

Bulletin - Autumn 2013

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Autumn 2013

Steering Committee: Maureen Sundberg & Stefani Traina

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League of Women Voters of Andover/North Andover Newsletter

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Letter from the Steering Committee

Dear Members,

It seems strange to be putting together the first Bulletin this late in the year, but we've had a very good response to the Weekly News. The new format has allowed us to get information out to members quickly in our fast-paced world. In this Autumn Bulletin we recap the first part of the League year. Be sure to check out the article about the new government website for keeping track of Congress, information about the study groups and the proposal for a charter school in Andover, as well as details about upcoming events.

September saw the League tabling at Andover Days. We talked to a lot of visitors as part of an informal survey about Andover's Town Meeting. Thank you to the members who helped out that day and to the dozen members who have pursued a study of Andover Town Meeting. Our January 18th membership event will focus on town meeting in both towns and culminate the Andover study.

October was the Running for Office Workshop, held in North Andover this year. Though the event was scheduled the same night as the 6th game in the World Series, we had a good turnout. Heather McNeil kept the program on a tight schedule and everyone was out in time for the opening pitch! The Andover Town Meeting Studio group, also began meeting in October. Look for their proposal below.

November saw Andover's 19th annual LWV Community Read-Along. It was another well received event. Thanks to all the League members, town and school employees, and community volunteers who support the event year after year. Also in November, an Agriculture Study Group began meeting and is considering possible educational opportunities around this important topic that touches on the health and safety of our food supply, open space, budget priorities, and many other social areas.

As we approach the dark months of winter, we offer our wish for a safe and happy holiday season for all.

Maureen Sundberg & Stefani Traina

Winter 2013 - 2014 Calendar

Many events are still being developed. For the most up to date calendar information visit [our website](#).



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January

- 9 Thurs Board Meeting, Andover Library, 7:00pm
- 18 Sat Membership Event at Marland Place, Andover, 9:30am.

February

- 12 Wed League Membership Event at the Addison Museum of American Art, Main St, Andover, 6:00pm.
- 13 Thurs Board Meeting, Andover Library, 7:00pm

A New Way To Keep Up With Congress: Congress.Gov

by Becky Cairns

For many years, THOMAS.GOV has been the go-to source for the public to stay up to date on legislative action in Congress. However, THOMAS.GOV, operated by the Library of Congress and named after the Library's original benefactor, President Thomas Jefferson, has outgrown its technical capacity and is transitioning into CONGRESS.GOV.

The new website allows users to more easily search for legislation, find committee reports, and search the Congressional Record. You will also find links to Committee schedules, hearing updates, and live video of both the House and Senate floors.

Need to get your Congressional updates on the go? The Library of Congress has also introduced the Congressional Record App for iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. The App allows you to read summaries of legislative action, full text of speeches, and information on bills that will be voted upon in each Chamber.

Andover Charter School: STEAM Studio

The decision whether or not to award a charter to the proposed STEAM charter school in Andover will be made by a state committee on February 25, 2014. The committee is soliciting written public input through January 3 at Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, c/o Charter School Office, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148, or by email to charterschools@doe.mass.edu.

The League is working on two fronts to provide more information to residents. First, we asked Andover Public Schools and STEAM Studio to provide written statements (see below). Second, on December 18th, we are recording a dialog that will dig into the curriculum and finances.

Please indicate why you do or do not support the introduction of a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) charter school in Andover. As part of your response, please address the overall school curriculum as well as implications for town finances. Please limit your comments to 750 words maximum.

Andover Public Schools Statement

The Andover School Committee does not support the STEAM Studio charter proposal because the programming it promises to offer students doesn't enhance or build upon our current offerings enough to justify the very large share of state and local funding it will divert from Andover's existing schools and programs. Further, as a high performing school district, a Commonwealth Charter school is inappropriate for Andover since, by statute, the charter school would operate independently of the existing school system and taxpayers would have no ability to vote on how a large portion of their local tax dollars are spent.

