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Mr. Eric Cheng
Chair of the 2019-20 Procedure Committee
P.O. Box 284
Scarsdale, NY 10583

also sent via email to: chengchoi@optonline.net

January 13, 2020

Dear Mr. Cheng,

The League of Women Voters of Scarsdale (“League”) thanks you for serving as chair of the Scarsdale Procedure Committee (“PC”) and thanks Madelaine Eppenstein for presenting on behalf of the Procedure Committee at our general membership information meeting on December 9, 2019, concerning the CNC election. The League appreciates Ms. Eppenstein’s comprehensive report and commends her for her thorough written responses to the League’s written questions as well as to those posed during the meeting.

Immediately following our information session, the League held a consensus meeting of its members. The League’s specific recommendations to the PC are set forth below.

1. OVERALL FUNCTIONING OF THE PC, COMPOSITION, AND LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

The League thanks all those who served on the 2019-20 PC for their participation and fulfillment of the PC’s civic responsibilities. Though, for various reasons, only six of the ten graduating CNC members continued on to the 2019-20 PC, all eleven appointed slots were filled and, as reported at the information session, PC leadership transition this past year was “seamless.” In accordance with the line of succession outlined in the NPR, the 2018 vice chair succeeded to the role of 2019-20 chair, a new vice chair was selected with the same expectation, and all PC members had the benefit of a comprehensive 21-page Operations Manual in place to guide all aspects of the PC’s functioning. The League commends the PC for the drafting of the manual as well as for the preparation and dissemination of the recently amended Non-Partisan Resolution (“NPR”), the 2018-19 PC Annual Report, the 2018-19 CNC Annual Report, the 2018-19 CNC Rules of Procedure, the expanded CNC recruitment packet, the FAQ sheet about the Village’s non-partisan system, the PC and CNC calendars, various contact lists, and the LWVS’s most recent consensus report. The League looks forward to the PC’s continued use and updating of those materials.

The League commends Madelaine Eppenstein who, upon completion of her service as the 2018 PC chair, stayed on as one of the appointed PC members, served as treasurer and contributed an intimate working knowledge of the system's governing resolution, its history, the significant changes enacted through the amendments of 2018, and their rationales. As the 2018 PC chair, in accordance with the new provisions in the NPR, Ms. Eppenstein selected not only herself but also the ten other appointed members of the PC who were ratified by the newly graduated CNC members as their first order of business. The League commends the diversity of the selection in that the appointed members represented a wide variety of neighborhoods, age groups, civic and community affiliations, and skills needed to carry out the PC's responsibilities. The League encourages current and future PC chairs to devote similar attention and diligence to ensuring a diversified pool of appointed members. The League also strongly encourages the PC to retain several continuing, seasoned veterans, as it did this year, for the sake of continuity and preservation of institutional memory.

The League continues to stress the importance of awareness of the history of various procedures and the reasoning behind them before initiating major changes or deviating from past practice. Particularly when certain recurring issues arise only once during any individual's term of service on the PC or the CNC, the conscientious documentation and preservation of institutional knowledge by both the PC and the CNC are of paramount importance. The transmission and regular review of such materials should help guide future decision-making.

In past years, the League has noted the importance of the PC website as the primary source of public information about the Village's non-partisan system. The League thanks the PC for continuing to post various materials to the PC website this past year, encourages the PC to make greater use of that resource with more frequent updating, and hopes that the PC will continue to explore efforts to revamp the visual layout website to make it more user-friendly and intuitive for the end user. The League also thanks and commends the CNC for continuing the practice of videotaping and making available for viewing the public portion of the organizational meeting.

2. POLICIES, PROCEDURES, GUIDELINES

After the extensive overhaul of the NPR by referendum in 2018, the 2019-20 PC did not entertain further revisions to the NPR this past season and did not propose any changes to the CNC concerning its rules of procedure. The League notes the existence, however, of topics considered previously that were not definitively resolved. In particular, the League encourages the PC and the CNC to revisit and consider adopting a conflict of interest policy that, among other things, contemplates the public roles and limits, if any, of individual members of the CNC once the committee as a whole has nominated its slate. The League further recommends deliberation and discussion of that issue up front and then throughout the entire CNC nominating process, just as the importance of confidentiality is and should be emphasized frequently.

3. RECRUITING POTENTIAL CNC CANDIDATES

The League commends the PC for beginning early, for making good use of shared online

resources to track recruiting efforts and the status of potential candidates, and for expanding its media and social media outreach via other community-based organizations that were willing to disseminate recruitment messaging on their platforms. The League further commends the PC for ensuring that press releases and letters to the editor appeared regularly in the local print and online newspapers and blogs.

Despite extensive outreach to many different members of the community, securing a fully contested election in each neighborhood district continues to be an elusive objective. This season, only one neighborhood district had a fully-contested slate (i.e., at least two candidates for each open position) while two neighborhoods had partially contested elections and two neighborhoods had uncontested elections. As explained in the information session, the most common reason proffered for a potential candidate’s disinclination to run was the “seemingly implacable” apprehension of a contested election.

