

Impact on Issues: Summary of the LWVS' Positions

INTRODUCTION

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan volunteer organization working to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. The league does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. It does take stands on issues after careful study and substantial agreement among its members. Membership is open to all citizens of voting age. Associate membership is open to all others.

In the League, program is carried on at various levels-local, county, state and national. League members are actively involved in determining which issues the League undertakes to study at each level. Program suggestions from local meetings are considered by League boards and voted on at local League annual meetings and county, state and national League conventions. Following adoption of a program item, members study the topic, discuss it and arrive at agreement on a position.

The local League membership reached consensus position on a number of local government issues it had selected for study. In support of these positions, the League seeks to influence the outcomes of Village governmental activities. The consensus statements summarized in this pamphlet are presented as written by the league committee and board members who approved them.

Current local positions include the broad categories:

Planning and Zoning:

- Master Plan
- Downtown Development
- Open Space and Land Use
- Housing
- Parking

Environment

- Sustainability
- Recycling
- Preservation of Natural Resources
- Air, Noise and Water Pollution

Budgets

- Village
- School
- Education Foundation
- Teen Center

Election Systems

- Village
- Village Administration
- Tax Assessment
- School
- Nonpartisan Nominating Systems

- Internet Voting

Apportionment and districting

MASTER PLAN

POSITION:: Support of a Master Plan for the Village of Scarsdale. The public should be involved in all aspects of the planning process. A Master Plan should be approached from the perspective of the social, economic and environmental

constraints of the entire region in which we live. A Master Plan should be reviewed periodically.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

The Scarsdale League has had an interest in planning since 1949, when the local program included "Planning for a Growing Scarsdale."

In 1956 the League adopted a position supporting the need for a Master Plan. The position called for periodic reassessment of the basic premises as circumstances and conditions change and for the use of a professional planner. The League stressed the importance of citizen education and input in the planning process and stated: "The time and expense are justified as a Master Plan will produce substantial dividends in helping to achieve an efficient and effective administration of Village affairs."

The Village Master Plan Committee developed "Major Scarsdale Policies" in 1958 which the League studied and made statements on to the Village Board. From 1958 to 1961 the League made continued requests that the Village Board develop a Master Plan.

In 1962, when the Board of Appeals granted variances permitting the construction of 50 Popham Road and 2 Overhill Road, the League expressed concern that the Board of appeals was making planning policy decisions without the benefit of a Master Plan.

The League commended the updating of the Master Policies Plan Report in 1966, stating that "changing conditions make frequent review of the Plan essential."

In 1974 the League praised the Village for initiating a new study of the Master Plan and asked that small tracts of land be considered in that review. The League asked the Village to update the policy to "balance human need and environmental need in a way that speaks to the problems of 1974 rather than those of 1968."

In 1983, when supporting a resolution clarifying and strengthening the role of the Planning Board, the League advocated a periodic review of the Master Plan at not less than five nor more than ten year intervals.

When the Planning Board began planning for the downtown area in 1984, the League participated in public workshops. During the downtown planning process which took place from 1984 to 1989, the League called for master planning for the entire downtown rather than a piecemeal approach.

In 1990 the League formed a Master Plan Committee to study the need for a current updating of the Village's Master Plan Policies. In May 1991, the League commended the Village Board for putting a Master Plan review on the Village agenda.

A League membership meeting on Land Use and Open Space was held November 1991, which adopted new positions on these issues and related them to the Village Board. The committee continues to review the Master Plan, focusing on various issues of importance to Scarsdale.

In May 1992, the League urged the Village Board to develop a Comprehensive Master Plan rather than a revision of the 1968 Master Policies Plan and stressed the importance of community involvement in the process.

In March 1993, the League commended the Village for undertaking an in-depth study and enlisting input from the community through community organization meetings and a village-wide questionnaire.

In response to the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, in September 1994, the League supported the basic goals of the Plan: to preserve the Village's architectural character and scale; to maintain the quality of its landscapes and open spaces; and to maintain a prudent policy toward taxing and spending. The League also noted that the Plan acknowledged Scarsdale's place in the region, that it called on Scarsdale to take a responsible role in providing for affordable housing, and that it advocated stronger environmental measures. The League recommended that the Plan be periodically reviewed and revised to reflect physical or demographic changes in community character.

In connection with the Village's updating of the Comprehensive Plan, the League advocated in March 2008 that the Village create an advisory committee comprised of representatives from community organizations to ensure full citizen participation in all stages of the updating process.