AHS is currently experiencing tremendous growth in the area of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) programming. A few examples:

- We are among the first public school districts in the country to have written STEAM goals into our district-wide Strategic Plan. Some of our STEAM efforts are featured in a case study on the national stemtosteam.org website sponsored by the Rhode Island School of Design.
- Our Strategic Plan is being implemented: in the last year alone, student enrollment has tripled in both our engineering and computer science classes. We have also started a new graphic design lab program, as well as a technology integration class that includes app development. We are actively planning for continued growth and expansion in these areas.
- Last year AHS became the first public high school in the country to partner with EdX--the Harvard-MIT online course program--to allow our students to take college-level courses for AHS credit, at no cost.
- In 2012, AHS was one of three national finalists for the Intel School of Distinction in High School Mathematics award.
- Our ninth grade STEAM program, "Geometry through the Lens of Art," was adopted as a professional development offering by the Museum of Fine Arts.
- Our new Environmental Science Internship Class matches students with business and community mentors to work on specific, real-world problems.
- Last year, Andover High's robotics program and science teams placed at a high level in state competition.
- This fall, multiple school districts, including Lexington, have requested visits to AHS, specifically to observe and learn about applying STEAM ideals to the art classroom.

Thanks to the community's recent \$2.5 million dollar investment in town-wide technology infrastructure, we are now experiencing a rapid acceleration in our capacity to provide innovative programming, and we have dedicated substantial professional development money toward supporting these initiatives. Now is the time to continue expanding and enhancing these opportunities for ALL students--not the time to divert funding to a charter school that will only serve a small number.

Budget Impact

Commonwealth Charter schools work well in districts where schools are failing and the state provides a large percentage of the schools' funding. For those systems, it is fair for the state to assume control by issuing a charter and dictating that state funds be channeled to the charter. In Andover, a high-performing school district where the state provides only 14% of its per pupil cost, it makes no sense for taxpayers to cede control of a large share of its local tax dollars to the state.

Any decision to invest further in education should be made by voters at Town Meeting, where the pros and cons of the investment can be fully vetted by our own taxpayers. If Andover residents feel a charter school is a good idea, then a Horace Mann Charter is a better option because its budget is approved by voters. If a Commonwealth Charter such as STEAM Studio is approved, the increase in expenses to Andover will need to be absorbed locally--by increasing local taxes, decreasing town spending, decreasing school spending, or some combination thereof.

- The STEAM Studio charter tuition is estimated at \$15,871 per student.
- Andover receives \$1,386 per student from the state.
- For each student from Andover who attends STEAM Studio, Andover will need to reallocate \$14,485 from local revenues to STEAM Studio.

- If the charter school attracts Andover students who currently attend private schools, the number of students now educated through public tax dollars will actually rise, further increasing the cost to the Town of Andover.
- The STEAM Studio charter team assumes 70% of its students will come from Andover. This would result in a total impact of roughly \$5 million per year after the initial reimbursement period ends--offset by only modest decreases in expenses.

These budgetary impacts are significant and will be felt at all levels of the school system.

STEAM Studio Statement

The original purpose of charter schools was to foster innovation and alternatives in education: alternatives in instructional methods, curriculum, pedagogical philosophies, and student guidance. Not all students learn the same way or learn best in the same environment. So, charter schools were meant to introduce diversity of approach, size, methods, and philosophies - and introduce new ideas into the larger educational ecosystem to benefit all students.

SCHOOL SUMMARY

STEAM Studio is a proposed public charter high school for creativity and innovation that focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art + Design, and Mathematics. The school's focus is in these areas - and includes other important subjects. Four years of English, Math, and Science are required. Students are required to enroll in at least two years of History/Social Sciences and a World Language.

STEAM Studio is not a vocational school. And it is not a performing arts / fine arts school. It is a school that focuses on the creative process in science, technology, engineering, and design.

