**League of Women Voters of St. Croix Valley**

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting, April 28, 2024**

**Amery Community Center/Senior Center**

**608 Harriman Ave. South, Amery, WI**

**2:00 pm to 4:30 pm**

# Welcome/Call to Order

Co-President Beth Wood welcomed participants and introduced League officers. Beth also introduced our speaker, Cathy Leaf.

# Keynote Presentation

Cathy Leaf presented Civics 101.

Link to *Impact on your Life* video: TBD

# Group Photo

Co-chair Beth Wood assembled everyone for a group photo. Refreshments for everyone!

# Business Meeting Called to Order

Co-President Irene Bugge called the business meeting to order at 3:30pm. Current membership is at 77. Thirty-seven members were in attendance exceeding the 20% requirement for a quorum.

## ***Approve Agenda***

A motion was made and seconded to approve the business agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

## ***Annual Report***

Irene Bugge introduced our League’s *2023-2024 Highlights* and encouraged everyone to read the document. (Document is attached to these minutes.)

## ***Dues Collection***

Treasurer Kate Manecke explained the changes to dues collection for 2025. Currently, dues are collected by each local chapter and most of the money we collect is sent to the WI and US Leagues. In 2025, LWVUS will take over due’s collection for all 700 League chapters. LWVUS will send money to each League. Currently, we receive $8 from each membership. Going forward, we will receive $15 from each membership. These changes in how our dues are collected will require that our bylaws be changed.

## ***Bylaws Change***

Co-president Irene explained that LWVSCV bylaws currently state that bylaws changes can only be made at the annual meeting. Changes to Article XI of LWVSCV’s bylaws were proposed so that our chapter would have the option of making bylaws changes at regular or special general membership meetings and not be limited to the one time per year annual meeting.

The proposed bylaws changes were sent to all members 30 days in advance of this meeting.

**Highlighted below are the proposed changes.**

Article XI

Amendments and Suspension

Section 1. Amendments.

These bylaws may be amended by a two thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at an annual, regular or special meeting, providing the amendments were submitted to the membership in writing at least one month in advance of the meeting.

Section 2. Suspension.

Parts of Articles IV through IX of these bylaws may be suspended, if necessary, for up to one year by a two thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at an annual, regular or special meeting. if notice of intention to do so has been submitted to the membership in writing at least one month in advance of the meeting.

Motion made, seconded and discussion ensued. Members unanimously approved proposed bylaws change.

## ***Nominations and Elections***

## The Nominating Committee presented the following slate of candidates to our membership.

**Board of Directors:**

| **Position** | **Candidate** | **Term** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Vice President | Kris Surbaugh | 2024-2026 |
| Treasurer | Kate Manecke | 2024-2025 |
| Director | Edna Early | 2024-2026 |
| Director | Barb Katt | 2024-2026 |
| Director | Rita Kearns | 2024-2025 |
| Director | Patty Van Nevel | 2024-2025 |

Nominating Committee – 2024-2025

* Marcy Armstrong
* Kathy Streitz

Budget Committee – 2024-2025

* Nancy Steward, Chair
* Janet Ballis Lestock

Motion made and seconded, discussion ensued. Members unanimously approved the slate of nominees.

# Adjourn Business Meeting

Meeting was adjourned at 3:50pm.

# Speed Dating, Meet and Greet, Visit Displays

Attendees visited tables to learn about tabling at farmer’s markets; using the Let’s Vote Storytime Kit; reaching out to youth, in particular the Adopt a School Book Mark project; Diversity, Equity Inclusion and Justice efforts; Creative Fundraising and Readers Theater.

# Wrap Up

Participants discussed their experience of the annual meeting, what they liked, what could be improved.

**2023-2024 Highlights**

**League of Women Voters of St. Croix Valley**

The past year was a time of change in our chapter. There was a transition in leadership. There was new energy and creativity in our membership. One member designed and donated a Suffragist Quilt. We made inroads in member engagement and strengthened and expanded our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice efforts. Our League focused on our core mission and experimented with new initiatives. We hosted our first candidate forums since Covid as well as numerous voter education/registration events. Members reached out to high school and college youth and partnered with other grassroots organizations. We celebrated Fair Maps in Wisconsin Some of our favorite slogans for the year were: “We’ll try anything once,” aka “Test and Learn” and “Fun with the Fundamentals.”

**Core Mission**

* **Candidate Forums.** Our chapter hosted three excellent forums for County Board of Supervisors candidates in contested races in Burnett, Polk and St. Croix Counties. Over one-hundred people attended these forums. (March, 2024)
* **Boards of Education.** League members contacted all Board of Education candidates running in contested races in our three-county area. They were invited to provide written answers to questions and their answers were posted on our website. (March, 2024)
* **National Voter Registration Month.** We hosted multiple voter education/registration events at libraries, schools, farmers markets and community events. (September, 2023)
* **Fair Maps.** Chapter members represented our League at a Fair Maps celebration with the Governor in Hudson, WI on the day the new voting district maps were signed into law. This invitation was an acknowledgement of our League’s active involvement in local and statewide efforts to end gerrymandering in WI. (February, 2024)
* **Amplification of Voter Information.** Nonpartisan information for voters is regularly updated on LWVSCV website, posted on social media and sent as Public Service Announcements to local newspapers and to ADRCs (Aging and Disability Resource Centers) in all three counties, as well as to a representatives of the Tribes. (Ongoing)