In October 2009, in reference to the Village component of the Comprehensive Plan, the League stated, "the mission of the Plan was well stated and captures the essence of what the community would like to see." The following goals in particular were supported:

- Promoting more retail diversity in the Village
- Anticipating workforce housing
- Utilizing green options when possible, and
- Maintaining the architectural integrity of Scarsdale Village while responding to changing needs of residents.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

POSITION :Support of the 1989 downtown zoning amendments, including FAR (Floor Area Ratio), reduction of maximum allowable building heights, inclusion of additional residential zoning and density bonus provisions.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

In 1981 the League responded to the Polera Proposal for development of the

Freightway site. The League supported the plan's concept as appropriate use of the property, stating that it addressed several village needs including the need for more apartments and the need to improve an unattractive, underutilized site. However, the League expressed concern over the lack of additional parking and the need for senior citizen housing at both market and lower rate prices, and also questioned costs to the taxpayers. The Polera proposal was eventually rejected by the Village Board.

From 1985 to 1988, when the Village Board, with the help of planning consultants, was considering downtown redevelopment suggestions, the League analyzed the various proposals and commented to the Village Board. We reiterated our position on the need for a master plan for the downtown area, permitting residential development and meeting parking needs.

The League supported the 1988 and 1989 zoning amendment proposals as outlined in the Village Board's Master Plan for the Downtown. However, we expressed continuing concern about short-term parking problems in the business district. The League stated that the new zoning plan "is a living document and will provide future Village Boards with the necessary flexibility to accomplish their goals as they review proposals for development."

March 4, 2003 Christie Place consensus: "we hope it [Christie Place Garage Proposal] will be consistent with League positions and long-held planning goals for the Village Center. These goals include both maintaining character and scale and improving traffic and parking conditions, and doing so in a way that does not impose new tax burdens."

OPEN SPACE AND LAND USE

POSITION: Support of measures relating to open space and land use which reflect a healthy balance among economic, environmental and housing needs.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION:

In 1958, a League study of the "Major Scarsdale Policies" developed by a Master Plan Committee of the Village Board included the following position on open space: "Under the pressures of an expanding population and development of remaining land, keeping the open spaces in Scarsdale becomes increasingly important to help preserve the residential character of the village." The League advocated for the continued holding of all publicly owned land and the public acquisition of additional advantageously located land.

A 1960 League statement to the Village Board urged the acquisition of the Scarsdale Supply property not only as open space but to act as a buffer to development in adjacent New Rochelle.

In a 1961 statement the League favored the Village acquiring development rights for property owners, on a voluntary basis, as an inexpensive way at preserving open space.

The League consensus on open space in 1963 suggested priorities for open space preservation made through village land acquisition be dependent on aesthetic and economic considerations and stressed the importance of the Zoning Board of Appeals in maintaining the residential quality of the village.

A campaign to promote greater citizen awareness and support of the importance of preserving open space was launched by the League in 1966. Later that year a League statement on the updating of the Master Policies Plan Report stated a position of preserving as much open space as possible with the least expenditure of public funds. The League supported the inclusion of a Land Reserve Fund in the Village Budget and strongly urged that smaller lots scattered throughout the village be acquired by any means possible.

In 1973 the League supported the dedication of the Chase Road lots for public park purposes.

The League praised the Village for initiating a new study of the Master Plan and Land Use Policy in 1974. We asked that small tracts of land be considered in that review and that the Village update the policy to “balance human needs and environmental needs in a way that speaks to the problems of 1974 rather than those of 1968.”

Frederick P. Clark Associates prepared a Preliminary Master Plan Report in 1975. The League’s response differed with the report which recommended that the Village “maximize the preservation of Scarsdale’s remaining open space.” The League advocated a healthy balance between environmental needs and housing needs, questioning whether all the golf courses should be saved for open space.

In more recent years the League has supported the use of conservation zoning in the subdivision of various large lots in Scarsdale, such as the Rosenberg (Murray Hill Road) and Winston (Griffen Avenue) properties. The League has seen the use of this zoning technique as a way to enhance the environmental quality of these developments by increasing the amount of open space. In 1987 the League supported the Village Board’s decision to ban flag lots.

