



Established 1947

Officers 2003-04

President	Nelda Holder
President-Elect	Kathleen Balogh
Vice President	Janet Bowman
Treasurer	Jane Weis
Recording Secretary	Sandra Abromitis

Elected Board Members

Civic Education	Marsha Bate
Government Accountability	Nina Accardo
Membership	Ruth Christie
Publicity	Totsie Marine
Editor, Publications	Andy Reed
Voter Enfranchisement	Susan Fisher
Nominating Committee	Christine Singleton, Chair Marian Fisher & Bette Jackson

Off-Board Appointees

Corresponding Secretary	Frances Myers
Hospitality	Marge Stewart
Office Phone	Betty Becker
Web Page	Nelda Holder & Judy Bissell
Member Communication	
Phone	Rose Rose
Email	Millie Wald
Fundraising	Jackie Gunn
Public Access TV	J. R. Yarnall

About the League of Women Voters
MISSION OF THE LEAGUE

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League seeks to expand citizen participation in the election process and in federal, state, and local government decision-making. Based on member participation and agreement, the League also seeks to secure public policies that promote League positions.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE LEAGUE

Membership is open to all citizens of voting age, female and male, who subscribe to the League's purpose and policies. Citizens of other countries or those under 18 may be non-voting (associate) members. Membership in the LWV of Asheville-Buncombe County (\$45 individual or \$70 household) carries automatic membership in the LWVNC and LWVUS.

The League of Women Voters
of Asheville-Buncombe County
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Asheville, NC 28801
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www.abc.nc.lwvnet.org/

THE VOTER

PUBLISHED NINE TIMES PER YEAR

SEPTEMBER 2003

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS STUDY BEGINS

Eight League members met August 18 at the YWCA to establish parameters for the "League Study on the Application and Appointment process for Boards and Commissions of Buncombe County and the City of Asheville." The study group is headed by Civic Education chair Marsha Bate and Government Accountability chair Nina Accardo and includes League members Nelda Holder, Totsie Marine, Andy Reed, Sandra Abromitis, Kathleen Balogh, and Cathy St. John-Ritzen.

The study was recommended by the Civics Education and Government Accountability Committees, which shared a perception that barriers prevent diversity on many boards and commissions in terms of race, sex, and socio-economics.

The study will analyze the appointment process to develop a better understanding of how it works and identify any barriers that may exist in the current process. It will attempt to determine what aspects of the process work best for applicants, appointed members, and the two government bodies they serve. The ultimate goal will be to determine and recommend the most effective system of appointed boards and commissions for our community.

Among the first questions to be addressed are:

- √ how applicants become informed of openings and the qualifications needed;
- √ how the list of applicants is developed for submission to the appointing body;
- √ are there required representatives;
- √ how, if at all, are applicants screened.

Group members will analyze the selection process based on both objective and subjective criteria and for consistency of the process from appointment to appointment. The group will also address the training and evaluation of appointees, especially regarding such important aspects as attendance, keeping accurate minutes, and observing the North Carolina Open Meetings Law.

To begin the study, Nina Accardo will compile comprehensive lists of Boards and Commissions, identifying each as an Enforcement or Authority Board, a Policy Making board or commission, or an Advisory commission, as well as identifying boards whose members receive compen-

sation for their services.

To cast a wide net for the study, the group will recruit representatives from other organizations and the general public and determine the appropriate ways in which their participation may best serve the goals of the study.

ANNUAL KICKOFF MEETING TO BE HELD SEPT. 15 AT YMI

The League will hold its annual kickoff meeting at the YMI Cultural Center on S. Market Street Sept. 15 from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. All members and supporters of the League are encouraged to attend.

The kickoff offers Leaguers an opportunity to meet each other and get to know board members, learn about plans for the coming year, and socialize over wine and catered hors d'oeuvres.

This year's meeting will be held in the upstairs gallery of the YMICC, Asheville's premiere institution dedicated to the preservation and celebration of African-American culture in Western North Carolina. Established in 1893, reorganized and renovated in 1980, the YMI is now a partner organization of Pack Place.

Its collection of African arts and crafts is unsurpassed, and its historic documents and photographs are a unique documentation of the history of minorities in the region.

