Zoom or hybrid, but he noted that hybrid meetings do not allow for full participation. Kathy added that grappling with technological problems is stressful, and Rebecca noted that every hybrid meeting we have held has been problematic. While no decision on venue was made, Starlyn agreed to contact the new Socorro member to inquire about a hybrid meeting there, and Judy will check with St. Johns United Methodist Church or El Sendero, (the former Desert Inn).

Jo will inquire with her sister, who recently purchased a hotel in Santa Fe, to see if it would be acceptable for our Convention in April 2025.

Rebecca advised the board that she will not be able to participate in the September board meeting, and a replacement secretary will be needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Written by Rebecca Chaiken (July 21, 2024)

Edited by Barbara Calef (July 22, 2024)

1. Kim’s balance reflects $18,270 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)