In 1990 a League Master Plan Committee was formed and an Open Space Land Use meeting was held in November 1991. A number of our Land Use and Open Space positions were reviewed and a letter was sent to the Village Board in November 1991 which included the following:

1. The residential nature of the village and the value put on public and private green space should be maintained, but the village should welcome opportunities to expand the tax base with non-residential uses located so that they do not undermine the neighborhoods or the underlying community character.
2. In the interests of promoting the open features of private land, the League supports public regulation of lot coverage, wetlands, flag lots, scenic and historic elements and clustering where appropriate. But the Village should not abandon policies that invite private owners to protect and preserve open space by means of land gifts and sale of development rights, so long as such efforts are subject to Village criteria for acquiring land.
3. The Village should consider zoning and other strategies to improve its opportunities to control land use on private parcels abutting public land and on parcels of significant size such as golf courses, which have the potential for mixed residential, non-residential and park use.

In March 1994, the League agreed that local zoning should be amended to require submission of a clustered development plan for any parcel where three or more houses can be built. In addition, the League urges that the Village obtain first refusal rights on golf courses and enact zoning amendments that would allow mixed residential and nonresidential uses on golf courses should they ever be developed. The League believed the Village should reactivate its efforts to acquire development rights on private properties that met its criteria for acquisition and inform property owners how they could contribute to open space through tax abatements. The League also urged zoning amendments providing for stricter coverage limits for parcels in large lot zones and height-setback ratios for all new construction, including house additions, to maintain scale and an open appearance in residential neighborhoods.

In 1997, re setbacks, we supported the concept of maintaining neighborhood character by supplementing existing Zoning Code restrictions to take into account adjacent properties when considering additions as well as new structures. We believe that these changes in the Code provide much needed guidelines and discourage inharmonious construction but wonder whether application of the same standards uniformly throughout the various residential districts is necessary

In October 2001, the League endorsed the use of floor area ratios (FAR) to regulate building size in addressing over-sized homes. The League urged the Planning Board to set FAR limits that do not create more than 15% nonconformities with the bonus in each lot size (a level that was accepted in previous subdivision legislation) and recommended that the Planning Board monitor the number of applications sent to the Board of Appeals and the scale of homes constructed once the legislation was enacted, and modify the far limits either up or down as necessary.

HOUSING

POSITION: Support measures to increase the supply of affordable housing in Scarsdale for persons of low to moderate income, with preference given to such groups as Scarsdale seniors, municipal and school employees. The League also supports alternative types of housing.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

Local League efforts in housing date back to 1968 with a study of fair housing ordinances, which led to membership support of a fair housing ordinance for Scarsdale to help enforce federal and state anti-discrimination laws.

In 1971 the League issued a statement urging the Village Board to give consideration to providing low or moderate income housing in the village. "The crisis in housing is so urgent that all localities should give positive consideration to the feasibility of making some housing available to lower income families." The League also noted that we have a sizable number of village employees who are unable to afford to live here.

When the issue of disposition of the Drake Road properties came up in 1972, the League encouraged the Village Board to retain these properties for recreational use and to consider providing lower cost housing for older residents.

In 1973 the League urged the Village board to undertake a new land use study, with special attention given to planning for the few remaining large parcels in the village. The League stated that these parcels "should not be subdivided and sold to private builders for the building of high-priced single family dwellings. This land could fulfill many community needs-from recreational open space to housing for a wider income range than now exists."

In a statement to the Village Board in 1974 the League supported the Ethical Humanist Society's proposal to build a 49 unit subsidized housing project on Saxon Woods Road and urged the Village Board to consent to the Urban Development Corporation to assume development responsibility for the plan.

In a 1975 statement to the Village Board the League favored "a diversity of housing types to suit a diversity of needs and tastes." The League suggested to the Village that cluster, attached and multiple housing be considered, which would keep Scarsdale "environmentally sound and socially open and might improve the tax base."

In 1981 the Polera Building Corporation proposed a project to be built on the Freightway site. In a letter to the Village Board the League expressed several concerns about the proposal but stated that the project addressed needs which existed in the village, including the need for more apartments, particularly for senior citizens.

In 1989 the League and the Town Club (now the Town and Village Education Forum) formed a joint study group to determine the need for and feasibility of providing affordable housing in Scarsdale. The committee developed a questionnaire which was sent to all Scarsdale senior citizens and full-time village and school employees. The results of the survey were analyzed by the Housing Action Council, a private non-profit agency which advises communities interested in building affordable housing. In addition, the committee surveyed 12 Westchester and lower Connecticut communities in which affordable housing has been built and which have affordable housing policies. The committee also surveyed all Village-owned land and privately owned undeveloped parcels which were possible sites for affordable housing.