In a new outreach aimed at developing cross-cultural partnerships, the League has also invited members of leading black sororities and civic groups to attend. Many members of Delta House, Alpha Kappa Alpha, and The Links are active in voter registration drives, youth education, and other civic projects compatible with League activities.

We need a head count to plan the catering, so please call Andy Reed at 667-1733 or email him at adreed@charter.net to let him know you'll be there. And bring a friend whom you'd like to introduce to the League!

(See map and parking info. on back cover.)

September, 2003

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Membership

Membership year is July 1 to June 30.

Individual: \$45; Household: \$70

New members joining after Jan 1 may pay reduced dues of \$20/individual or \$30/household through June 30.

Member names and addresses are not given or sold to other organizations. We provide mailing labels when we cosponsor an event with another organization.

THANK YOU to all members who have sent in dues for 2003-04, which were due July 1. If you haven't sent in your dues, please fill out the form on page 5 and send with your check to our treasurer Jane Weis right away. If you're not sure whether you've renewed, check with Ruth Christie at 670-8632 or christie@buncombe.main.nc.us.

NEW MEMBERS & LISTING CHANGES
See page 4.

VOLUNTEER

The League's work doesn't get done by elves and gnomes, but by willing volunteers! Choose what you want to help with and call:

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS	253-7326
Rose Rose (phone) 298-2546	rosrose@juno.com
Millie Wald (email) 253-4676	wwald999@charter.net
MEMBERSHIP	670-8632
Ruth Christie	christie@buncombe.main.nc.us
FUNDRAISING	699-0274
Jackie Gunn	gunn6775@bellsouth.net
PUBLICITY	299-4521
Totsie Marine	totsie@totsie.com
HOSPITALITY	658-2141
Marge Stewart	marjoriems@iopener.net
PUBLICATIONS	667-1733
Andy Reed	adreed@charter.net

Welcome back, everyone!

I hope your summers were entertaining and refreshing, and that you're ready to go back on civics patrol for the fall. We have a lot to attend to on behalf of our community, most of it featured elsewhere in this newsletter so I won't belabor the point. I will say, however, that our new board for 2003-2004 has held its summer retreat and one regular board meeting since the Annual Meeting last June, and this is one dynamic group of excellent people dedicated to moving us all forward in the coming months. So read the rest of the newsletter carefully and get ready to have some fun at our Kick Off social (September 15) and at the candidate forums in September and October.

And now, the icing on our League cake. First, vast appreciation and thanks to our new publicity director, Totsie Marine, for designing a beautiful new logo for our local League. You'll see it here in *The Voter*, and the letterhead for the office is even more dramatically gorgeous. It gives us such a fresh face for our public duties.

Second, a tip-of-the-hat, a curtsy, and a hug to Andy Reed, our veteran *Voter* editor, who has redesigned these noble pages and ushered in a new communication era for LWV-ABC. Isn't this just handsome as all get-out? Thanks, Andy. And you League members—tell your friends and “sell” your friends. Get them to join the League, or at minimum to subscribe to this effective news source about civic life (\$12 for *Voter* subscription).

As for the serious purpose for our existence, it is with a sense of private pain that I report on the recent vote (4-3) of the Asheville City Council to reject the existing housing code requirement of mandatory inspections for private and rental housing. This happened after a laborious public hearing on August 12.

Our League gave testimony during the hearing, based on our decades-old national position on meeting basic human needs. How many of you remember that national study? I do. I was in Vermont at the time, and I remember interviewing agencies that serve the public and having to come to grips with the true needs of our community's residents. And as with so many other national studies, I was proud that we were looking at these issues in depth and with such compassion. Our consensus position led us into participation in housing issues at the national level which were far-reaching, and we have been on record in the field of housing for years and years as supporters of minimum

housing codes and the assurance of safe and adequate shelter for all our citizens.

It was natural for the League to partner, therefore, with local organizations and individuals in presenting testimony to Council about the success of the current, mandatory code and the folly of doing away with something that other cities now use as a model in addressing their own housing issues. Included in these eloquent testimonies were voices from the Affordable Housing Coalition, Neighborhood Housing Services, the Coalition of Asheville Neighborhoods, and many individual citizens who believe—or know from firsthand experience—that moving to a complaint-based code enforcement system will not protect our more vulnerable populations or our housing stock.

