

**January 2024**

**Calendar**

January 9	Tuesday 7 p.m.	LWVA Board Meeting via Zoom teleconference. The meeting URL will be sent to attendees; email one of the Co-Presidents if you would like to attend.
January 15	Monday 6:30 p.m.	36th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Observance, Town Hall. The LWVA is a co-sponsor. Details on page 3.
January 18	Thursday 4 p.m.	Last of three seminars on offshore wind, co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA). Details on page 8.

Christine Bongiorno, Deputy Town Manager / Operations, at the League’s holiday potluck in December. See pages 5 and 7 for more information.

*Photo by Patti Muldoon*



# Co-President's Message

Dear League Members,

As I write this message it is a rather nasty, rainy day. A fire, going in the fireplace, is burning debris left over from holiday festivities and providing a bit of cheer. I love a wood-burning fireplace!

A wonderful, welcoming setting for the League's holiday gathering was provided by our hosts, Kathy and Paul Fennelly. Our speaker, Deputy Town Manager-Operations Christine Bongiorno, was very forthcoming. (See pages 5 and 7 for details about her presentation.) Being responsible for the efficient operation of about 40 buildings seems overwhelming to me. Keeping up with two homes is primarily my responsibility. The unexpected happening that occurs is often baffling to me. The latest was being greeted by an eviscerated squirrel on my front lawn at the bottom of a telephone pole. There was also no electricity inside and consequently no heat for a full day. It turns out the squirrel tried to bite through a wire, received an electrical shock, and tripped a fuse.


For many years the League has been a co-sponsor of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Observance celebration. Bring your family and friends to meet other members of the community and lift your voice in song. It seems to me that this year it is especially important that Arlington be seen as a welcoming community. I wrote these same words last year; nothing has changed to make me feel differently.

The Arlington Conservation Commission will be reviewing a proposal to develop the Mugar site. The LWVA sent a letter to the Conservation Commission as follows: "Several years ago, Elizabeth Thompson represented the League of Women Voters of Arlington at a public meeting at the Hardy School and spoke in opposition to the proposed development of the Mugar property. To our knowledge, circumstances have not changed to manage storm events and flooding. The League has positions at both the national and state levels in support of land conservation."

The LWVA's position has not changed. The site is still wet; the development is still very large.

Wishing you a bright and healthy new year,

*Carolyn Parsons*



<b>LWVA LEADERSHIP 2023–2024</b>	
Carolyn Parsons, Co-President	781-646-9309
Angela Olszewski, Co-President	781-648-8649
Meredith Zona, Organization VP	781-648-2753
Patricia Muldoon, Action VP	339-223-3300
Joan Martin, Treasurer	617-966-4521
Anne Linn, Secretary	781-643-0356
Ann FitzGerald, Membership Director	781-646-9711
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The BULLETIN is published monthly except during the summer and December by the League of Women Voters of Arlington, PO Box 461, Arlington, MA 02476.

# 36TH ANNUAL DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Monday January 15th, 2024

6:30pm- 8:00pm

Arlington Town Hall ● 730 Massachusetts Ave



Keynote Speaker

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P.O. Box 320, Arlington, MA 02476

[WWW.ARLINGTONMAMLK.ORG](http://WWW.ARLINGTONMAMLK.ORG)



The MLK Observance Committee's partnership with ACMi, Arlington Community Media Inc., will allow the program to be available for viewing on the local channel and live streamed. The Committee is accepting new members; please reach out to [crystal.haynes@gmail.com](mailto:crystal.haynes@gmail.com) if you are interested in joining.


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## Bongiorno Discusses Town Opportunities, Challenges at Potluck

*By Kim Haase*

The League of Women Voters of Arlington held its always festive and delicious holiday potluck party on December 11 at the home of Kathy and Paul Fennelly. After dinner, attendees heard from Christine Bongiorno, our recently appointed Deputy Town Manager / Operations. Bongiorno introduced herself and then answered questions. (Photo on page 1.)

Bongiorno has served Arlington for close to 20 years. Before her current appointment, she was our Health and Human Services Director, overseeing the Health Department, Council on Aging, Veterans Services, the Arlington Youth Counseling Center, and other areas. In fact, she hired Jim Feeney, our current Town Manager, to his first position in town, as a health inspector. After Feeney moved from Deputy Town Manager / Operations to Town Manager, and after the challenges of the pandemic, Bongiorno sought the new opportunity of the Operations position.

In her current job, Bongiorno's responsibilities include Facilities (a relatively new department) and the Department of Public Works. Her mandate is to look at problems and issues in several town departments. For example, Facilities oversees many town buildings in varying states of repair; she is helping to revamp procedures for maintaining these buildings efficiently. Another task is managing rentals of town properties in a way that covers their costs. Achieving building sustainability is another responsibility; cutting utility costs frees resources for use elsewhere. Bongiorno also works with the Community Preservation Act committee to make sure applications are received and processed, and to disburse the funds.

