

Mr. Howard Nadel  
Chairperson of the Procedure Committee  
9 Aspen Road  
Scarsdale, NY 10583

February 11, 2015

Dear Mr. Nadel,

The League of Women Voters of Scarsdale (“League”) thanks you for attending our general membership meeting on December 8, 2014 to review the Citizens Nominating Committee (“CNC”) election that took place on November 12, 2014. We further thank you for your voluntary service as Chairperson of the Scarsdale Procedure Committee (“PC”).

The League has a longstanding position of support for the existence of a nonpartisan system in the elections of Scarsdale’s village and school board trustees. In order to preserve a nonpartisan election system in Scarsdale, the League monitors the Village and School Board nominating committee elections. The League is invested in its independent oversight role to ensure transparency, organization, and legitimacy of the elections of the respective nominating committees, as those elections are the contested component of Scarsdale’s Non-Partisan Election System. Through its study and evaluation of the process, the League provides independent review and recommendations to the respective governing bodies.

We regret that this year we were unable to study and evaluate the CNC election system to the same extent as in years past due to significant gaps in information that has traditionally been provided by the PC in advance of or at the time of our general membership meeting.

Immediately following our general membership meeting, the League held a consensus meeting of its members to discuss the CNC election and to review its prior positions pertaining to the village election system. We highlight the following recommendations, with more detailed comments and observations set forth in the body of this letter:

### **Recommendations**

- Maintain and consult detailed and updated written records concerning the roles and responsibilities of the PC for use by incoming PC members to help ensure a smooth leadership transition, retention of institutional memory and experience, and effective functioning of the PC and the CNC election.
- Begin PC transition, planning, and, most importantly, candidate recruiting efforts much earlier.

- Increase and improve efforts to inform both the general public and all prospective candidates about the Village Non-Partisan Election System, the role of the CNC, and the responsibilities and time commitment required of CNC members.
- Make better and greater use of the PC website ([www.scarsdaleprocedurecommittee.org](http://www.scarsdaleprocedurecommittee.org)) and social media as tools that can aid the PC in implementing the foregoing.
- Submit the biographical information, as it will appear in the brochure, to each CNC candidate for review and approval prior to printing.
- Amend the Non-Partisan Resolution to provide that the CNC elect its incoming leadership from the outgoing class of voting members of the CNC.

## **Detailed Comments and Recommendations**

### **Overall Functioning of the PC and Continuity of Leadership**

The League commends the PC members for their high level of participation this year in contrast to prior years' reports of internal problems with both participation and attendance. However, the League was not provided sufficient information with which to evaluate the allocation and performance of responsibilities among PC members.

The League questions whether recent leadership transition efforts have provided sufficient guidance to the incoming PC Chairperson and committee members to enable them to carry out effectively all of the responsibilities with which the PC is charged. Accordingly, the League recommends that the PC maintain, update, and make readily accessible to its 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.

### **Candidate Recruitment**

Per your verbal report, recruiting CNC candidates has become "harder and harder" in recent years. You described the pool of candidates as "shrinking," with various community volunteer organizations effectively "cannibalizing" each other to attract new members. Despite what we understand was active PC member participation this year with members in certain

neighborhoods working particularly hard, the final slate consisted of uncontested elections in three districts (one the result of striking from the ballot on the day of the election an ineligible candidate based on residency), an incomplete slate of three candidates in one district, and a full slate (two candidates for each open position) in only one of the five neighborhood-based voting districts. You reported, however, that PC candidate recruiting efforts did not begin until August and the PC's first meeting did not occur until September, by which time the SBNC Administrative Committee had begun its recruiting efforts for school board nominating committee candidates to run in the January election.

The League recognizes the efforts made by the PC to recruit candidates by arranging for information to be published in the local print and online news media in August and September and by speaking with the Scarsdale Neighborhood Association Presidents (SNAP) and officers of other community organizations to recruit from their respective members. Per your verbal report, an editorial in the *Scarsdale Inquirer* on October 10 resulted in two CNC candidates. The League notes, however, that the date of publication of the editorial was one week after the deadline for submitting candidate biographies and petitions. The League reaffirms its recommendations from prior years that the PC begin its recruiting and publicity efforts much earlier in the year.

The League also recommends that the PC undertake additional outreach efforts, such as arranging for PC members to attend meetings of local organizations to encourage candidacy for the CNC, as well as following up with local organizations to ensure that the PC's written solicitations for candidates are distributed, as requested and where permissible, in a timely fashion to the membership of the local organizations.

The League also encourages the composition of a script and FAQ list that can be consulted by PC members and/or posted on the PC website and elsewhere to explain the Village Non-Partisan Election System, the role of the CNC, and the responsibilities and time commitment required of CNC members as a means both to recruit and to educate prospective candidates.