Regrettably, our city is turning its collective back on the fact that without the mandatory requirement, complaint-based inspections throughout history had failed to bring these houses up to code. And it is trusting that houses now brought up-to-code through the hard work of the housing community, the city's own personnel, and the respective owners, will remain that way. The dichotomy of that evening of testimony remains prevalent in my mind. On the one hand, there were those who believe that meeting basic human needs should remain a top priority. On the other hand, there were those who believe that profit margins should take precedence. It was not a night which engendered pride in government.

But let's end on a happier note. There was a night this summer that engendered pride in citizens and citizenship. The League was asked to help plan and host an Independence Eve event at Malaprop's on July 3. It was called “Patriots and the Patriot Act” (see related Patriot Act story in this issue), and it featured a panel composed of Ed Sheary, director of the Buncombe County library system; Evan Mahaney from the ACLU; and Christiana Tugman, citizen-scholar. The space was filled to overflowing with people eager to discuss this topic, and the evening was opened by performance poet Glenis Redmond reading our own Bill of Rights. Yours truly then had the fine opportunity of moderating, and our dear *Voter* editor, Andy Reed, finished the evening with a superb reading of the Declaration of Independence. It was frankly one of the best Independence celebrations I remember, and was a down-home demonstration of our motto, *Citizenship in Action*.

The Prez

LEAGUE NEWS

Schedule of Candidate Events for Election 2003

Pre-Primary

Monday, Sept. 29, 7:00 p.m.

"Meet the Candidates" for Asheville City Council, Renaissance Asheville Hotel
Candidates will be available to meet with members of the public, answer questions, and share information about their stands on issues and qualifications for office.

General Election

Monday, Oct. 13, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Woodfin Community Center

7:00-7:30 "Meet the Candidates" for Woodfin Water Board

Candidates will share information on experience and qualifications for office.

7:30-8:30 - Woodfin Mayoral Candidates

A structured forum for the two Woodfin mayoral candidates facilitated by a League

moderator and timer. Each candidate will respond to questions posed by the League moderator, including questions submitted in writing by members of the public.

Monday, Oct. 20, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

"Meet the Candidates" for Woodfin Alderman, Woodfin Community Center
Candidates will share information on experience and qualifications for the office. Then members of the public can meet informally with candidates.

Mon., Oct. 27, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Asheville City Council Candidates' Forum Renaissance Asheville Hotel

A structured forum, directed by an experienced League moderator and timer. Each candidate will respond to questions posed

by the moderator, including questions submitted in writing by members of the public.

OTHER FORUMS OF INTEREST

Thur., Sept. 18, 7:00-9:30 p.m.

Haw Creek Elementary School

Asheville City Council Candidates' Forum sponsored by Haw Creek Community Association. For more information, call Bob Brummond at 298-6222.

Thurs., Oct. 23, Time TBA

Black Mountain Alderman Candidates' Forum

sponsored by the Black Mountain Times.

The League will likely supply the moderator and timer, and the format will be in line with our forums.

Minutes - JULY 5, 2003

YWCA Conference Room

9:00 a.m.

Present: Holder, presiding; Abromitis, Accardo, Balogh, Bate, Christie, M. Fisher, S. Fisher, Marine, Reed, Singleton, Stewart, Weis, Yarnall

Meeting started at 9:25 a.m. with introductions of new board members; existing board members introduced themselves and told of their history with LWV.

Report from State Convention attended by Nelda & Kathleen:

Based on the LWVNC position in favor of appointments of judges, the LWV of Moore County moves the LWVNC support the motion pending before the NC Superior Court requiring capital cases to be tried and reviewed by appointed judges instead of elected judges by taking the following actions. Our board felt that more discussion of this motion was needed; tabled.

Assessment of 2002-03

Achievements:

- Membership enrollment up
- Great speakers
- Recognition from other organizations as being the "expert"
- Facts for Voters publication-big success
- Kids Voting-big success
- Participation in Rolling Thunder event

Needs Improvements or Follow-up:

- Public attendance at forums & general

Mtgs.

- Look for Forum Co-Sponsors
- More participation from board
- More planning, better publication of Forums, better tie-in with local papers
- Educate public on political process
- Add link to Malalprop's
- Address "left wing" image

TALKING POINTS

Members to be contacted for involvement: Reed, Balogh, Marine, Tinkler, Friedrich, Roderick.

