



THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF SCARSDALE
Box 495, Scarsdale, NY 10583

March 1, 2016

Ms. Dana Matsushita, Co-Chair
The Administrative Committee

Ms. Kate Conlan, Co-Chair
The Administrative Committee

Dear Ms. Matsushita and Ms. Conlan,

The League of Women Voters of Scarsdale (the "League") thanks you for taking the time to participate in our membership meeting on January 25th to review the School Board Nominating Committee ("SBNC") election that took place on January 12th. We commend your thoroughness and preparation regarding the election and the report you both presented at our membership meeting. The League's consensus meeting that followed the membership meeting serves to document the result of these discussions.

Recruitment of candidates is the core issue at stake in a vetted election system for the school board nominating committee. The League recognizes that the School Board Nominating Committee Resolution (the "Resolution") requires at least two candidates per vacancy to allow for a local contested election. We appreciate the active participation and engagement undertaken by the Administrative Committee (hereinafter, "the AC") members this past year in recruiting SBNC candidates, and encourage continuation of these efforts. However, as you reported to our membership, voter turnout for this year's SBNC election was low compared to previous years. The League feels the low turnout was due in large measure to the fact that only one election district (Fox Meadow) had a contested election; in fact voter turnout from Fox Meadow was more than twice as high as that of the next highest election district. The League recognizes how difficult it is to recruit candidates for the SBNC, other nominating committees and community service positions. We urge you to keep trying, you are doing great work. This letter serves to highlight some key recommendations and detailed comments based upon the League's consensus meeting on this subject.

Recommendations on Recruitment

The League commends the AC for and recommends continuing the following practices:

- Early outreach efforts towards candidate recruitment beginning in May and during the summer months;
- Sending a request to SNAP and the TVCC in the spring for each to appoint one new representative to the AC and fill any appointee vacancies (as required in the Resolution), including clear information regarding the time commitment/staggered, multi-year term length for these community organization representatives;
- Reminding PTA/PTC leaders to make announcements about SBNC recruitment and voting at all PTA meetings, newsletters and bulletins leading up to the election;

- Keeping accurate and complete records over the past several years of who has been contacted and asked to run for SBNC, their response and their contact information, as well as adding new contacts to the list each year;
- Using the SBNC website and the communication networks of other community organizations to encourage residents to support the SBNC candidates by voting in the election; and
- Continuing timely website updates.

The League recommends initiating the following practices:

- Investigate how to more effectively reach out to populations in Scarsdale who do not yet or no longer have children in the school system and other community organizations such as village sports organizations, pre-schools, seniors groups and religious establishments;
- Collaborate with the Procedure Committee to increase awareness of the non-partisan system in Scarsdale along with information contained within the new-resident packet distributed at Village Hall;
- Investigate how information about the election process may be communicated over Scarsdale Cable TV with a PSA;
- Develop an email address distribution list to use for SBNC candidate recruitment, get-out-the-vote and fundraising efforts;
- Develop a campaign to re-brand service on the SBNC as an honor/privilege and the responsibility of every eligible community member. To this end, templates can be created to do the following every year:
 - AC chair(s) should write a letter to the editor of *The Scarsdale Inquirer* and other media outlets (including online media) serving the Village (“area media”) and/or ask the editors of the area media to write an annual editorial about civic duty, encouraging people to run for the SBNC and to vote in the election;
 - In September submit an article to area media, asking for SBNC candidates with quotes from former SBNC members talking positively about the experience;
 - Submit a photo of the incoming SBNC class to *The Scarsdale Inquirer* and area media each year with quotes from a few of the new SBNC members about being excited to fulfill their civic duty and contribute positively to the community; and
- In May, make an effort to show appreciation to those who do serve—especially for SBNC chairs-- via public thank-yous, an appreciation party, etc.

Voting Procedures

The League reviewed and discussed the balloting process during the recent SBNC election and makes the following commendations and recommendations:

- The League understands the AC’s decision not to include the mail-in ballot as an insert to brochure this year for financial reasons, but would encourage including the ballot in future years’ brochures as budget permits;
- The League commends the AC for continuing timely website updates;
- The League commends the AC for its use of signage in this year’s election; “Vote Here” and “Voter Parking” signs were well-placed and very helpful, especially for new residents or those who were otherwise unfamiliar with the Middle School;
- The League recommends that the AC consider developing an email address distribution list to use for get-out-the-vote efforts;

- The League recommends that the AC consider adding a "How To Vote" page to the SBNC website that gives step-by-step instructions, with deadlines, for how to vote, both in-person and by mail; and
- The League recommends that the AC consider adding a button on the website and a URL on the brochure to allow people to "opt-in" to the email distribution list for future informational emails.

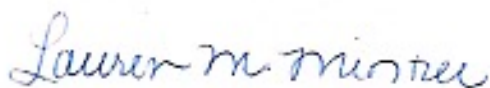
Fundraising

Maintaining the current SBNC election process requires sufficient monies to run upcoming elections. The League discussed recommendations on fundraising appeals as follows:

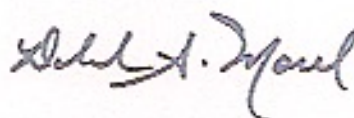
- The League commends the AC for making online appeals over email and via the SBNC website;
- The League recommends that the AC designate a fundraising representative to oversee campaign efforts and increase donor base;
- The League commends the AC for ending the year with a surplus of funds for starting its operations next year;
- The League recommends that the AC have pre-printed donation envelopes and distribute them at every public appearance (e.g., PTA/PTC meetings, LWVS meetings);
- The League recommends that the AC consider developing an email address distribution list to use for fundraising efforts;
- The League recommends that the AC consider keeping records of who donates, send thank-you notes to every donor and ask them to donate again the following year to build a base of contributors whom the AC can solicit directly;
- The League recommends that the AC consider asking for email addresses from online donors to help build the email distribution list; and
- The League recommends that the AC consider making the "donate" request and the website address as prominent as space will allow on the brochure.

The League views the SBNC election as an outstanding example of civic participation in our community. Volunteerism has declined in recent years so it is more important than ever to provide public orientation towards the goal of ultimately selecting the public school board candidates. The League thanks you for your labor-intensive efforts to recruit viable candidates.

Sincerely,



Lauren Myers Mintzer
Chair, School Election System
League of Women Voters Scarsdale



Deb Morel
President
League of Women Voters Scarsdale