STEAM Studio will serve students interested in STEAM subjects - with an emphasis on Computing & Digital Arts, Health Sciences, and Entrepreneurship. The depth of focus on these disciplines will allow students to gain a deeper understanding of these fields - which will be major drivers for innovation, social change, and economic growth in the next century.

CURRICULUM

Our curriculum employs a challenge-based approach that involves projects in every course, and courses and programs have a documented history of success. Categories include: Humanities, Math & Science, Arts + Design, Computing & Digital Arts, Health Sciences, Entrepreneurship, and Health & Wellness. Course highlights:

Arts + Design: Engineering by Design; Design Thinking; Art & Design Foundations; and Design Tools & Techniques.

Computing & Digital Arts: Computing, Apps, and the Web; Computer Science; Web Design & Development; Digital Media & Movie Making; Game Design; Research, Design, and Development; 3D Animation.

Health Science: Foundations of Health Science; Human Body Systems; Synthetic Biology; Principles of Biomedical Sciences; Neuroscience; Medical Interventions; Biotech Engineering; Public Health; Biomedical Innovation.

Entrepreneurship: Technology Entrepreneurship; Creativity & Innovation; How to Build a Startup.

SCHOOL WEEK

A key component is providing student opportunities for immersion in large-scale, interdisciplinary projects. To accomplish this, we have set aside one day per week (Friday) that is dedicated to work on STEAM projects and related topics. Monday through Thursday are more focused on the core, academic foundation classes along with course work in Computing & Digital Arts, Health Sciences, and Arts+Design.

STEAM COMMUNITIES

STEAM Communities provide students with rich, engaging, project-based learning experiences in two fields of study: Computing & Digital Arts and Health Sciences.

Each semester, a student chooses a STEAM Community as his/her 'home' for the semester. In the STEAM Community, each student is immersed in the essential aspects of the chosen community:

- Computing and Digital Arts: Students take on the roles of professionals working in the field and explore areas that combine computing with the arts and humanities such as mobile app creation, software development, game design, music and video production, and film/animation.
- Health Sciences: Students take on the roles of professionals working in the field and do projects in areas such as internal medicine, nutrition, biotechnology, orthopedics, epidemiology, bioinformatics, clinical research, and health care policy.

Students use 'Design Thinking' to imagine and discover breakthrough solutions; student teams apply the 'Engineering Process' and the 'Scientific Method' to develop and deliver high-impact solutions; and Faculty and industry experts provide mentorship and guidance.

Students work in themed spaces - called Studios. Studios provide an authentic, real world space that gives students a flavor of what working in the field is really like. Planned studios include Computing/Design, Biotech, Writing, and Music/Video Production.

IMPLICATIONS ON TOWN FINANCES

The school can have a maximum of 450 students. All Andover students in grades 9-12 are eligible to attend. Students from other communities can attend if there are seats available. There are no entrance exams.

If 115 - 450 Andover students choose to attend, \$964K - \$5.5M in tuition would transfer annually from the Town budget to the charter school over a 10-year period. This represents 0.6% - 2.6% of the Town budget, assuming that annual revenues continue to grow at historical 3% levels.

If 200+ Andover students attend, taxpayers may not have to fund a \$20M+ expansion of Andover High, which is 200 students over capacity.

Through January 3rd, MA residents can voice their support for STEAM Studio by emailing comments to the Department of Education:

charterschools@doe.mass.edu

For More Information - Visit www.steamstudio.org.

Background Information

According to the MA Charter Schools website (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/>):

"The Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign oversees the creation of a variety of high quality public school options - including those that innovate in the areas of

instructional practice, time, resources, and technology - to ensure that all students in the Commonwealth have equitable access to a pathway to success after high school. ... Charter schools are independent public schools that operate under five year charters granted by the Commonwealth's Board of Education. ... Once the Board of Education has awarded a charter, the new charter school has the freedom to organize around a core mission, curriculum, theme, or teaching method. It is allowed to control its own budget and hire (and fire) teachers and staff. In return for this freedom, a charter school must demonstrate good results within five years or risk losing its charter."