Promoting Civic Engagement: GOALS

- I. More citizens involved in government
- II. Improved process, accessibility
- III. Increased public awareness, regarding how to get involved and how to be effective participants (education regarding open meetings law, etc.) To do this, we must: establish a time line communicate with appropriate folks (Terry Bellamy and county counterpart; clerks) review LWV experiences (other cities/counties?), write guest editorials, understand the selection process, determine "best practices" (observer corps can help with this), look at barriers to service set up survey, look at how to publicize openings to reach more diverse population, look at how to promote the work/information generated by boards/commissions potentially publish "pull out" on boards & commissions for C-T; potentially offer train-

ing sessions on serving on boards & commissions, work with full range of organizations on project (Vision, CAN, BCWC, Citizens for Change, NAACP, Hispanics)
Some ideas:

Check with Institute of Government and other Leagues

How to: make meetings more welcoming to public? instruct in Open Meetings Law? give public access to agendas? Who decides what meetings are taped? When are "closed session" notes released? How many hours do members spend? What is phone, e-mail contact? How are applicants treated? Are there agenda & minutes for various committees (and public notice?)

Miscellaneous items:

-The Water Authority meeting will be held Monday, July 7, at the YWCA.

-J.R. Yarnall reported that Public Access would pick up some city funding at a later date.

-A Communication Chair is needed, until then all communication concerning LWV should go through Nelda. The Nominating Committee was asked to look for a Comm Chair.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Sandra Abromitis
Recording Secretary

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

NEW MEMBERS

LISTING CHANGES

NEW E-MAIL ADDRESSES:

METROPOLITAN SEWAGE DISTRICT

Wednesday, May 7, 2003 at 2:00 p.m.

Regular meeting

Full board present

Reported by Bette Jackson

The main topic of this meeting was the preliminary budget for 2003-2004, which passed with Ball and Venable voting "no". Ball voiced concerns that the proposed 2% rate increase was not necessary at this time since the district's revenue for 2002-2003 was actually \$1.5 million more than had been estimated in the budget. During the budget discussion, the general manager mentioned that next year the board might want to discuss the idea of a flat residential rate.

In his report, Tom Hartye, the general manager, told of the initial meeting of an infrastructure planning group with the purpose of discussing infrastructure planning and coordination. Representatives from infrastructure providers, Mayors, and Commissioners Gantt and Ramsey attended.

Wednesday, June 11, 2003 at 2:00 p.m.

Regular meeting

Gantt and Sobol absent

Reported by Bette Jackson

The main topic of this meeting was the

public hearing on budget and rates for fiscal year 2003-2004. No member

of the public spoke. The 2% rate increase passed with Ball and Field voting "no". Ms Field commented on this being a difficult economic time and noted that every other taxing agency has chosen not to raise taxes.

The idea of a flat rate for residential users was again discussed (see May 7, '03). Ms Ball commented that there are economic and social disincentives connected with a flat rate. The flat rate possibility will be considered by the Finance Committee.

Wednesday, July 16, 2003 at 2:00 p.m.

Regular meeting

Gantt absent

Reported by Bette Jackson

There was an election of Board officers.

Chair: Brady Blackburn

Vice Chair: Mike Sobol

Secretary: Jackie Bryson

The board presented achievement awards to some MSD staff members.

There was a report presented on motor efficiency, discussing when it is financially beneficial to replace a motor.



Your 2003-04 Board of Directors



Seated, L to R: Andy Reed, Sandra Abromitis, Kathleen Balogh, Nelda Holder, Janet Bowman, Jane Weis. Standing, L to R: Marge Stewart, Jackie Gunn, Bette Jackson, Nina Accardo, Marsha Bate, J.R. Yarnall, Betty Becker, Ruth Christie, Talmadge Neece, Totsie Marine (photo by Totsie Marine)

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE MINUTES

June 24, 2003

Present: Christie (presiding), Becker, Berdie, Panarites, Yates,

Welcomed Barb Panarites who recently moved to Asheville from Dallas where Barb had been VP for Community Relations in Dallas LWV.

- Individualized LWV buttons –

Supplier willing to produce small batches. Therefore we recommend giving each new member individualized LWV buttons.