Questions came up on these topics:

**Demographics and Affordability:** A general concern for town officials is housing affordability. Arlington's population is aging, partly because it is unaffordable for people under 30. (There are many seniors and families with children.) This is a hard problem to solve, though increasing the supply of smaller apartments under the MBTA Communities Act may help eventually; rents for new apartments are still very high at present. Also, there isn't room for larger businesses that might attract employees. The town's diversity is increasing, however; town employees who speak languages other than English (Mandarin, for example) are much in demand.

**Lyons Room:** One current facilities problem is the Lyons meeting room on the second floor of Town Hall, which is closed because it is directly under the leaking clock tower. The clock tower has to be removed while its roof is repaired. In the meantime, this is a room that can't be rented out. A member suggested that it would be good to have an online form for room rentals, instead of a phone number to call; Bongiorno said she'd put that on her to-do list.

**Override:** Asked how she felt about the override result, Bongiorno said she felt very encouraged by the 2-1 vote in favor; a lot of parents came out for the schools, she believes. Town officials had been very nervous, because passing the override would keep level funding for services, while a defeat would mean that layoffs would have been necessary. Arlington has a very lean budget compared to other towns, Bongiorno said, adding that it was amazing what the town did with what it had. She praised the Finance and Capital Planning Committees for their

*(Continued on page 7)*



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*Initial consultation is free for LWVA members*

A promotional graphic for Arlington Community Media, Inc. (ACMI). The background is a solid green color. At the top, there is a horizontal bar with a color gradient from green on the left to red on the right. The ACMI logo, featuring the letters 'ACMi' in a stylized font with a swoosh, is positioned on the left. To the right of the logo, the text 'EXPLORE ACMi' is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Below this, the text 'Arlington Community Media, Inc.' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Further down, the text 'Check out the channels and schedules:' is written in white. Below that, the website 'www.ACMI.tv/watch' is listed in white. The phone number '781-777-1115' is displayed in white. Finally, the email address 'info@acmi.tv' is shown in white. At the bottom of the graphic, there is another horizontal bar with the same color gradient as the top one.

## Bongiorno at Holiday Potluck (Cont.)

careful financial management. Because the constraints of Proposition 2 1/2 mean that revenue doesn't keep up with inflation, the town will continue to need an operational override every few years.

**Flooding:** Bongiorno remembers that the town has been fighting projects in the Mugar area, which is prone to flooding, for over 20 years. The other major problem is combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the Alewife Brook area, which are caused by Cambridge, Somerville, and the MWRA. Unfortunately, the town has no clout, and a federal mandate will be needed.

**Sustainability:** Asked about sustainability improvements for Town Hall, Bongiorno said the possibilities are limited because of the historical nature of the building. They can't add solar panels or replace the windows, for example; but weatherization and insulation improvements can happen. Jim Feeney is looking into geothermal, but that would be very expensive. Elsewhere in town, the Bishop roof will have solar panels, and the new DPW and High School, as well as the Gibbs School, have them. Bongiorno liked a suggestion that solar panels could be installed above the town parking lots.

**Gas Leaks:** A League member reported that she could smell gas in a location in her neighborhood, and that other parts of town have leaks too. Bongiorno agreed that the problem is urgent and suggested that the resident email her so she can follow up. Another League member suggested that the resident and neighbors should call National Grid every time they smell a leak; the utility is required to fix leaks that can be smelled, but only persistence can get them to do it. Another member noted that only citizen activism can help overcome the power of the fossil fuel industry.

**Biggest Challenge:** Bongiorno said the lack of resources for projects is her biggest challenge. For example, making the Foot of the Rocks area into a usable gathering place in the Heights will cost about \$1 million, but it's difficult to raise funds for it. Her other major challenge is the lack of civil discourse, especially since COVID. Anger at town officials is hard for staff to deal with. The town has also had to deal with "First Amendment audits," people who come to town offices with video cameras and try to provoke officials to react angrily, so that they can post the videos, along with officials' phone numbers, on YouTube (and sell ads). Sandy Pooler made the front page of the Globe this spring (<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/05/21/metro/first-amendment-audit-youtube/>). They also get people to post negative reviews of town facilities. Bongiorno says town staff are trained by legal counsel on how to react, but they find the encounters upsetting; we need to support them.

Bongiorno added that the project she's most looking forward to is reenvisioning and rebuilding the Fox Library in the next few years. Meetings will be held soon, and they'll be applying for grants from the state. See <https://www.robbinslibrary.org/libraries-for-all-building-a-new-future-for-the-fox-branch-library/> for more information.

