

Newsletter

School Based Aftereffects of Proposition 2 1/2 Override

by Andrea Kelley, Co-Chair LWVN Education Committee

Newton residents are surely interested in hearing how the increased taxes have been put to use since the Override by Proposition 2 1/2 was passed last spring. Public Schools Superintendent Jeff Young summarized the tangible outcomes of the Override in his December 5, 2002 memo to the School Department. There are five key educational areas that have benefited as a result of the override: class size, technology, maintenance and security, literacy, and instructional materials.

Class Size: at the elementary level, class size was reduced on average across the fifteen schools from 26.3 to 20.3 between FY02 and FY03. There are some larger and smaller, with extremes of one class each with 13 and 14 students (which would have been one class of 27) and four classes of 25 each in grades 2, 3 and 4.

Team size was the standard for middle school, trying to keep the average at less than 90 students per team. For the four middle schools the team size average dropped from 92 to 89 students. Each school experienced a reduction of from one to five students per team average.

The goal at the high school level was to minimize classes with 25 or more students. At Newton North, classes at or above this size dropped from 120 in FY02 to 63 in FY03. For Newton South, the change was from 64 to 34 classes at that size.

Technology: \$643,000, the bulk of the Override money, which was originally intended to be used for technology at the elementary and middle schools, was redirected by the School Committee to purchase Newton South High School technol-

ogy equipment. The remaining \$43,000 were added to \$63,112 from E-rate funds, other grants and PTO monies, and used to purchase eMac labs for each middle school.

Six positions were created/merged: a Network Specialist, an Administrative Information Specialist working on the student data management system and the financial management package, and the Student Information Specialist providing technical support to the high schools. Several part-time positions were consolidated into full time ones: a .5 Web Facilitator combined with another .5 position enabling much fuller web site function, a .4 coordinator of Instructional Technology merged with a .6 to create a full-time position to implement the I.T. program and technology plan, and finally the .5 Coordinator of Library Media was created.

Maintenance and security: thermostats in all elementary and middle schools were recalibrated; the "high schools are being treated on a case by case basis." Old wooden doors are being replaced with more secure fiberglass systems. "Emergency lockdown protocols" are being established in cooperation with the Newton Police Department.

Approximately \$500,000 was spent last summer on upgrade projects including bathroom renovation, science lab conversion, painting, and tile replacement of carpet. Roughly \$450,000 of capital funds were also spent on CIP (Capitol Improvement Projects) which included modular classrooms at Horace Mann, masonry at Cabot, Peirce and Zervas lighting upgrades, heating system repairs

at Underwood and Ward, and science classroom modifications at Brown.

Literacy: one full-time Literacy Specialist is now at each elementary school. These specialists "build a leveled library in each building", analyze MCAS data, identify and track all struggling readers and writers, support "fragile" readers and writers in grades 4 and 5, "articulate the literacy program and goals to staff and to the community", mentor and train new teachers, and work closely with the PIRP aides.

Additionally, there is an "expanded university/school consultancy" in collaboration with Tufts University Elliot Pearson Center for Child Development, and leveled textbooks for reading instruction for grades K-2 with assessment kits and new phonics materials.

Instructional Materials: much needed new and replacement materials and books totaling \$325,000 in all subject areas, across all three levels, were purchased. These cover subjects ranging from bilingual/ESL, business/technology, English/Language Arts, Fine Arts, Library/media, math, science, history/social sciences and world languages. ■

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Newsletter

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| President | Amelia Koch | 617244-2647 |
| Editor | Ann Grantham | 617964-0333 |

Committee Members

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| Pat Acton | 617965-5572 |
| Liz Lieberman | 617244-4402 |
| Linda Morrison | 617332-6539 |

The LWVN Newsletter is published nine times per year. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization open to all citizens of voting age. For more information about the League of Women Voters, call 617-964-0014.

PO Box 610207
Newton, MA 02461
617-964-0014
www.newtoncitizens.com/lwv

Anita and Bob Capeless are moving...

So many times have I heard from a league member "Anita says..." Many sorts of League wisdom can follow that phrase, from how to edit a public statement, to guidance about surveying the lay of the land when observing committee meetings at City Hall. Many women who are active in Newton today treasure the advice and mentoring they have received from Anita Capeless.

We thank Anita for her long interest in land use and her advocacy for affordable housing. We admire her dedication to the Library, from the vision of a new building to serving on the Board of Directors of this successful institution. We are grateful for the years she has spent as a member of the Board of the League of Women Voters as an activist, an advocate, a teacher and a friend.