- Sept. kick-off:

Recommend retaining general format of the past two years with following suggested changes: a) Live, background music during hors d'oeuvres-mingling time (If we can find musician to play for free); b) Intro comm. chairs early enough in evening for guests & members to have opportunity to talk w/chairs, give suggestions, etc. – have comm. chairs located in different areas of room (at small table, circle of chairs, etc.)

If Starnes Room isn't available to us this year, ask to hold event in a member's home – suggestions – Barbara Whitaker, Sonya Friedrich, Jane Mathews- or meeting room at Deerfield or Crowfields

- Prospects and new members

- Call to invite to Sept. kick-off – ask non-comm. members who've offered to call members to call 3 or 4 prospects each.
- Invite to small coffees or teas in

members home for 1-on-1 conversations to explain how League operates, political info. in city & county, judicial system, school districts, etc.

- Develop folders of info re above as resource for hosts

- Outreach to minority communities

- At voter registration drives in minority communities, put out sign up sheet for people interested in learning more about League, receiving Voter
- Potential contacts- business people in black & Hispanic communities; schools (teachers, teacher aids) & libraries (Does our library system have indiv. responsible for community outreach?); black sororities, Stephens-Lee Alumni Assoc., Building Bridges
- Public radio & TV & new radio station being operated by the NAACP Empowerment Center – transmit forums
- Attend NAACP board meetings
- Encourage LWV member attendance at NAACP Freedom Fund dinner
- Arrange for Spanish interpreters at forums
- Activate Speakers Bureau; offer speakers to black teachers, librarians in minority communities

- Outreach to young adults (under 35)

- Re: youth – involve League members with special interest in youth ; i.e. former teachers, etc.

College students: 1) Propose internships to UNCA & Warren Wilson College – need to have proposal ready & contact college before August. Ideas for internships: a) Create plan to get young people interested in elections; b) Create program for League to attract & involve young adults; c) Observe community Boards; 2) Present program for Women's History Month at UNCA (March): a) Link proposed topic to some existing UNCA course; b) Involve LWV members interested in theatre to create exciting program; i.e. Sandra Bradbury, Andy Reed, etc.; 3) Local focus; i.e. WNC Women in Politics; Elizabeth Blackwell (1st woman doctor in US, taught in Asheville prior to attending med. School.); 4) Need to have program specifics developed well before call for proposals goes out in late Nov. since very little lead time is allowed. Specifics required

- What we'll do
 - Who will do it
 - Time slot (brown bag lunch, afternoon or evening event such as talk, film, performance)
 - What we can't do
 - Special needs - equipment, etc.
- Event with food (Minnie Jones' idea) at the YWCA?

Next comm. mtg. – (tentative)
Aug. 26, 1:00 p.m.



Membership Application for 2002-03 League of Women Voters of Asheville-Buncombe County

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (h) _____ (w) _____ (cell) _____

e-mail _____ Fax _____ Member since: _____

Membership Category:	Individual (\$45*) _____	Membership Cost _____
	Household (\$70*) _____	Additional Contribution _____
	Student (\$20) _____	Total Enclosed _____

Mail with your check to: Jane Weis, Treasurer 11 Honeycomb Cir. Swannanoa, NC 28778 (828-686-8982)

**After Jan 1, \$20 & \$30 for membership through June 30, 2003. Assistance toward membership dues is available. To apply, contact membership chair Ruth Christie at 670-8632.*

LWVUS Concerned By “USA Patriot Act”

TO: Members of the U.S. Senate, Members of the U.S. House of Representatives
 FROM: Kay J. Maxwell, President
 RE: Civil Liberties and National Security

The League of Women Voters strongly believes that basic civil liberties must be preserved and protected as the nation seeks to guard against terrorism and other threats to national security. We are particularly concerned about the impact of provisions of the USA Patriot Act passed by Congress in October 2001, the possible extension of the sunset provisions of that Act and Administration proposals for a new Domestic Security Enhancement Act (DSEA), also known as Patriot Act II.

Members of the League are steadfast in their conviction that the need to protect against security threats to America must be balanced with the need to preserve the very liberties that are the foundation of this country. There are fundamental principles that guard our liberty — from independent judicial review of law enforcement actions to prohibitions on indiscriminate searches — that must be preserved.