Charter schools receive (a) per pupil tuition payments that initially have some state government aid but ultimately come from the district/municipality where the student lives, and (b) facility aid from the state government. The tuition payments follow a fairly involved formula; details can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/tuition/Reimbursements.html>.

Membership Event with Town Meeting Focus

The League will hold a Saturday morning membership event on **Saturday, January 18th from 9:30-11:30am** at Marland Place in Andover. Join us for brunch and a discussion of town meeting in the Andovers. Current Town Moderators, Sheila Doherty and Mark DiSalvo will be our featured speakers.

We'd like to have a rough count of the number of members able to attend. Please RSVP [here](#). We hope a few people will be able to help with food for the event. If you would like to bring a dish to share, please let us know in your RSVP.

After we hear from our Town Moderators, the membership will discuss and come to consensus on changes to our existing positions on Town Meeting, as proposed by an Andover Town Meeting Study Group, led by Joan Duff and Lolly Sumberg. Membership consensus is needed to add or change a current position. Once a position is adopted, the League may take action on issues related to the position. The current and the proposed update of the LWV ANA Town Government Position can be found [here](#).

Andover Tomorrow

Co-sponsored by Andover's Economic Development Council and the Board of Selectmen, this panel presentation features a great accumulation of data by Barry Bluestone of the Dukakis Center at Northeastern University. Claudia Bach, former Superintendent of Schools, and Greg Sebaskey, Chairman of Philips North America, provided additional perspectives on the importance of educating and attracting a qualified labor force.

You can view Bluestone's Power Point presentation or the video broadcast of the event from the [League's web site](#).

Agriculture Study Group

League and community members interested in the update of the US League's positions on Agriculture Policy met at Panera on November 11th and again on December 4th. There was a lot of interesting discussion and sharing of ideas.

A number of multi-media presentations related to the topic are now available from the US website:

<http://www.lwv.org/content/agricultural-update-multimedia-resources-background-information>

in addition to print and online documents:

<http://www.lwv.org/content/agriculture-update-suggested-summer-reading>

New resources are posted frequently on www.lwv.org. If you sign up for the online agriculture forum, you will receive updates when new information is

posted. To join a forum, click on Login in the red band at the top of the homepage. Create an account, or simply login if you already have an account, and then click Forums on the left-hand menu. Follow the information for Getting Started.

Voters Service - "Running for Office" Available Online

by Heather McNeil

The League recently held its annual Running for Office Workshop in North Andover. The workshop panel included North Andover's Town Clerk, Joyce Bradshaw, Andover's Assistant Town Clerk, Kathleen McKenna, and Jason Tait, Director of Communication and Public Education from the Office of Campaign & Political Finance. We were also joined by North Andover Selectman, William Gordon, and Andover School Committee member, Barbara L'Italien.

This one-hour program is filled with information about running for elected office, from dates and deadlines, to financing tips and reporting requirements. Our elected officials also share some very helpful insights on everything from how to get to know the position for which you are running, to practical tips on going door to door to meet voters, to the pros and cons of some of the software that exists to help candidates. You may find the program at our [web site](#).

Money In Politics - Available for Viewing on Cable

If you haven't yet viewed it, the Greater Haverhill League and Northern Essex Community College co-sponsored program Money in Politics is still available for viewing on Andover and North Andover Cable TV.

Don't miss Dr. Lawrence Lessig, Professor at Harvard Law School and founder of Rootstrikers, a network of activists fighting government corruption, and Jeffrey Clements, co-founder and general counsel of Free Speech for People, as they discuss how money is corrupting the political process. Moderated by Sue Tucker, League member and former State Senator, you won't want to miss rebroadcast of this lively forum.

In Andover view on Comcast Channel 8 and Verizon Channel 47 on Tuesdays at 12:30pm and Sundays at 8:00pm.

In North Andover, view on Comcast Channel 22 and Verizon Channel 24 on Tuesdays at 6:00pm, Wednesdays at 3:00pm, Fridays at 12:30pm, and Saturdays at 9:00am.