We thank Bob for being a resource we could call upon in our studies of financial and municipal issues. As a former mayor of the city of Pittsfield, he holds a perspective on city government that he shares with ease and clarity. We will remember his energy that sparked the campaign for a ballot initiative for a smaller Board of Aldermen.

Other organizations that have benefited from the contributions of Anita are the YMCA, the Newton Conservators, the Charles River Watershed Association along with the Newton Free Library. Each in turn became more knowledgeable about Newton through their association with her.

Anita and Bob are moving back to Pittsfield this spring. We will miss them. We wish them health and happiness.

Amelia D Koch

Welcome New Members

Welcome New Household Members

Rubyna S. Ajanee
Ashfaq Mahmood
161 Sumner St.
Newton, 02459
617-243-9888



All Members

Please check your listing in the handbook. If there are corrections or e-mail address additions, send them to robinm@attbi.com

You are invited

“Why Equal Rights and Responsibilities for Gay and Lesbian Families?”

*An Educational Panel Co-Sponsored by
the Newton Human Rights Commission and
the Newton League of Women Voters*

Society supports the family unit – in which couples take care of each other and their children – by conferring hundreds of legal protections that start the instant a couple enters into civil marriage. Many people, even married people, are unaware of how the laws help them, particularly when someone is ill or needs help. Married couples thus have automatic legal rights and responsibilities that are unavailable to gay and lesbian couples, because they are barred from civil marriage.

What are these rights and responsibilities? What difference does it make to the lives of a committed couple to have them or not?

Newton’s Human Rights Commission and League of Women Voters present an educational panel, “Why Equal Rights and Responsibilities for Gay and Lesbian Families?” on Tuesday evening, March 18, 2003 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Druker Auditorium of the Newton Free Library, at the intersection of Homer and Walnut Streets.

Panelists include Mary Bonauto, Esq., Civil Rights Director of GLAD (Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders), who will explain the legal points that she argued before the Supreme Judicial Court in early March, as the lead attorney for seven Massachusetts gay and lesbian couples who seek equal civil marriage rights and responsibilities. Five gay and lesbian Newton residents will talk about how the laws affect their lives as couples and as parents. Ellen Wade and Maureen Brodoff, are Newton parents and one of the plaintiff couples in the case. Holly Gunner is a 27-year resident of Newton Center, a businesswoman and former educator whose partner of 15 years died suddenly in her 40's. John McDargh is an associate professor of Theology who lives in Newton with his partner, Tim Dunn, and their son, whom they adopted and brought here from Russia. Sheila Decter, Executive Director of the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action and a Newton resident, will comment on the social justice aspect of this issue, in the context of social history. ■

For further information, contact Holly Gunner, 617-964-0767

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

- I would like to join the League of Women voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for \$50 payable to LWVN.
- Lifetime membership \$1000**
- I would like to receive materials about the League.
- I would like to be contacted by a League member to talk about LWVN.

Mail this form (and your check, if joining) to:
Andrea Kozinetz Holtz at 8 Stoney Brae Road,
Newton Highlands, MA 02461

Committees - in - Action

E d u c a t i o n

| | | |
|---------|--|--|
| Focus | Renovations, increasing high school enrollments, school financing, testing & standards | |
| Members | Ann Grantham Susie Heyman Jody Klein Anne Larner | Robin Maltz Fran Osten Beverly Spencer Beth Wilkinson |
| Contact | Andrea Kelley Andrea Kozinetz Co-Chairs | 617964-4609 617964-6490 |

H u m a n R i g h t s

| | | |
|---------|---|--|
| Focus | League outreach, relevance and support for the human rights of Newton's diverse populations | |
| Members | Sharon Balfour Susie Heyman Jody Klein Linda Morrison | |
| Contact | Holly Gunner, Chair 617964-0767 | |

L a n d U s e / T r a n s p o r t a t i o n

| | | |
|---------|---|-------------|
| Focus | Interrelationship between land use and transportation and its effects on Newton & surrounding communities | |
| Members | AnnaMaria Abernathy Anita Capeless Carol Ann Shea Lynne Sullivan | |
| Contact | Anita Capeless | 617969-9483 |

L o c a l A c t i o n

| | | |
|---------|----------------------------|-------------|
| Focus | Various local issues | |
| Members | In formation - all welcome | |
| Contact | Deb Crossley Chair | 617244-7597 |

N o m i n a t i n g

| | | |
|---------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Members | Deb Hirsch Elaine Reisman | Fran Seasholes Janet Stearns |
| Contact | Sandy Butzel Chair | 617332 8021 |

You may call committee contact or a Board officer or director to learn more about current committee work. All are welcome to participate.