These beliefs have been long held by the League of Women Voters. In 1942, during World War II, the League wished “to preserve the greatest degree of civil liberty consistent with national safety.” That concern continued during the “witch hunt” period of the early 1950s when the League conducted a two-year, community education program known as the “Freedom Agenda” that provided opportunities for Americans to discuss and learn about their freedoms under the Bill of Rights. This was followed by a League study on the federal loyalty/security programs, culminating in a policy position that emphasized protection of individual liberties against major threats to basic constitutional rights.

Today, American citizens and their elected representatives must remain vigilant to protect against encroachment on basic civil liberties. The additional powers that would be given to the government under the proposed Domestic Security Enhancement Act being discussed in the Administration would endanger many key rights of individuals. It is our understanding that the proposed DSEA would incorporate and expand on some of the most controversial and threatening as-

pects of the USA Patriot Act by:

- > Including an overly broad definition of terrorism so that government action could be directed against protesters and organizations that voice disagreement with the policies of the leadership of the United States;
- > Authorizing government officials to obtain data, such as financial records and library records of individuals, without a warrant or involvement by the courts;
- > Providing for indefinite detention of individuals, including American citizens, without disclosure of names or filing of charges;
- > Ending existing court-imposed limits on law enforcement spying on political and religious organizations.

In addition to our concerns about the proposed DSEA, the League of Women Voters is concerned about the impact of the USA Patriot Act on the free and open exchange of knowledge by patrons of libraries and bookstores. We support S.1158, the Library and Bookseller Protection Act, sponsored by Senator Barbara Boxer (D CA), which would ensure that libraries and bookstores are subjected to the regular system of court-ordered warrants.

When Congress passed the Patriot Act, it gave the federal government unprecedented powers but balanced this by including sunset provisions that limit certain parts of the Act to five years’ duration. It has only been twenty months since the law was passed. The sunset provisions will give Congress and the country time to determine the impact of the Act on individual rights. We are concerned about congressional efforts to make permanent many of the law enforcement provisions before the trial period is complete. We urge you to oppose any efforts to eliminate the sunset provisions in the USA Patriot Act.

In addition to threats to basic individual liberties that are central to our civic life, the League is concerned about the potential impact that the USA Patriot Act and the proposed DSEA could have on the checks and balances of government. We believe that accountability and responsibility to the people require that unnecessary secrecy between the President and Congress be eliminated. It is critical that Congress know

LWVUS Supports “Our Democracy, Our Airwaves” Legislation

-WASHINGTON, DC- The League of Women Voters of the United States has announced its support for the Our Democracy, Our Airwaves Act introduced in the U.S. Senate. The legislation, sponsored by Senators McCain (R-AZ), Feingold (D-WI) and Durbin (D-IL), requires television and radio stations to provide free airtime and advertising vouchers to candidates and political parties before elections.

“The time has come for ideas to matter more than money,” stated Kay J. Maxwell, League President. “As campaigning costs have gone up, driven by the skyrocketing cost of buying television advertising, the political system has eroded,” said Maxwell. “Candidates have lost their focus. Instead of taking the time to speak to voters about their candidacies and issues, they are forced to spend enormous amounts of time raising money, and all too often that money is from powerful special interest groups,” noted Maxwell.

According to the Alliance for Better Campaigns, candidates, parties and special interest organizations spent approximately \$1 billion on political ads in the 2002 election.

“Escalating campaign costs drive out potential candidates,” said Maxwell. “Building on the League’s previous campaign finance reform work, this legislation will help level the playing field for political candidates. Providing free airtime allows the ideas of candidates to be heard,” she added. “Airwaves are provided free of charge to broadcasters. They, in turn, have a civic responsibility to serve the public interest and play a constructive role in our democracy,” Maxwell stated.

of the actions of the Executive and Judiciary branches and that the courts be kept apprised of and have the opportunity to review the actions of law enforcement. In addition, it is important for local and state governments to be able to work in concert with the federal government in the critical balancing of security concerns and individual liberties.

VISION Housing Dialogues

Asheville-Buncombe VISION invites participation in the 2003 Community Dialogues. The Dialogues do not seek to change anyone's mind, but rather to identify the concerns and actions that will address housing issues in our community.

The first event in the Dialogue process is the Kickoff Meeting Tuesday, Sept. 2, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Central United Methodist Church on Church Street in Asheville. Neighborhood Dialogue sessions will meet once a week from Sept. 8 through Oct. 5, The Summit Meeting will be Tuesday, Oct. 14 at Central United Methodist Church.