In July 1990 the League issued a statement to the Village Board recommending that the Board endorsed the principles of providing affordable housing and recommended that they appoint a citizens' committee to study in greater depth the complex factors involved. The League also suggested the following five options for the committee to consider:

- the building of affordable, smaller size and less elaborate units within market rate apartment complexes,
- the use of undeveloped public land for affordable housing units,
- the use of density bonuses to encourage developers to provide moderately priced housing,

- the legalization of accessory buildings for housing in area zoned for single family residences and
- the continued encouragement of shared housing for seniors and public employees.

In April 1991 the League reiterated its position to the Village Board. Soon after, the Village Board appointed an affordable housing committee which the League continues to monitor.

In 1992 the League reiterated its support of accessory apartment legislation intended to increase the supply of affordable housing alternatives. In 1998 the League urged the Village Board not to stray from the goal of providing an increased supply of alternative housing in Scarsdale intended to benefit seniors, retirees, relatives of residents, singles and community related employees.

In May 1993, the League urged the Village to:

- Use clustered attached and multiple-family housing
- Adopt an accessory apartment law
- Permit density bonuses for affordable housing development
- Consider the use of suitable publicly owned, undedicated land for affordable housing

In 1995, in response to the Village effort to maintain the residential quality of our community, we commended the Board for recognizing “invisible” home occupations. We wanted to see the law enacted in a manner that restricts the rights of individuals to the smallest degree possible.

In 1998 at a public hearing, the League was pleased that the Village Board enabled the Planning Board to approve Cluster subdivisions.

In 1998 in a statement related to the Village Board’s consideration of proposed zoning legislation on accessory apartments: “we urge the Board not to stray from the goal of providing an increased supply of alternative housing in Scarsdale to benefit seniors, retirees, relatives of residents, singles and community-related employees.”

PARKING

POSITION: Support of measures to provide adequate parking in the downtown area.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

In 1970 the League supported the use of the Freightway property, which the Village had acquired earlier, for parking. In a letter to the Village Board the League expressed some concerns, particularly traffic congestion, about the proposed parking structure and urged the Village to develop a comprehensive plan for the station area.

The League supported establishment of a Special Parking District for the downtown area in 1979. In a letter to the Village Board the League described the new district as a way for the Village to enter into cooperation with business property owners to create mutually satisfactory parking arrangements as the need arose.

In 1984 the League advocated the need to separate physically the various types of parking in the downtown area: long-term commuter, medium-term shopper or business and short-term convenience shopper. We also stated that the number of short-term spaces should be increased.

In 1989 the League made a statement to the Village Board again voicing concerns about the short-term parking problem in the downtown area and urging expeditious planning of options to solve the problem as well as stricter enforcement of parking regulations.

ENVIRONMENT

POSITION: Promote recycling, waste reduction and pollution control. Natural resources should be

conserved and protected to assure their future availability.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

In 1972 the League supported the Village's plan to establish regular back-door newspaper pick-ups. The League also urged the Village Board to abolish sliding scale rates for water consumption. "The philosophy of offering bargain rates for excessive use of a limited natural resource no longer seems sound."

In 1974 the League recommended to the Village that separation of newspapers by all residents be mandated.

In 1978 we urged the Village Board "to take stronger measures in the direction of resource recovery." We advocated for mandatory recycling of newspapers, more publicity for the recycling program and support of deposits on beverage containers. In 1981 we asked the Village Board to send a letter to the State Legislators endorsing the "bottle bill."

In 1980 the League stated that "trees are a significant factor in the appearance and ecological balance of the community." We recommended that the Village Budget provide for replanting as well as maintenance.

In 1982 the League urged the Village to more aggressively secure community participation in the recycling program.

In 1988 and again in 1989, we urged the Village to launch a major recycling campaign in conjunction with the new effort by the County. We urged that the Village develop a plan of action prior to recycling being mandated by State law and reiterated our position that more effort be made on educating the citizenry to the benefits of recycling.

In 1990 the League organized and conducted "pre-cycling shopping tours." Members visited Girl and Boy Scout troops to talk about recycling and we conducted a pre-cycling workshop at the High School on Earth Day.