Zoning and Planning Committee

Monday, January 27, 2003

- **Committee members present:** Ald. Yates (Chair), Aids. Lennon, Gentile, Sangiolo, Baker and Lappin
- **Committee members absent:** Aids. Johnson and Mansfield
- **Also present were:** Aids. Bryson, Lipsitt, Schnipper, Fischman, Stewart, Linsky, Lipof and Parker
- The Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) was held in the Aldermanic Chambers because of the large number of public attendees.

Two agenda items were discussed:

Item #42-03 was the appointment of John H. Martin as an alternate member of the Newtonville Historic District Commission. The appointment was held by a 6-0 vote because Mr. Martin was not present and no one on the Committee knew him.

Item #196-02 concerned a recommendation by the Newton Upper Falls Historic District Commission (the Study Committee) to establish a local historic district in Auburndale.

The Committee debated a request from Aids. Johnson and Mansfield, absent because of conflicts with their regular jobs, to delay a final vote on the proposed district until they could be present. Although Aids. Gentile and Bryson questioned the future ramifications of granting such a request, other aldermen responded that similar requests have been granted in the past. Chairman Yates closed the debate with a decision that matters discussed that evening would not be repeated at future meetings and it would be the responsibility of absent members to bring themselves up to date.

Discussion on the historic district centered on the Committee's altering the Study Committee's original recommendation by removing some properties at the edges of the proposed district, and thereby reducing opposition within the Auburndale community. The Committee reviewed a map of three new district options and a revised list of the properties under consideration for removal, as provided by Ald. Sangiolo. A letter from Paul O'Shaugnessy, Chair of the Newton Upper

Falls Historic District Commission (and Auburndale Historic District Study Committee) and John Rodman, Chair of the Newton Historical Commission, was reviewed wherein the signers voiced their opinion that "manipulation of the borders would lessen the district's worth and value." Chairman Yates reported a phone conversation with Mr. O'Shaugnessy, in which O'Shaugnessy stated that the letter represented his view and not that of the full Study Committee.

Aids. Baker, Stewart and Lennon felt the committee should request further input from the Upper Falls Study Committee before voting on the district. Aids. Lipsitt, Gentile, Bryson and Lappin recommended the Committee vote on the present options that evening. The Committee voted 4 (Lennon, Sangiolo, Yates and Baker) to 2 (Gentile and Lappin) to hold the item and request advice from the Upper Falls Historic District Commission (the Study Committee) on whether reduction of the proposed district would still "contain sufficient architectural and historic resources to remain worthy of preservation."

Because the February 26 Committee meeting date proposed to enable Aids. Johnson and Mansfield to attend was not possible for Aids. Gentile and Bryson, Chairman Yates said he would poll all the ZAP Committee members and all the Ward 4 aldermen to determine a meeting date that could accommodate as many as possible.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Jaffe, Observer ■

Education Committee Report

Andrea Kozinetz and Bev Spencer

The LWVN Ed. Committee has focused on observing and learning about local, state and national issues as they relate to education.

- + At each level much of what can be accomplished is impacted by budget concerns. The City of Newton city and school budgets unfold over the next month.
- + The Newton North High School Task Force has been meeting weekly since January. Their deadline for presenting a recommendation to Mayor Cohen, the Board of Aldermen and the School Committee is May 2003. All of their meetings are open to the public and are held at Newton North in the library. The next meeting at which public comments will be solicited is March 31, 2003 and the public hearing part begins at 7:30 P.M. At the February 10 meeting, a project construction consultant, Richard Amster of Turner Construction, reported to the Task Force that the Newton North students must be relocated for a renovation. The Task Force will grapple with this issue when coming up with their suggested solutions and alternatives. Is phased construction feasible?

Summaries of each meeting are available at
www.newtonpublicschools.com

NewTV has been televising the meetings.

For playback times go to
NewTV.org, *Schedule of Programming, Red Channel*

The LWVN Ed. Committee has begun to learn more about the national mandate, No Child Left Behind, and to assess its impact on local schools. We have reprinted the article below from the Newton SPED PAC January 2003 newsletter with permission from PAC and the author.

No Child Left Behind and Special Education

*By Dr Carol Daynard,
Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services, Newton Public Schools*

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act one year ago has transformed the landscape for schools across the country. This piece of legislation, which is in the popular press almost daily, is known as the No Child Left Behind Act. It effects all school districts receiving Title I, Bilingual, and Safe and Drug Free School Funds. What is the implication of this law for students with disabilities whose services are still governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act?