Paul Fennelly added that there is information about the Foot of the Rocks project on the town website. This was the site of a major military encounter, where citizens attacked the British troops retreating from Lexington and Concord. See <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/Home/Components/News/News/12035/225>.

The League thanks the Fennellys for their hospitality this year!

## **Final Webinar in LWVMA Offshore Wind Series Airs January 18**

*By Launa Zimmaro, LWVMA Environment Specialist*

Massachusetts and other New England states are planning on offshore wind as a major factor in meeting renewable energy generation and emissions reduction goals as we transition off fossil fuels. Join us as we take a deep dive into the Northeast's offshore wind industry and learn about the value of critical offshore wind projects and threats to their timely deployment.

The title of the series is "What's Up with Offshore Wind? Current Status - Future Plans - Getting It Done."

Each session has a separate Zoom registration.

See full descriptions and viewing/registration links for each session on the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) website: <https://lwvma.org/whats-up-with-offshore-wind/>. This series is co-hosted by the LWVMA and New England for Offshore Wind (NE4OSW).

### **Webinar III: Conflicts and Solutions: Overcoming Offshore Wind Opposition January 18, 2024, 4-5 pm Eastern Time**

Supporting responsible offshore wind development means understanding the best pathway for achieving our climate goals. Continuous and rigorous engagement among stakeholders can raise awareness of the best environmental practices, community needs, and equitable economic opportunities that can come with responsibly developed offshore wind. However, misleading information and intentionally deceptive campaigns about offshore wind make it more difficult to find the right balance of environmentally sound and equitable development with climate imperatives.

In the final installment of this three-part webinar series, you will learn about opposition messaging prevalent in the Northeast offshore wind sector and best practices for setting the record straight about this important clean energy resource. You will leave with access to a practical messaging guide and social media tool kit to help you identify and counter deceptive messaging practices.

The first webinar, "Collaboration and Ambition: Where Offshore Wind Stands Now," took place September 14; the second, "Opportunities and Obstacles: Costs and Benefits of Offshore Wind," took place November 16.



We welcome new members at all times. Thank you!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ARLINGTON Membership Application/Renewal Form

\*\*Fiscal Year runs from April 1 to March 31\*\*

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Please check areas of interest and activity even if you can't be actively involved THIS year.

SPECIAL LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

- \_\_\_\_\_ Action: phone calls \_\_\_\_\_ letters \_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_ Bulletin: mailing \_\_\_\_\_ soliciting ads \_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_ Membership
\_\_\_\_\_ Nominating Committee
\_\_\_\_\_ Publicity
\_\_\_\_\_ Voter Service: Rides to the polls \_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_ Candidates Night
\_\_\_\_\_ Voters' Guide
\_\_\_\_\_ Host a meeting in my home

FOLLOW ISSUES, KEEP LEAGUE AND COMMUNITY INFORMED

- \_\_\_\_\_ Congress/Presidency/Election Process
\_\_\_\_\_ Discrimination/Equal Employment/Civil Rights
\_\_\_\_\_ Education
\_\_\_\_\_ Environment/Climate Change
\_\_\_\_\_ Health Care
\_\_\_\_\_ Justice/Courts/Prisons
\_\_\_\_\_ Housing/Zoning/Community Development
\_\_\_\_\_ Taxation/Budgets/Deficits
\_\_\_\_\_ Transportation/Urban Policy
\_\_\_\_\_ Voting Rights
\_\_\_\_\_ Basic Human Needs
\_\_\_\_\_ Women's Issues/Gender Issues
\_\_\_\_\_ Housing/Zoning/Community Development
\_\_\_\_\_ Other

OBSERVE AT TOWN BOARD MEETINGS\*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Select Board (Mondays)
\_\_\_\_\_ Redevelopment Board (Mondays)
\_\_\_\_\_ School Committee (2nd & 4th Thursdays)
\_\_\_\_\_ Conservation Commission
\_\_\_\_\_ Housing Authority

SKILLS LEAGUE COULD DRAW ON

- \_\_\_\_\_ Writing articles
\_\_\_\_\_ Computer spreadsheet
\_\_\_\_\_ Desktop publishing
\_\_\_\_\_ Website management
\_\_\_\_\_ Moderating meetings
\_\_\_\_\_ Membership development

\*Some of these can be seen on cable TV

Please add my name, street address, phone number, and email address to the LWVA mailing list: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

(Note: This information will not be sent to anyone outside the LWVA)

**January 2024**

**League of Women Voters of Arlington**  
**Post Office Box 461**  
**Arlington, MA 02476**