Even if one does not participate in the weekly sessions, all are invited to the Kick-off to hear facts about the current housing situation and to the Summit to hear the groups present their suggested solutions/actions. For more information or for a registration form call the VISION office at 254-0333 or send an e-mail request to dialogues@abvision.org.

CANDIDATE PRIMER

Asheville city leaders held a seminar for candidates for the three open City Council seats on Monday, Aug. 18. All 13 registered candidates attended. Hosted by Mayor Charles Worley, the session offered candidates an overview of local government operations and personnel.

City Manager Jim Westbrook discussed the history and reasons for the council/manager form of local government and the legal relationship between municipalities and the state. Attorney Bob Oast explained the Open Meetings Law, issues of conflict of interest, and responsibilities of elected officials. Budget Director Ben Durant and Finance Director Bill Schaefer discussed the responsibilities of their respective offices and the process by which City spending is developed and accounted for.

Following the formal presentations, former council members Barbara Field and Rev. O.T. Tomes and former mayor Russ Martin held a question-and-answer session. Though each recognized drawbacks to serving in elected office, all were strongly supportive; Field asserted that, regardless of the election outcome, running the race is, in itself, one of the rewards of such community involvement.

When I proposed to the board that I write a column for each issue of THE VOTER, I was admonished to remember that, despite my own liberal tendencies, this newsletter must maintain a strictly nonpartisan balance. I was also encouraged to reflect that my goal in life has been to find bridges and common ground, rather than to exploit divisions. I have accordingly instructed my keyboard to reject partisanship, divisiveness, and rancor. We - my brain, my fingers, and my computer - will concentrate instead on finding and exploring ideas that might lead to solutions to identified problems.

This first issue of the 2003-04 VOTER introduces both a new look for our monthly newsletter and a new spirit for our League. That spirit is reflected in our 21st-century logo, designed by new board member Totsie Marine, and in our undertaking important projects.

The most visible project, one that could have great impact on our community in years to come, is our Study of Boards and Commissions. For new or forgetful members, the idea for such a study originated almost simultaneously with two of our committees, Government Accountability and Voter Education.

The front-page report on the Study Group's first meeting outlines the Study's purpose, process, and goals. Its value will become apparent only in the long run, if it succeeds in both process and outcome.

The process demands bringing together City and County officials, sitting and former members of boards and commissions, members of the public, experts on various aspects of civic life and public polity to share their ideas and wisdom.

A successful outcome will be seen in an appointments process through which every citizen feels enfranchised and well served by all those who are appointed - and no longer feels that it's pointless to apply, in the belief that the process allows only those with an inside track, or those who won't rock the boat, to gain seats.

A second important undertaking for the year is our plan for a joint session of Building Bridges cosponsored by three (?) of Asheville's leading black women's organizations. The program will offer the League an opportunity to interact and work with leaders in the black community

who are pursuing many of the same goals as the League.

Ever since I've been a League member and board member, I have heard it asked, "Why do we have so few black members? How can we get more African-Americans to join?" Through my own deep involvement in Asheville's black community, I've learned that we need to precede that question with this one: "What are we offering the black community that would interest African-Americans in wanting to join the League?"

As with the Boards & Commissions Study, knowledge will lead to understanding, and understanding will lead toward opportunities to work together. And the most successful route to understanding is through dialogue.

Building Bridges has developed great expertise in setting up structured dialogues that allow people to explore their differences and areas of common ground. Participants are expected to speak out honestly and, equally importantly, to listen with an open mind.

Historically, area African-Americans got, at best, limited help and support from the white community in dealing with the issues that faced them. Deep-pockets philanthropy went to institutions beloved of whites: the Asheville Symphony, Community Theatre, Art Museum. Funding for institutions that serve, primarily, upper- and upper-middle-class constituencies - the YMCA, for example - has long been on a different scale from that for those that serve lower-income and minority families - like the YWCA.

So, the black community established its own organizations and institutions: The Links, Delta House, the YMICC, and others. Other institutions, like the Community Relations Council, lacking access to deep pockets, rely heavily on public funding.

These institutions founded and led by African-Americans have developed leadership structures and met the needs of the black community without the help of well-meaning whites; why should whites expect their members to now support us?

We must listen, and we must hear. And when we bring our agenda to the table, we must be willing to accept the agenda of those we meet with.

