



Mr. James Pullman
Chair of the Procedure Committee
P.O. Box 284
Scarsdale, NY 10583

also sent via email to: jpullman@verizon.net

January 22, 2018

Dear Mr. Pullman,

The League of Women Voters of Scarsdale (“League”) thanks you for your voluntary service as Chair of the Scarsdale Procedure Committee (“PC”). The League further thanks you and Robert Schechter, Vice Chair, for presenting and answering questions in person on December 18, 2017, at our general membership information meeting concerning the 2017 CNC election. The League commends you for your thoughtful, candid, and thorough assessment, for reinstating the practice of submitting a detailed report to the League concerning the PC’s activities, and for providing comprehensive written answers to the questions that the League posed in advance.

Immediately following our information session, the League held a consensus meeting of its members to discuss the November 15, 2017 CNC election and to review its prior positions pertaining to the Village Election System. The League’s specific recommendations to the PC are set forth below.

**1. OVERALL FUNCTIONING OF THE PC, CONTINUITY OF LEADERSHIP,
AND DIVISION OF LABOR**

The League commends James Pullman and Robert Schechter who, upon completion of their 3-year terms as elected, voting members of the CNC, accepted the TVCC appointments to serve as the chair and vice chair, respectively, of the 2017 PC. The League also commends the TVCC for appointing PC leadership specifically from within the ranks of the ten voting members of the CNC graduating class for the second consecutive year.

The League congratulates the eighteen of the nineteen members of the PC for their active participation and fulfillment of the civic responsibilities they undertook when agreeing to serve and for dividing up the various PC responsibilities into working subcommittees.

As explained during the information session, Mr. Pullman’s selection as the 2017 chair was done on an ad hoc basis when the 2016 vice chair, who should have become the 2017 chair,

resigned. His recruitment was fortuitous, not only because of his immediate past service on the CNC, but also because he had previously chaired the PC in 2010. The League commends Mr. Pullman for his seasoned approach to the role, his knowledge of how to prioritize the committee's focus, his attention to scheduling in-person meetings throughout the summer, his follow through with email exchanges among the entire committee and with various subcommittees, and his supervision of a committee that appeared to have worked well together.

Notwithstanding the successful teamwork and effective collaboration by the members of the 2017 PC, the League is concerned by the lack of continuity in the PC's line of succession. Of late, the PC has experienced frequent vice chair abdications and continues to lack a codified leadership selection process in the Non-Partisan Resolution.

The League is also very concerned by the decision of SNAP to refuse to honor its duty to appoint a representative to the PC in accordance with the Non-Partisan Resolution and for the unilateral decision of one neighborhood association to refuse to participate in the recruitment process.

The League continues to encourage the TVCC to look to the graduating CNC class as the preferred source of incoming PC leadership and commends Robert Schechter for approaching the role of vice chair with the understanding that he will succeed into the role of chair the following year, absent extenuating circumstances. The League strongly suggests to the outgoing PC that it focus its attention on leadership transition, as set forth below, to lessen the learning curve for incoming chairs and institutionalize practices that future PCs need to replicate.

The fact that one year's PC disbands long before the TVCC appoints the following year's leadership has contributed to a system in which the PC wheel appears to be reinvented annually. As indicated in previous consensus statements, the League recommends that steps be taken immediately to preserve the institutional memory and promote systematic, comprehensive transfer of knowledge, experience, and documentation from one year to the next. Among other things, the League wholeheartedly endorses Mr. Pullman's suggestion that the PC create and maintain an operating manual for all aspects of the election, including detailed checklists and timelines, to help ensure effective functioning of the PC in the future. The League notes that Mr. Pullman's written reports to the LWVS already provides a skeletal framework for such a manual. The League further suggests that PC documentation be stored electronically, shared with the other members of the PC, and transmitted to future PC members through a central repository such as Google Drive.

\\

\\

\\

The League refers the PC again to our position statement dated February 11, 2015, for a sample list of items to include in a central repository¹ as well as materials to post on the PC website for viewing by the general public.²

The League commends the CNC for taping and making available for viewing the public portion of the organizational meeting which included presentations by all trustees who are not currently eligible for renomination. The League recommends that a link to the video of the CNC meeting and all public written materials circulated also be posted on the PC website.

The League further suggests that the 2017 PC members not disband until after they have debriefed, documented their work, made recommendations and conveyed lessons learned to the incoming PC. The League encourages the PC to create a structure to address the chronic problems caused by leadership turnover and invites the incoming PC leadership to review and discuss the recommendations herein with the LWVS presidents and Village Election Systems

¹ The following items were listed as examples of materials that should be maintained, updated, and made readily accessible to all PC members:

- A comprehensive report from the PC Chairperson that contains a description of the roles and responsibilities of PC members, a summary of actions taken, best practices, issues and concerns including those derived from current and past years' experiences, and a summary of election results by neighborhood area, including mail-in ballots
- The Non-Partisan Resolution
- A timeline setting forth deadlines
- A procedural checklist of tasks to be completed
- A list of prospective candidates, current and historical, who have been or may be approached to run
- A list of frequently asked questions and corresponding answers
- A script that may be utilized by PC members and others involved in recruiting candidates to explain the Village Non-Partisan Election System and the process of running in the CNC election
- A job description for PC and CNC members.

