



BULLETIN

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January 2026

Calendar

January 12	Monday 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 19	Monday 6:30 p.m.	38th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Observance, Town Hall Auditorium, 730 Mass. Ave. The LWVA is a co-sponsor. Doors open at 6 p.m. Details on page 3.
January 30	Friday 5 p.m.	Deadline for incumbent Town Meeting Members to file for re-election.
February 4	Wednesday 5 p.m.	Deadline for candidates to take out nomination papers for the March 28 Town Election.



Town Manager Jim Feeney speaks at the LWVA Holiday Party, with Meredith Zona, left, and Carolyn Parsons, right. Story on page 5; another picture on page 8.

Photo by Stephanie Ford

Carolyn Parsons and Angela Olszewski: Co-Presidents
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Ann FitzGerald: Membership **AnnFitz@rcn.com**

Kim Haase: Bulletin Editor **c.haase@comcast.net**
Margaret Reiners: Bulletin Mailing **mlreiners@gmail.com**

Co-President's Message

Happy new year! I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season. I regret that I was out of town for our annual holiday party. I heard that it was a wonderful event. Those who attended enjoyed good food and conversation with Town Manager Jim Feeney. Thank you to our hosts, Pam and Steve Meister.

The board has started planning for Candidates Night in anticipation of the coming local election scheduled for March 28th. This annual event provides valuable opportunities for residents to hear from candidates for town-wide office and meet informally with candidates for Town Meeting. We look forward to co-sponsoring it with Envision Arlington. Please consider volunteering to help us with the event.

Let's hope for a mild winter and early spring!

Angela Olszewski

*Note: Candidates' Night will be **Wednesday, March 18**. Save the date!*

LWVA LEADERSHIP 2025–2026

Carolyn Parsons, Co-President	781-646-9309
Angela Olszewski, Co-President	781-648-8649
Meredith Zona, Organization VP	781-648-2753
Colleen Kirby, Action VP	339-222-3887
Joan Martin, Treasurer	617-966-4521
Marina Popova, Secretary	339-707-0740
Ann FitzGerald, Membership Director	781-646-9711
Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Voter Service	781-648-9026
Jo Anne Preston, Voter Service	781-643-5431
Laura Ahner, Candidates Night	360-907-2056
Kim Haase, Bulletin Editor/Ads	781-643-3429
Margaret Reiners, Bulletin Mailing	781-646-9611
Pamela Meister, Email Coordinator	781-646-8024
Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Webmistress	781-648-9026

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.

38TH ANNUAL DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. *Birthday Observance*

MONDAY JANUARY 19TH, 2026

6:30 PM

**Arlington Town Hall
730 Massachusetts Ave**

Music by:
Peoples Baptist Church
Male Chorus
Marcia Scott , Director

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Town Manager Jim Feeney Updates League at Holiday Party

By Kim Haase

Jim Feeney, Arlington's Town Manager, demonstrated both his love of Arlington and his knowledge and experience of the Town to a gathering of about 15 League members and friends at our annual holiday party December 11. Many thanks to Pamela and Steve Meister for their hospitality and to those who brought food to the delicious potluck dinner.

Jim began with a brief account of his experience. He grew up in Billerica and attended Arlington Catholic High School, so "the 350 was my school bus." Earning bachelor's and master's degrees from Boston University, he started a part-time job with the Board of Health in 2009 as his first job after college and has spent his whole career in Arlington, going full time in 2011. He became Assistant Town Manager in 2016 under Adam Chapdelaine, and he gained insight into many Town departments and into employee concerns by filling in as interim director when various positions became vacant. He was appointed Town Manager in August 2023.

Jim then answered questions from attendees. On the timeline for getting rid of lead water pipes, he said that all but 3 known ones have been replaced; the deadline is a few years away. They have so far identified over 1,000 water services that were in the "unknown" inventory.

About his most frequently asked questions, Jim said that currently the override comes up most; it will be on the ballot for the Town Election March 28. Before that, trash and recycling were the top concern because of the transition to a new vendor in midyear and the ongoing change to an automated containerized pickup scheme, which takes a while to get used to (bins have to be 3 feet apart, for example). He regretted the poor service in the months before the vendor switch; once Republic lost the contract, they let things slide.

Jim answered several more questions about trash and recycling. There will always be a fee for disposing of bulky items, on a graduated scale. Snow will be another learning curve for the vendor. The new trucks are still coming in. We have a very low recycling contamination rate (between 2% and 3.8%). The most common contaminants are plastic bags and scrap metal. It's more expensive to recycle than to dispose of trash, per ton, because sorting is labor-intensive, and the resale value of recycled material keeps going down. Glass isn't recycled; it's pulverized. But we have to recycle.

We currently have 2 electric schoolbuses and would like to replace the diesel ones, but our recharging capacity is limited. The buses are recharged at the Ottoson; we might be able to get one more into the rotation. Smaller vans can be more easily recharged at Town buildings. The Tree Warden has an electric truck for watering trees. All parking enforcement vans are electric, and an electric Council on Aging van is coming. All-electric vehicles are more efficient than hybrid ones for us. All our buildings support Level 2 recharging (4 hours); we don't support level 3 (half-hour). Plow trucks are still diesel; electric ones would need very fast charging. For the past few years we've had federal grant support for electric vehicle purchases, but the outlook for this is not good.

The Town is thinking of expanding parking meters to the Heights and East Arlington, because a parking benefit district like the one in the Center would support infrastructure improvements there. Multi-space meters are cheaper and easier to maintain than individual meters. Businesses like the meters because they encourage turnover.