THE VOTER



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LEAGUE CALENDAR - 2003-04

LWVABC Board Meetings

The board meets monthly on the first Saturday at 9:00 a.m. at the West End Bakery on Haywood Road, West Asheville. All members are welcome to attend. The deadline for submissions to *THE VOTER* coincides with each month's board meeting. **Next up is our monthly meeting Sept. 6.**

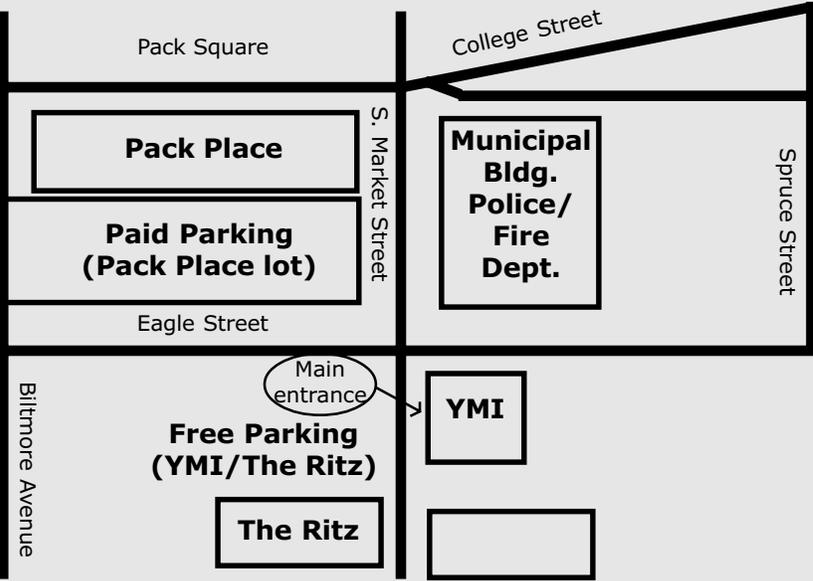
League Events

- Board Meeting/Voter Deadline Sept. 6
- Kick-off Sept. 15
- YMI Cultural Center Upstairs Gallery
 (See map below right)
- Candidates Forum Sept. 29
 7:00 p.m., Renaissance Plaza
- Board Meeting/Voter Deadline Oct. 4
- Luncheon Meeting Oct. 20
- Candidates Forum Oct. 27
 7:00 p.m., Renaissance Plaza
- Board Meeting/Voter Deadline Nov. x
- Breakfast Meeting Nov. 17
 7:30 a.m., TBA
- Holiday Party Dec. 5
- Board Meeting/Voter Deadline Jan. 3
- Luncheon Meeting Jan. 19
- Board Meeting/Voter Deadline Feb. 7
- Membership Planning Meeting ... Feb. 16
- Board Meeting/Voter Deadline .. March 6
- Luncheon Meeting March 15
- Board Meeting/Voter Deadline Apr. 3
- Breakfast Meeting Apr. 19
- Board Meeting/Voter Deadline May 1
- Annual Meeting May 22

Non-League Events

- Women's Equality Day Aug. 28
 Laurel Forum, Karpen Hall, UNCA
 Elizabeth McCrodden, speaker 6:00 p.m.
- VISION Dialogues Kickoff Sept. 2
 7-9 pm, Central United Methodist Church

Map to the YMI Cultural Center Kickoff Meeting Sept. 15, 5:30 p.m.



Wanted: Seat Fillers

Okay, couch potatoes or weary workers. Here's a chance to do something important while sitting on your . . . er . . . derriere.

At Asheville City Council meetings, a representative of a group or organization is allowed 10 minutes to speak instead of the usual three during public hearings. To my chagrin, when I attended the August 12 meeting to present our testimony on behalf of maintaining the current housing code, I was unable to complete my prepared remarks because there were not three other League members in the audience.

The remarks, it seems, would not have changed any Council minds, but they would have been part of the public record (and perhaps would have landed on someone's conscience!).

So in the future, LWV NEEDS YOU! Would you sign up for a list of Seat Fillers, so that when we need to give testimony on a League consensus issue, we will be allowed to do so? Call right now to volunteer (252-8569), or e-mail me at westofthemoon@charter.net.

You can even bring along your knitting.
Nelda