² The League strongly recommends that the PC review and update, on a timely and ongoing basis, all relevant information on the PC's website. The League notes that the PC website often lagged behind other sources of information concerning the PC's activities, diminishing its potential to inform the general public, prospective CNC candidates, and members of the PC regarding the non-partisan election process. The League has identified the following categories of information to be presented in a user-friendly and intuitive manner:

- the Village Non-Partisan Election System*,
- the roles and responsibilities of the CNC,
- the roles and responsibilities of the PC,
- the composition of and primary contact information for current CNC members, with the chair's name and contact information displayed prominently,
- the composition of and primary contact information for PC members, with the chair's name and contact information displayed prominently,
- the deadlines and procedures for running for CNC,
- the forms required to run for CNC,
- the date, time, and place of the CNC election,
- the process by which mail-in ballots may be used, including making the mail-in ballot form readily accessible on the website,
- the election results,
- the dates, times, and places of scheduled CNC meetings, and
- the dates, times, and places of all CNC or PC meetings that are open to the public.

portfolio chair before convening the first PC meeting.

2. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE RESOLUTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CNC

The League acknowledges that the lateness of the appointment of the 2017 chair precluded the PC from convening in time to deliberate and consider proposing amendments to the Non-Partisan Resolution or to the CNC Rules of Procedure and processes. The League understands that there were several issues that had been referred to the PC from the prior year's CNC in addition to the recommendations that had been made by the League and other members of the public. The League suggests that those issues be recorded and transmitted to next year's PC for its consideration.

In addition, the campaigning and public endorsements that occurred in last spring's contested trustee election gave rise to an opportunity for a discussion of the role that PC and CNC members play, whether a conflicts of interest policy should be adopted, the duty of confidentiality, and whether individuals on either of those committees can or should be precluded from speaking publicly for or against the candidates that have been nominated for trustee by the CNC or the candidates running for election to the CNC. This year's PC could also have taken advantage of the heightened scrutiny surrounding last spring's trustee election to educate the community about the Non-Partisan System as it sought input on potential changes to the Non-Partisan Resolution and CNC Rules of Procedure. The League suggests that those issues also be recorded and transmitted to next year's PC for its consideration.

The League continues to reaffirm its position that was first set forth in its 2012 "Statement Concerning Scarsdale's Nonpartisan System for the Selection of Candidates for Village Office" and repeated in each of its subsequent CNC consensus statements:

The League recommends that the PC propose an amendment to the Non-Partisan Resolution providing that the CNC elect the chair and vice chair [sic]³ of the following year's CNC from the outgoing class of voting members.

Currently, the Non-Partisan Resolution provides that the President (or the First Vice President of the TVCC in the President's absence) serve as chairperson of the CNC. The League notes that the TVCC is a separate civic organization; neither its membership nor its leadership is chosen by the Scarsdale electorate. Although the chairperson is a nonvoting member of the CNC, he or she is nonetheless in a leadership position and can influence the committee on its operations and selection of candidates. The League also notes that the President and First Vice President of the TVCC, who simultaneously serve as President and First Vice President of the Forum, do not necessarily possess any CNC experience. The selection of chairs by the CNC from among those who have just completed their service on the CNC, comparable to the process set forth in the School Board Nominating Committee Resolution for selecting the leadership of the SBNC, promotes greater continuity and smoother transfer of procedural and historical knowledge, ensures that the CNC leadership possesses recent CNC experience, preserves the appearance of

³ The Resolution does not currently make any provisions for a "vice chair" position.

impartiality, integrity, and neutrality in the process, and makes certain that the incoming leadership will bear the indicia of approval of their CNC peers.

3. RECRUITING OF POTENTIAL CNC CANDIDATES

The League commends the PC for recruiting enough candidates to have contested elections in four of the five neighborhood voting districts and for having fully contested elections in three of those four -- an accomplishment last achieved in 2013. The League recognizes the difficulty in recruiting people to run in the CNC election and commends the PC for beginning efforts in July, for using candidate and donor lists that had been assembled in recent years, and for reaching out to all current CNC members, Village trustees, SNAP and every individual neighborhood association, as well as multiple other community organizations, to solicit suggestions and to broadcast calls for candidates. The PC also published announcements in local print and online media sources.

As mentioned in the information session, conversations, in person or by phone, continue to be the most effective means of recruitment. The League encourages the PC to focus its efforts, as it did this past season, on person-to-person outreach.

The League continues to suggest that the PC (1) create and maintain a centralized, chronological list of individuals who should be or have been solicited to run for CNC, (2) coordinate recruiting efforts among all members of the PC to ensure that the PC contacts and solicits individuals by phone or in person, regardless of whether such individuals are known by the PC member making such contact, and (3) formalize a system of adding or updating names of potential CNC candidates for transmittal to future PC members from year to year.