Continued on page 7



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Holiday Party (Continued)

Progress continues on the Town Hall roof and bell tower. The flat roof has been repaired and restored. They've chosen a project manager consultant for restoring the entire Town Hall envelope. They are putting in a CPA application for funding the planning cycle (in the historic preservation category). They have a digital model of the old tower and have saved sample components for restoration: terra cotta, limestone, and cast stone (concrete). They have to weigh cost and durability for replacement components, including the slate roof and the windows. It would be very costly to complete the restoration of Town Hall, and CPA funds are limited each year. Four towns have borrowed against future CPA funding for town hall restoration projects, and we are thinking of doing the same. Buying land to preserve for open space is also too expensive for a one-year CPA grant, and we might think of using borrowing for that as well.

Richard Duffy, a fount of information about Arlington history, commented that it's not necessary to use the original materials for restoration as long as the appearance is preserved. Terra cotta was used for the original building because it was the latest thing at the time. (Our Town Hall, he noted, is a Colonial Revival building, modeled on New York's City Hall.)

Jim then mentioned some other work the Town had done recently. He was happy about the construction of the Foot of the Rocks memorial pocket park, crediting Al Tosti and George Parsons of the Arlington Historical Society. He would like to see more work in Arlington Heights, which lacks gathering spaces; parking meters would allow more improvements. They have recently removed lead paint from the depot building at the bus terminus, which might lead to finding a use for it.

The Town recently got a grant to design improvements to the Minuteman Bike Path by Ryder Street and the Burns Arena, which should make it safer. The planned brewery on Ryder Street will create more of a need for this work. We have a traffic counter on the bike path now, which will provide information to better integrate the bike path with the community.

Jim is proud of the Arlington Civic Academy, which now meets in the new High School and Public Works buildings as well as Town Hall.

The next big priority for the Town will be the Ottoson Middle School. The Massachusetts School Building Authority will make us consider all the possibilities for rebuilding the school, such as making it a grade 6-8 facility again. Predicting enrollment is hard; we thought it was trailing off, but we have 150 more kindergarteners this year than we expected.

Asked about the many teardowns that result in small houses being replaced by very large ones, Jim noted that there are requirements on setbacks and open space; the lot size limits what can be built. Some of the large new homes provide space for multigenerational families.

A question about the demolition of the block at Mass. Ave. and Lake Street that once contained Flora led Jim to observe that this property is owned by the same developer who previously built 882 Mass. Ave. (at Lockeland, near Stop & Shop) and is currently working on the building at the corner of Mass. Ave. and Medford Street. Richard Duffy commented that the Flora building was not historically significant, in spite of its appeal; it was an ordinary retail space that a bank improved many years ago.

Carolyn Parsons concluded by thanking Jim Feeney for coming and providing so much helpful information, and for his service to the town. She also thanked the Meisters for their hospitality.



Town Manager Jim Feeney with Richard Duffy at the LWVA Holiday Party.

Photo by Stephanie Ford

League of Women Voters Education Fund Receives \$1 Million Grant for Youth Civic Education and Engagement

From the National League

The League of Women Voters Education Fund announced in November that it has been awarded a \$1 million philanthropic grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York to expand youth civic education and engagement programs nationwide. This investment comes at a pivotal time as the League works to strengthen civic learning partnerships and build a new generation of informed and active participants in democracy.

"Young people hold the key to the future of our democracy," said Celina Stewart, CEO of the League of Women Voters of the United States. "This grant allows us to expand our reach, equip youth with the knowledge and tools they need to lead, and ensure that every young person understands the power of their voice and their vote. We are deeply grateful to Carnegie Corporation of New York for recognizing the urgency and importance of this work."

2026 Ballot Question Reminder

From the State League

LWVMA will issue positions on the November 2026 Ballot Questions in early 2026, after the initial signature threshold deadline of December 3.

Members are welcome to take action as individuals until then. Local Leagues may not take action as a League, including but not limited to, endorsements, outreach, or other forms of volunteerism, until the LWVMA board has determined positions on the ballot questions.

The exception to this timeline is the ballot question to repeal the recently-passed gun law, which is already on the ballot. LWVMA will participate in the Vote Yes for a Safe Massachusetts campaign (<https://www.yesforasafema.com/>) to defeat the Massachusetts Firearm Regulations Referendum (2026).

This is a veto referendum that will be on the November 2026 ballot to repeal An Act Modernizing Firearms Laws; Chapter 135 of MA General Laws. LWVMA supported the passage of this law during the previous legislative session. A YES vote upholds the law as is. A NO vote repeals the law. Learn more and take action via the campaign website.

LWVMA is a member of the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence (<https://www.mapreventgunviolence.org/>), a 100+ member organization working to eradicate all forms of gun violence from the Commonwealth.

Membership Dues Information

By Ann FitzGerald

LWVA members no longer receive written reminders of dues renewals on April 1. The League of Women Voters of the US (<https://www.lwv.org/>) should now send out a reminder to you. Dues are divided between the national, state, and local leagues.

You should have received a notice to register at the LWVUS portal. if you didn't receive it, you can go to the portal and register yourself. Go to <https://www.lwv.org/> and click Member Log In. Your name was sent to LWVUS for renewal purposes and is listed on the membership roster. The site is secure and has a verification process.

The LWVUS portal requests dues of \$75, but you can contribute any amount over \$20.

If you prefer to renew by check, you will be a member of the LWVA only, not the state or national League. Make out a check for \$60 to "League of Women Voters of Arlington" and send it to me:

Ann FitzGerald
162 Summer St Apt 1
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Call me at 781-646-9711 or email annfitz@rcn.com if you have questions.

January 2026

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