In 1991 the League membership adopted "Environmental Issues" as part of its 1991-92 local program. The League studied closely the Village's proposed recycling plan. Comments and suggestions were made to the Village Board that were incorporated into the Village's plans.

In February 1992 we read a statement to the Village Board requesting that legislation be enacted limiting the unnecessary idling of engines of trucks, buses and automobiles on Scarsdale streets. We described the proposed law as "a possible, low-cost method to help reduce pollution."

In April 1992 the League urged the Village Board to use graduated water rates to promote conservation. In 2008 the League was actively involved in monitoring the proposed local law designed to regulate trees throughout the village. The League did not support the proposed changes to the existing Tree Ordinance.

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

POSITION: Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive, and that assures opportunities for citizen participation in government decision making. The League supports the Open Meetings Law and believes that all public meetings, including committee meetings, should be posted and open to the public.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

In 1981, the League conducted a study of Scarsdale's appointed Boards and Advisory Councils. Several recommendations were made to the Village Board including:

- a sequential order of procedure should be available to residents whose applications must be heard by more than one Board,
- packets of information should be sent to all new members of Boards and Councils,

- announcements of vacancies should be made to the general public,
- agendas for each meeting of the Boards and Councils should be posted,
- names of all members should be prominently displayed at meetings,
- trustees who serve as liaisons should make periodic reports at Village Board meetings,
- orientations should be provided for all new Board and Council members,
- chairmen should take the responsibility to communicate with one another when issues arise having impact on more than one Board or Council.

In 1983 the League studied the Village Administration and the relationship between the Village Board and the paid professional staff. We recommended that the Village Board and Administration make periodic assessments of the job titles and descriptions of Village Staff to ensure the most effective use of talent to meet the needs of the community. When new positions are created, there should be some public notification. We recommended that a new procedure be established to inform the community of the status of ongoing Board deliberation and the implementation of past decisions.

In 1984 the League completed its study of the adoption of local laws and read a statement to the Village Board urging that at least one Village Board meeting intervene between the official notice of a public meeting and the hearing itself and that the Board not vote immediately following a public hearing. Additionally, we recommended that when issues or proposals are discussed that directly affect the citizens of Scarsdale, sufficient time be given between the presentation and the decision to allow for public study and comment. In 1985, 1987, 1989 and 1990 we continued to lobby the Village Board on these positions.

In 1989 the League recommended that there be an orientation for chairmen of Scarsdale appointed Board and Councils.

In an effort to improve communication between Village government and the public and provide for effective citizen participation, in April 1991 the League recommended to the Mayor that meetings held by the Village Board conform to the Open Meetings Law. We suggested that all upcoming meetings should be listed at the end of each Village Board Meeting agenda, including executive sessions and committee meetings. If an emergency Village Board meeting is necessary, community groups and local newspapers should be notified. We reiterated our position that a procedure be established to keep the community informed of the current status of ongoing Village projects.

1993 the League conducted a study of the length and number of terms the Village trustees serve. The consensus reached was that the tradition of two 2-year terms for trustee be extended to three 2-year terms, but the Mayor's term remain at the current single 2-year term

1999 the League concluded: relying upon our League position in support of a nonpartisan system, we reached consensus that a March election date for village officials be retained.

In 2006 an update study on term lengths for Scarsdale's Mayor concluded that we do not support a change in local law to extend the term of office of mayor to a three-year term. "We believe that since the mechanism for permitting the re-election of a mayor to a second two-year term already exists under state law, there is no compelling reason to amend local law to provide a three-year mayoral term."

TAX ASSESSMENT

POSITION: Support of a full property tax reassessment for the Village of Scarsdale. The League believes that a reassessment would achieve a more equitable tax distribution.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

In its Village Budget statement in April 1991 the League asked the Village Board to give serious consideration to property tax reassessment, last done in 1969.

On November 1, 1991 the League held a membership meeting at which a clear, strong consensus was

reached for tax reassessment in Scarsdale. A letter to the Village Board stated: We found it significant that Scarsdale's own Board of Reassessment Review has called for a reassessment of all Scarsdale properties. The League is pleased to support its request...After 22 years our tax rolls do not reflect an accurate picture." The letter goes on to say that a redistribution of taxes without increasing the village's total assessment should have no effect on county taxes and notes that reassessment is likely to decrease the number of winnable assessment challenges.

The League made the following recommendations regarding reassessment:

- The employment of an experienced professional firm to minimize challenges and expedite the procedure.
- The Homestead Law be taken into consideration when planning reassessment.
- An extensive community education program be launched.