The League also suggests that the PC compile a list of talking points for PC members to mention in their recruiting efforts and thereby incorporate an educational component into their outreach. Potential candidates would then be informed about not only the role of the CNC but also about Scarsdale's Non-Partisan System which, as noted in the information session, is not widely understood by all those in the community.

4. CNC ELECTION

a. Pre-election Publicity, Brochure and Mail-in Ballots, Polling

The League commends the PC for its attention to detail in checking the bios that appear in the brochure, for providing important background information about Scarsdale's Non-Partisan System on the front page, for identifying by name all members of the PC, for explaining voter eligibility, and for utilizing the brochure to solicit donations to support the Non-Partisan System. The League further commends the PC for checking the Non-Partisan Resolution polling hour requirements and commends Mr. Pullman especially for personally staffing the polls an hour earlier than planned upon realizing that publicity surrounding when the polls would open had been inconsistent.

The League reiterates its suggestion that the printed brochure and other publicity (e.g.,

press releases) surrounding the CNC election specify the names, terms, and election districts of all continuing CNC members. Had the names of continuing members appeared in the table on the first page of the printed brochure, the accidental carryover instruction of “vote for 3” might have been caught and remedied earlier. The League suggests that the outgoing PC set up a template for next year’s brochure that includes the names of CNC members whose terms have not ended, amending the voter instructions to indicate “vote for up to [2]” as correctly shown on the actual ballot, and correcting the header inside the back cover to refer to a “mail in ballot” rather than an “absentee ballot” while these issues are fresh in mind.

The League encourages the PC to continue to explore ways to modify the appearance and content of its website to improve its utility as a resource for timely and relevant information about the PC’s and CNC’s activities. For the period leading up to the CNC election, the League recommends that the brochure and all pertinent information concerning the election be featured prominently on the homepage.

b. Voter Turnout

For convenience, the following table is included as a means of tracking voter turnout trends. The League commends the PC for efforts resulting in the highest voter turnout in five years. The League also commends the PC for resuming its practice of tracking the mail in ballots.

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Edgewood	66 (3)	37 (?)*	24*	21 (3)*	62 (3)+	76 (28)	64 (2)	65 (4)	73 (2)
Fox Meadow	54 (4)*	168 (?)	84	106 (28)	107 (?)	153 (67)	162 (5)	133 (10)	187 (43)
Greenacres	141 (24)	68 (?)+	66+	54 (17)	103 (?)	115 (54)	106 (12)	89 (13)	101 (15)
Heathcote	136 (6)	24 (?)*	34*	34 (7)*	59 (?)	106 (40)	134 (25)	129 (64)	187 (92)
Quaker Ridge	42 (2)+	24 (?)*	16*	24 (10)*	24 (2)*	103 (45)	67 (12)	100 (47)	116 (30)
TOTAL (mail-in)	439 (37)	321 (≈106)	224 (25)	239 (65)	355 (163)	553 (234)	533 (56)	516 (138)	664 (182)

Data in parentheses () indicate the number of mail-in ballots

* indicates uncontested election

+ indicates fewer than twice the number of candidates for each open slot

c. Fundraising, Expenses, and Finances

The League commends the PC for promptly identifying an urgent need for funds to run the election and for holding a successful fundraiser in the summer to compensate for the absence of one that ordinarily would have occurred in the prior November/December traditional time frame. The League further commends the PC for being cost-conscious, for remaining financially self-sufficient, and for covering all its annual expenses. The League encourages the PC treasurer to record systematically the details of the PC’s annual expenses and ensure that such data is accessible to all current and future members of the PC insofar as they were not made available to either the PC chair or the League by the time of the information session.

\\

For convenience, below is a chart identifying the PC's expense breakdown, as reported to the League by the PC, for the past four years:

<u>TYPE OF EXPENSE</u>	<u>YEAR: 2017</u>	<u>YEAR 2016</u>	<u>YEAR: 2015</u>	<u>YEAR: 2014</u>
Postage deposit	\$?	\$1,267.00	\$1,267.04	\$1,274.28
Printing (brochure/mailling)	≈\$1,700.00	\$1,768.00	\$1,715.49	\$2,670.79
Ballot printing	\$?	\$?	\$?	\$83.75
Additional postage (fundraising solicitation)	\$?	TBD in Jan.	\$39.20	\$31.96
P.O. Box Rental	\$?	\$126.00	\$126.00	\$?
<hr/>				
TOTAL	≈\$3,300.00	\$3,155.00	\$3,147.73	4,060.78

5. CONCLUSION

The League appreciates the PC's dedication to a non-partisan process and desire to improve the CNC election system. The League hopes the PC will view this letter as a tool to facilitate discussion on strategies for continuing to improve the system.

Sincerely,



Diane E. Baylor
Chair, Village Election System
League of Women Voters of Scarsdale




Linda Doucette-Ashman and Janice Starr
Co-Presidents
League of Women Voters of Scarsdale

cc: Mr. Robert Schechter
Vice Chair of the Procedure Committee
schechter.robert@gmail.com

Ms. Mary Louise (ML) Perlman
Chair of the Citizens Nominating Committee
themlperlman@gmail.com