### Increase Public Education Efforts

The League recommends increasing and improving efforts to inform both the general public and all prospective candidates in a timely fashion about the Village Non-Partisan Election System, the role of the CNC, and the responsibilities and time commitment required of CNC members. Examples of additional outreach may include the use of social media, submitting for publication additional articles about the merits of participating in the Village Non-Partisan Election System, holding village-wide meetings, attending and speaking at the meetings of local organizations where permissible, and, as explained in more detail below, making the PC website more informative and user-friendly.

## PC Website

The League strongly recommends that the PC review and update, on a timely and ongoing basis, all relevant information on the PC's website. It can be a powerful tool to inform the general public, prospective CNC candidates, and members of the PC regarding the non-partisan election process, including information on, among other things:

- 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 Chairperson's name and contact information displayed prominently,
- the composition of and primary contact information for PC members, with the Chairperson'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.

\* The PC is welcome to link to the League website for a description of the Village Non-Partisan Election System: <http://www.lwvs.org/Nonpartisan.html>

## Brochure and Mail-in Ballots

The League notes several concerns in connection with this year's brochure and mail-in ballots.

First, as indicated in your verbal report, a large portion of one candidate's biographical information was inadvertently omitted from the brochure. The League recommends that the brochure be reviewed carefully by more than one PC member and the text of each candidate's biographical information provided to the candidate for final approval before printing.

Second, League members reported that the brochure mailing was both over- and under-inclusive. In this respect, some residents of the Mamaroneck Strip who are not eligible to vote in Scarsdale Village elections reported that they received the brochure in the mail while some residents of Greenacres reported they had not received the brochure. You reported that you obtained the mailing list from the Village. The League recommends following up with the Village to ensure that the PC obtains the appropriate mailing list.

Third, the League recommends that instructions for the use of mail-in ballots should be clarified to indicate that the mail-in ballot contained within the brochure may be photocopied and/or downloaded and printed from the PC website. These instructions should be stated on the

ballot and elsewhere in election publicity efforts so that voters understand that a photocopied or downloaded and printed mail-in ballot has the same validity as the original mail-in ballot included within the brochure. The League also recommends that the PC ensure that a sufficient number of the brochures and ballots be maintained at the Scarsdale Public Library until the election. The League further reaffirms its prior recommendation to arrange for the local print and online news media to include the mail-in ballot or a link to the downloadable mail-in ballot in their publications.

Fourth, the League encourages the PC to explore a more efficient layout of the brochure to reduce the amount of unused space and thereby reduce printing costs.

### Voter Turnout

Unfortunately, because we were not presented with requested data on voter turnout by the time of the consensus meeting, we are unable to comment on voter turnout in this statement.<sup>1</sup>

### Fundraising, Expenses, and Finances

Per your verbal report, the PC's finances were healthy and were sufficient to cover all election expenses, with costs (specifically, the printing and mailing associated with the brochure and ballots) consistent with that of past years. Unfortunately, because we were not presented with requested data on fundraising efforts, expenses, and overall finances by the time of the consensus meeting, we are unable to comment on the PC's fundraising efforts, expenses, and overall finances in this statement.<sup>ii</sup>

### Amendment to the Resolution

The League reaffirms 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]<sup>1</sup> 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. For this reason, it is far more appropriate and democratic for the CNC leadership to be selected by the elected members of the CNC.

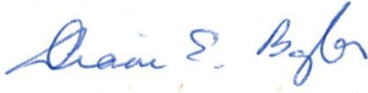
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<sup>1</sup> The Resolution does not currently make any provisions for a "vice chair" position.

## 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



Susie Rush  
President  
League of Women Voters of Scarsdale

cc: Lucas Meyer  
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21 Autenrieth Road  
Scarsdale, NY 10583

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<sup>i</sup> We note that you did provide us with the election results subsequent to the consensus meeting and that did confirm your verbal report that voter turnout was higher in the two districts that offered contested elections (Fox Meadow and Greenacres). For the benefit of future PC members and League study, that information is set forth below, side-by-side with the data made available to the League in previous years, with the first number in each cell representing total ballots cast and parenthetical numbers representing the number of mail-in ballots:

<b>Election District</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>
Edgewood	21 (3)		76 (28)	64 (2)	65 (4)	73 (2)		
Fox Meadow	106 (28)		153 (67)	162 (5)	133 (10)	187 (43)		
Greenacres	54 (17)		115 (54)	106 (12)	89 (13)	101 (15)		
Heathcote	34 (7)		106 (40)	134 (25)	129 (64)	187 (92)		
Quaker Ridge	24 (10)		103 (45)	67 (12)	100 (47)	116 (30)		
<b>TOTAL (mail-in)</b>	<b>239 (65)</b>	<b>355 (163)</b>	<b>553 (234)</b>	<b>533 (56)</b>	<b>516 (138)</b>	<b>664 (182)</b>	<b>385 (17)</b>	<b>450 (9)</b>

<sup>ii</sup> We note for the benefit of future PC members and League study the following expense breakdown which you provided to us after our consensus meeting:

Postage deposit	\$1,274.28
Brochure and mail-in ballot printing	\$2,670.79
Additional postage	\$31.96
Ballot printing	<u>\$83.75</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,060.78</b>