The League has continued annually to ask for reassessment with or without a countywide initiative. The expense would be alleviated in part by stemming certioraris.

VILLAGE AND SCHOOL BUDGETS

POSITION: Support of budgets that are financially sound and responsible, which maintain a prudent amount of surplus and provide for adequate maintenance of facilities. In 1998, in reference to a Teen Center Consensus, the League urged the village and school district to work together in structuring a program that can provide for the teens in an appropriate setting.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

The League studies the village and school budgets each year and holds membership meetings to formulate positions. Statements are then made at the appropriate public hearings

The League promotes citizen participation in the Village and School Budget processes and urges village and school boards to present clear budget documents that the public can understand.

The League supports school and village coordination and consolidation of services and equipment, particularly in grounds care and maintenance.

In regard to Health Insurance coverage, the League asked in 1991 that "givebacks be pursued in negotiations."

EDUCATION FOUNDATION 2011

In January 2011, the league issued its statement and observations:

"At this time, the League did not reach consensus on whether an education foundation should be established in Scarsdale as a source of funding to supplement the taxpayer approved school budget. There are circumstances within and outside the school district that may cause the league to revisit the issue of whether an education foundation should be established in Scarsdale, including but not limited to:

- (i) the enactment of a state law that would cap property taxes;
- (ii) the inability to fund in the school budget significant projects that affect the core values of a Scarsdale education; and
- (iii) the adoption of a contingency budget by the board of education.

The league also makes the following observations:

1. There are existing community organizations in Scarsdale that raise and donate funds that may be able to fund certain items that are not included in the school budget.
2. If an education foundation were to be established, significant checks and balances must be addressed in defining the role of an education foundation and its governance.
3. There are untapped funds in Scarsdale. An education foundation may serve as an alternative vehicle for large donors to make tax exempt donations to the schools.

4. It is important that the board of education be involved in the grant process of the foundation to safeguard the priorities of the school district as formulated by the board of education and the superintendent of schools.
5. Relieving the tax burden of property owners should not be a reason for establishing an education foundation in Scarsdale.”

SCARSDALE TEEN CENTER

In 2007, the League conducted a study of the financing of the Teen Center. “Assuming that the Village and School district boards are satisfied each year with the efforts and achievements of the Teen Center in meeting and reporting and performance goals that have been set, the Village and School district boards should each allocate equal and sufficient funds to meet, in aggregate, at least 85-90 percent of the Teen Center’s proposed yearly budget. The allocations by the two funding boards should include increases arising from annual inflation and other rises in cost and for the rebuilding and subsequent maintenance of the depleted Teen Center reserve fund.”

NONPARTISAN NOMINATING SYSTEMS FOR SCHOOL BOARD AND VILLAGE BOARD

POSITION: Support of nonpartisan systems for the election of Village Board and School Board members. The League supports the concept of “a” nonpartisan system for both these election processes. The position was formed in 1982 and revised in a 1995 consensus statement: “The League favors the concept of, and recognizes the value of, a nonpartisan system for the selection of Village and School Board candidates in Scarsdale. We will continue to monitor the election system in order to encourage the informal and active participation of our citizens. In the case of contested elections, the League will be governed by its voter service guidelines and principles.”

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

The League has tried to balance its own nonpartisan position with its role regarding Scarsdale’s Nonpartisan Systems. In this effort, the League has found it difficult to avoid appearing as an advocate for “the systems” if it participates in the administration of the systems. As a result, the League’s role has evolved into a monitoring position rather than one of active participation. Membership meetings regarding each system are held at least once a year and usually result in recommendations sent to the committees which govern each system.

League members participate in the system as elected individuals, not as League representatives. Board members (except the president, vice-president, voter service and local election system chairs) may serve on these committees. The policy for board members is reviewed annually and stated in Board Policies. In years when there were contested elections, the League prepared Voter Guides and/or conducted Candidate Meetings.

History – School System

Since 1924, Scarsdale has had various nonpartisan citizens’ committees to nominate School Board members. In 1965 a village-wide study group, which included League appointees, presented a new procedure to the voters at the Annual Meeting of the School District.

The League was enthusiastic about this new system, which corrected many of the undemocratic aspects of the previous one. To launch the new system successfully, the League appointed representatives to both the Administrative Committee and the Nominating Committee. Once launched, League representatives to the Nominating Committee were discontinued to protect the League’s nonpartisanship. Subsequently, in 1982, the League discontinued its role on the Administrative Committee for the same reason.