**Member Engagement and Education**

* **The Values-Focused Conversations Project**. Members of the leadership team reached out to ½ of our membership. They listened and shared stories about the values that grounded their decisions to join the League. (March - May, 2023)
* **Book Study:** Members participated in an in-depth study of Diane Wilsons’ Spirit Car:  Journey to a Dakota Past. This novel gave insight into the era when Native American children were forcibly separated from their families. (May, 2023)
* **Issues Briefing Conversation.** League Members participated in in a zoom conversation about the LWVWI Issues Briefings. The briefings centered around setting the stage for the 2024 election year and focused on redistricting, WI Constitutional Amendments plus overcoming barriers to voting and election administration challenges. (Nov. 2023)
* **Summer Picnics and Coffees for Fun and Purpose.** Two summer picnics at member’s homes in Grantsburg and Star Prairie, plus coffees in all three Counties, brought members together to build connections. Grantsburg’s picnic featured Bridge the Divide Representative, Danny Akenson who gave an update on Final Five Voting (FFV). Members also participated in a letter writing campaign for FFV.  At a coffee, members took home League note cards to send thank you notes to their county clerks in observance of Election Heroes Day. (Picnics, July, August, 2023; coffees ongoing)
* **Field Trip to see Jim Denomie’s Artwork**. On a path to new awarenesses, members carpooled to the Minneapolis Institute of Art to see Denomie’s exhibit of paintings and sculptures that gave insight into a contemporary Ojibwe artist’s perception of U.S. historical events impacting Native sensibilities and experiences. (November, 2023)
* **Winter Gathering**. Wildriver Nature Center was decorated for the holidays. There was a carnival-like atmosphere with interactive displays including spinning wheels, the Civics Game, the Storytime Kit, Member Services/Voter Services/DEI information, and prizes. The focus was on engaging and educating our members about the League and ways to become involved. (January, 2024)
* **Bi-Monthly Newsletter** – Our Voice. Every 1st and 15th of the month, a flashy colorful newsletter written by multiple League members arrives in members’ mailboxes. It is filled with information and photos taken at local League events along with a calendar of future opportunities for member engagement. It has become a touchstone and a major way we communicate across our three counties. (Ongoing)

**Community Partnerships**

* **Annual Meeting Keynote**: Panel discussion with PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Powerful presentation educating our membership about how to be effective allies with the LBGTQ+ community. (May, 2023)
* **Valley-Wide Pride Event**. We were invited to participate in the first Valley-Wide Pride Event in Hudson. Now an annual event on our calendar. (June, 2023)
* **The Barbie Mobile. Members** (plus a 12-year-old unicyclist), marched in the Star Prairie Ox Cart Days Parade alongside our Barbie mobile, wearing League T-shirts and pink boas, handing out candy and carrying League and VOTE signs. We were applauded and thanked along the parade route. (August, 2023)
* **Northwest Community Alliance: Know Your Nonprofits Expo.** Our chapter was invited to participate in the Northwest Community Alliance Know Your Nonprofits Expo in Siren, Burnett County for the first time. Increased LWV visibility and built connections with other non-profits. (October 2023)
* **Future Voter Storytime Toolkit.** In collaboration with a local librarian, we developed a Future Storytime Toolkit to teach pre-school kids (and their parents) about the importance of voting and the League. The Toolkit is available through MORE -- a consortium of libraries in Western Wisconsin sharing resources. (November, 2023)
* **Collaboration with Wisconsin Interfaith Voter Engagement Campaign (WIVEC).** Board approved furthering a relationship with the Wisconsin Interfaith Voter Engagement Campaign (WIVEC). (November, 2023 and ongoing).
* **Environmental Justice Presentation.** Collaborated with WI League chapters to sponsor a zoom presentation entitled: Achieving Environmental Justice. (February, 2024)
* **LWVUS’ 104th Birthday.** Hosted celebrations by staffing voter education/information tables at three college campuses:  Northwood Technical, University of Wisconsin, River Falls, and Chippewa Valley Technical reaching 150 students. (February, 2024)
* **St. Patrick’s Day Parade.** For the second year in a row, we marched in the New Richmond St. Patrick’s Day parade dressed in green and handing out candy and carrying League and VOTE signs. (March, 2024)
* **Earth Day Student Panel on the Environment**.  Our League chapter was a proud sponsor of a Main Street Voices event in Taylors Falls, featuring science students from local high schools in Polk County.  Moderated by WI Teacher of the Year, students discussed environmental topics including climate change, recycling, new technologies and economic impact. (April, 2024)
* **Adopt a School Book Mark Project**. Part of our youth outreach, bookmarks with voter registration information are designed for each high school in our three county-area. League liaisons then work with each school to distribute the bookmarks to seniors to help them to register to vote when they turn 18. (New Initiative)