The League appreciates the difficulty the PC has faced but continues to maintain that contested CNC elections are crucial components of the democratic process envisioned by the NPR. Having a choice at the CNC polls has shown to increase voter turnout and engagement and helps ensure that special interest groups do not hijack or manipulate the system. To that end, the League supports the PC’s continued efforts to educate and engage the public about the non-partisan system in a manner that conveys and explains the fundamental tenets of contested CNC elections and bolsters potential candidates’ willingness to run in a contested election.

4. CNC ELECTION

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

The League commends the PC for pairing education about the non-partisan system with election publicity efforts and for incorporating the use of relatively inexpensive, brightly colored palm cards into its practice. The League thanks the PC for its preparation of the election brochure, for retaining the layout improvements and details that had been added in the past few years, and for having candidates approve their bios in advance of printing. The League appreciates the PC’s newly added reference to the Chase Road Post Office as a means to explain where mail-in ballots would be delivered and shares the PC’s frustration with the voter disenfranchisement caused by the USPS’s failure to process in a timely fashion several properly mailed ballots. In light of the USPS troubles as well as potential confusion over the double-envelope requirement, the League suggests ongoing refinement and clarification of the voter instructions provided on the mail-in ballot.

The League commends the PC for changing the hours reserved at Village Hall for voting and securing continuous volunteer coverage from 7 a.m. until 9 p.m. to allow for uninterrupted polling throughout the day.

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b. Voter Turnout

The following tables are included as a means of tracking voter turnout trends. The League commends the PC for tabulation efforts that were mindful of the mail-in ballot verification requirements and for providing the requested data for League study.

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Edgewood	96 (8)	65 (18)*	66 (3)	37 (?)*	24*	21 (3)*	62 (3)+	76 (28)	64 (2)	65 (4)	73 (2)
Fox Meadow	46 (5)*	113 (2)+	54 (4)*	168 (?)	84	106 (28)	107 (?)	153 (67)	162 (5)	133 (10)	187 (43)
Greenacres	82 (3)+	57 (7)*	141 (24)	68 (?)+	66+	54 (17)	103 (?)	115 (54)	106 (12)	89 (13)	101 (15)
Heathcote	57 (4)*	44 (3)*	136 (6)	24 (?)*	34*	34 (7)*	59 (?)	106 (40)	134 (25)	129 (64)	187 (92)
Quaker Ridge	87 (12)+	70 (4)	42 (2)+	24 (?)*	16*	24 (10)*	24 (2)*	103 (45)	67 (12)	100 (47)	116 (30)
TOTAL	368	349	439	321	224	239	355	553	533	516	664
(mail-in)	(32)	(34)	(37)	(≈106)	(25)	(65)	(163)	(234)	(56)	(138)	(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

5. FINANCES

The League commends the PC for keeping good financial records and for its fundraising efforts that replenished coffers with donations from many different individuals in the community. As reported at the information session, the PC has received approximately \$4,800 in donations so far this season to add to their existing balance. After covering the expenses detailed below, the PC expects to have over \$2,000 remaining in their accounts as a healthy cushion for next year.

While commending the PC for the mailing of the detailed election brochure that serves to educate households about the Village’s non-partisan system, the League recognizes that the costs associated with its printing and mailing constitute the PC’s main annual expense. As a result, the League understands the need to continue monitoring and revisiting the costs and benefits of the brochure’s continued distribution to every household.

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For convenience, below is a chart identifying the PC's expense breakdown, as reported to the League by the PC, for the past five years (2019 numbers are estimates as of the date of the information session):

<u>TYPE OF EXPENSE</u>	<u>YEAR: 2019</u>	<u>YEAR: 2018</u>	<u>YEAR: 2017</u>	<u>YEAR 2016</u>	<u>YEAR: 2015</u>	<u>YEAR: 2014</u>
Postage deposit	\$1,035.83	\$1,269.39	\$1,300.00	\$1,267.00	\$1,267.04	\$1,274.28
Printing (brochure/mailling)	\$2,164.96	\$2,036.52	\$1,717.28	\$1,768.33 (revised cents)	\$1,715.49	\$2,670.79
Ballot printing	\$65.00	\$184.24	\$in-kind donation?	\$48.32 (revised from \$45.00)	\$---	\$83.75
Additional postage (fundraising solicitation)	\$198.00	\$180.00 (contribution)	\$?	\$?	\$39.20	\$31.96
VH Meeting Room and Lobby Rental Fees	\$240.00	\$240.00	≈\$150.00	\$?	\$?	\$?
Fundraiser printing (stationery, flyer)	\$425.00	\$370.44	≈\$185.14 (revised from 159.77)	\$?	\$?	\$?
P.O. Box Rental	\$136.00	\$132.00	\$130.00	\$126.00	\$126.00	\$?
TOTAL	\$4,264.79	\$4,412.59 (inclusive of \$180 postage donation)	≈\$3,482.42	\$3,209.65	\$3,147.73	\$4,060.78

6. 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

Leah Dembitzer
President
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