Pricing Carbon - A program by the Wellesley League

LWV Wellesley, with co-sponsors LWVMA, Citizens Climate Lobby, and LWV Needham, presented a program, "Pricing Carbon," that focused on the emerging national dialogue about a revenue-neutral carbon tax. Could such a tax accelerate the transition of the US to a clean energy economy and help in the fight against climate change?

Steve Curwood, host of NPR's "Living on Earth" was the moderator for the event. The speakers included Dr. Theda Skocpol, Professor of Government and Sociology, Harvard; Dr. Joseph Aldy, Asst. Professor of Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School; Dr. John Reilly, Senior Lecturer and Co-Director of the Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change, Center for Environmental Policy Research, MIT Sloan School of Management; Dr. Fritz Fleischmann, Professor of English, Babson College; and Dr. Gary Rucinski, New England Coordinator, Citizens Climate Lobby.

[Click here to view the program at http://youtu.be/OUgwkesQGCI.](http://youtu.be/OUgwkesQGCI)

Thank Yous

Many League members and friends helped with events for the first quarter of the year. Many thanks to all of them:

Andover Days: Maria Bartlett, Nuala Boness, Suanne Dillman, Alix Driscoll, Ann Cobleigh, and Diana Walsh. As well as AHS student volunteers Jonathan Cohen and Emily Granoff, and Morrissey Bronder.

Phonathon: Ann Cobleigh and Keller Williams Realty for offering space, Joan Duff, Heather McNeil, and Maureen Sundberg for making calls.

Community Read-Along: Denise Boucher, Ann Michaels (Bancroft), Gerri Fegan (Librarian, High Plain), Christin Hazel (Associate Director for the Office of Advancement, Pike School), Pam Bedard (Sanborn), Cheryl Ott (Shawsheen), Deb Sapienza, Renita Johnson, Susanne Willert (South), Lesa Botti, Lisa Comosa (St. Augustine), and Erin Cammann, Sarah Walsh, Margo Spinale (Asst Principal, West).

Resources of Interest

Following are links to articles and information that might be of interest to our members. Topics range from running for office to environmental issues and everything in between.

Looking for good consumer advice? try:

<http://www.masspirgedfund.org/issues/usf/consumer-tips>

In addition to the League's own [Running for Office Workshop](#), people interested in learning more about running a campaign can refer to American Campaign School at <http://americancampaignschool.com/>

Find information about League studies completed across the country at

<https://sites.google.com/a/leagueofwomenvoters.org/clearinghouse/>

Trying to describe the branches of government or the constitution to kids? Looking for great activities about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship? Look no further:

<http://www.icivics.org/>

Check the validity of those political claims:

[FactCheck.org](#) (U of PA)

[PolitiFact.com](#) (Tampa Bay Times)

[Washington Post's Fact Checker](#)

Another tool for voter information is: <http://votesmart.org>

About the League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters is a 93-year-old national nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of individuals in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League neither supports nor opposes candidates for office, elected officials or political parties at any level of government.

The Andover/North Andover League focuses on topics directly impacting the citizens of our communities.

League membership is open to all citizens, both women and men.

Membership Form

Sign up [online](#) or complete and mail the form below. When you sign up online you will have the option of paying by credit card or PayPal. The League's membership year is July-June.

_____ New _____ Renewal

_____ \$60 Basic Member

_____ \$65 Contributing Member

_____ \$75 Sustaining Member

_____ \$100+ Patron

_____ \$40 Senior Citizen (65 yrs. old and over)

_____ \$40 Student (under 24 yrs. old)

_____ \$75 Household Dues (2+ persons in same household)

_____ In addition to my membership fee, I'd like to make a contribution of \$_____.

_____ Enclosed is a separate check containing my tax-deductible contribution of \$_____ payable to the Education Fund, which supports the LWV's educational activities.

Please make checks payable to:
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