History -- Village System

In 1930 the political parties asked the Town Club to draft and adopt a resolution governing a new nominating system for Mayor and Village Trustees. The Village Board Nominating System was governed solely by the Town Club until 1974 when a broader administrative committee (called the Procedure

Committee) was formed, including two League appointees.

In 1977 the League recommended to the Procedure Committee that the Village Board Nominating Committee include centralized polling and a public amendment process. Historically, the League has also advocated that voters be better represented on the Procedure Committee of the village nonpartisan election system by reducing the number of appointed members and including the full retiring class of elected members from the Citizens Nominating Committee. Likewise, we have encouraged more reliance on public financing of the Village Election System (adopted 1960's; reiterated 1977-present).

A series of unprecedented contested elections forced the League, in 1982, to reexamine its position on appointing representatives to the Procedure Committee (Village system) and the Administrative Committee (School system). A decision was reached that the League would no longer appoint representatives but would continue to monitor local elections in line with its goal of promoting political responsibility.

In 1988 centralized polling for the village system, lobbied for by the League since 1977, was put into practice. The League continues to lobby for public amending and public financing. In 1990 public amendment was adopted by the Town and Village Civic Club (formerly the Town Club and currently the Town and Village Civic Club Education Forum). The League has consistently recommended that the two systems be aligned to bring the village system closer to the school system, including: Nominating Committee members not be eligible to be chosen as trustees, voting hours be the same for both systems, Village Board members eligible for reelection not be interviewed by the Nominating Committee.

In 1991 the League reiterated its position that the Village non-partisan nominating:

1. "system be divorced from any private organization—politically and financially.
2. to further increase voter turnout, the TVCC and the Neighborhood Associations should step up their efforts among their own members to produce more petitions and bring out the vote."
3. suggested the Procedure Committee explore the possibility of absentee ballots.

In 1996 the League endorsed the redrawing of election unit lines according to elementary school districts rather than election districts, thus reducing the election unit districts from six to five. The nominating committees should be allowed to naturally reduce the aggregate numbers to 30 over a three year period. Whenever the school district adjusts its school boundaries, the units will automatically conform to the new school area definitions.

In 2004 the League encouraged the Procedure Committee to permit voters who are present in Scarsdale on the election date but for any reason, not limited to physical reasons, are unable to vote in person during the election hours, to vote by absentee ballot.

INTERNET VOTING FOR SCARSDALE'S SCHOOL AND VILLAGE ELECTIONS

Position adopted October 2008. Scarsdale should not seek to employ a remote Internet voting system for its school and village elections. Conclusion was based on the intensive study undertaken by two highly respected taskforces composed of leaders in the fields of Internet security, legislative representatives, members of voting rights groups, members of county election offices and members of academia, and based on their reports discouraging the use of remote Internet voting at this time due to security concerns and digital disenfranchisement.

APPORTIONMENT AND DISTRICTING

POSITION: Support the following standards for establishing legislative districts:

- Districts should be substantially equal in population.
- Within standards for numerical equality, districts should follow political subdivision lines, should be of contiguous territory and should have the smallest perimeter possible in that order of priority.

BACKGROUND AND ACTION

Local League positions on this item arise from districting standards adopted at the State level in a study that

dated from 1963 and from even earlier positions reached by the County League with respect to Westchester's legislative body.

In 1983 the Scarsdale League read a statement at the Westchester County Redistricting Hearing stressing the importance of maintaining the integrity of political subdivisions in creating districts.

Confronted with a flawed redistricting proposal following the 1990 Census, the League took action in May 1991 opposing the plan that divided Scarsdale into two districts. *Scarsdale was eventually divided into three districts.* When the plan was nonetheless adopted, the Scarsdale League filed a lawsuit in July 1991 against the County Board of Legislators, charging that the adopted plan submerges Scarsdale votes in large districts that cross many boundaries, thereby impairing Scarsdale voters' access to the Legislature.

The League made the same case that the districting erects a formidable barrier to the objectives of the Scarsdale League and of its plaintiff members, whose objectives of effective citizen participation in the issues of government is now seriously impaired. The lawsuit is still pending. *The Scarsdale League did not have standing in the suit so the County League became the plaintiff. We lost. However, the 2000 census restored Scarsdale to a single legislative district.*