Students with disabilities participate in the district (state and federal) accountability system that measures compliance with No Child Left Behind. Under No Child Left Behind all schools are expected to make annual yearly progress in language arts and mathematics until all students reach proficiency by 2013. If any school does not meet the annual benchmark for two consecutive years, the school is considered an underperforming school. Parents whose child fails the assessment and attends one of these schools then have both the option to choose to enroll the child in a higher performing school within the district and to access supplemental serv-

ices for the student. The law provides other consequences ultimately culminating in a take over of the school if benchmarks are not met over 5-7 years.

For children with disabilities, the challenge is to assist them in reaching proficiency and achieving annual progress goals. This holds our children to a high standard for themselves and as members of their school community. Only a very small percentage of students will be exempt from this standard. Our children will demonstrate what they know and can do through a variety of modalities and measures. With all this in place this will support both our goals for children as well as hold our district to a high standard.

The good news is that Newton is a very high performing district. Our students with disabilities are making progress and meeting standards for the most part. The challenge will be to achieve the annual performance goals set out by the federal government so that our children's performance will continue to support the overall performance of each school. Then we will have truly benefited from our inclusive practices and will be able to support our philosophy and practice. ■

PRISCILLA M. LEITH, MBA

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*Our politics may lean to the left,
 but our work... NEVER!*

April Unit Meeting

By Ruth Neiberg

The April 9, 2003 Unit Committee daytime meeting is being organized around the issue of City Finances. Look for an article in the next newsletter with the background information. The presenters will be Amelia Koch, Newton League President and Controller and Risk Manager of the Rhode Island School of Design and Priscilla Leith, CPA. Hope to see you there! ■

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*A project of the
 Lotte E. Scharfman Memorial Fund*

Invites you to a special event

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MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

Faneuil Hall, Boston
 Sunday, April 6, 2003
 2:00 – 4:00 P.M.

Presenting
**Winners of the 4th Annual
 Online Student Essay Contest**

Keynote Speaker:
 Lani Guinier Professor of Law,
 Harvard Law School

Emerson College Select Chorus

LWVN CALENDAR

March

- 2 Sunday, 5:30 – 7:30 P.M.,
Anita and Bob Capeless, Citizens
Extraordinaire, Newton Free Library
- 12 Wednesday, 12:30 – 2:30 P.M.,
Unit Meeting, Energy Action Plan,
at Sandy Butzel’s, 237 Mill St.,
Newtonville, 617-332-8021
- 12 Wednesday, Working Board Meeting/
Newsletter Deadline
- 18 Tuesday, 7:00-9:00 P.M.,
Human Rights Panel, Co-Sponsored
with the Newton Human Rights
Commission, Druker Auditorium,
Newton Free Library
- 18 Tuesday, 7:30 P.M., Education
Committee Meeting at
Andrea Kozinetz Holtz’s,
8 Stoney Brae Rd., Newton
Highlands, 617-964-6490
- 26 Wednesday, 7:30 P.M.,
Board Meeting, at Elaine Reisman’s,
28 Fairway Dr., West Newton,
617-244-6439

April

- 6 Sunday, 2:00-4:00 P.M.
We the People, Making Democracy
Work, Speaker: Lani Guinier,
Faneuil Hall, Boston
- 9 Wednesday, 11:30 – 1:30 P.M.,
Unit Meeting, City Finances
- 16 Wednesday, Working Board Meeting/
Newsletter Deadline
- 30 Wednesday, Day on the Hill,
State House, Boston

Wednesday, 7:30 P.M.,
Board Meeting

May

- 15 Thursday, Affordable Housing Forum
- 16 - 17 Friday and Saturday,
LWVMA Convention,
Wyndham Westborough
- 28 Wednesday, 6:00 P.M.,
LWVN Annual Meeting,
Newton Senior Center

Save the Date!
**April 30th –
League Day on
the Hill**

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVM) has scheduled this year’s League Day on the Hill for Wednesday, April 30th. Although the LWVM has not yet finalized the program for this event, it is scheduled to begin at the Massachusetts State House at 9:00 am and the Governor has reportedly been invited to speak. A topic of interest to all will likely be the latest on the 2004 fiscal year budget crisis.

Following the LWVM portion of the program, which is scheduled to end at 12:00, the Newton League would like to invite its members to attend a luncheon with our state legislators. We have reserved a conference room at the State House and will be providing lunch for all LWVN members who make an advance reservation. We hope to have a strong turnout for this event, which provides a unique opportunity to visit with our legislators.

If you would like to plan to attend our lunch with the legislators, please contact JANET STEARNS at (617) 559-9987. ■

**Please note the time for the
March Daytime Unit Meeting: Energy Action Plan
12:30-2:30 P.M.**

League of Women Voters of Newton

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