

Minutes
League of Women Voters of Thurston County Board-Held via Zoom
October 11, 2021, 4:00pm-6:00pm

Present: Laurie Craig, Susan Fiksdal, Julie Frick, Carol Goss, Shelley Kneip, Kelsey Monaco, Shari Silverman, Karen Tvedt, Kathy Varney, Leslie Williamson, Tony Wilson, and Nathaniel Jones.

Call to Order and Welcome: Karen called the meeting to order at 4:00pm, acknowledging Indigenous Peoples' Day and reading an excerpt from President Biden's proclamation on this topic.

September 8 Board Meeting Minutes and September 30 Financial Report: Kathy moved and Laurie seconded the approval of the consent agenda including both reports. The motion passed. Leslie noted that the form that goes to new members doesn't ask about accounting skills...Carol Goss indicated that this skill is now noted on the form. Leslie was nominated as "Treasurer for Life", but after light-hearted discussion, the Board took the matter under advisement.

Presentation on Interfaith Works: Karen introduced Meg Martin, Executive Director of Interfaith Works, who provided an overview of the work of the organization and information about affiliate memberships. She has been involved with supporting Olympia's most vulnerable homeless people for many years, including the long-standing, church-supported women's shelter.

Interfaith Works is a non-profit, social justice coalition made up of over 30 diverse faith and spiritual traditions that has been active in Olympia for more than 25 years. The organization is focused on inter-faith collaboration and the coordinated provision of homeless services. Some inter-faith activities include collaborating with the County Coroner's office for recognition of unclaimed human remains and honoring the lives of those who died while experiencing homelessness or through suicide, reclaiming the peace at sites where violent acts have occurred, connecting community members through on-line presentations, special events, and more.

The coalition brings the human and financial resources of faith communities together with business and government agencies to benefit those experiencing homelessness. They offer a continuum of services from outreach and advocacy to direct service provision at shelters or permanent supportive housing. Interfaith Works will not discriminate based on ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, race, physical ability, religion or religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to take part in a religious practice.

Interfaith Works will provide support services for people at a new day center and hygiene facility at 3434 Martin Way, using a modular building and repurposed shipping containers.

They will also operate the new Unity Commons facility at 2828 Martin Way, in Olympia, known as Unity Commons. This is a 5-story, newly constructed, affordable rental building that includes 65 permanent supportive housing units for people leaving homelessness, situated above a 60-bed enhanced shelter on the ground floor. Construction of the facility is on track for completion in December of this year.

Interfaith Works will not be the property owner/manager at Unity Commons. They are partnering with the Low Income Housing Institute for this aspect of the program.

The organization's philosophy is to take people as they are and help meet their basic needs, with commitment to the idea that once stabilized, people can more readily address other life needs.

Interfaith Works includes other non-profits which are not faith-based but which support the vision and purpose of Interfaith Works. These organizations have chosen to be "affiliate members". Much like ex officio members in other settings, affiliate member organizations have full participation, except they do not vote in policy decisions or elect Board members. They have not fiduciary or legal exposure. (See attachment for more discussion of affiliate membership.)

Interfaith Works' funding is derived, 60% from public sources and 40% from private contributions, including foundations. Affiliate member organizations are expected to contribute to Interfaith Works but this need not be a financial contribution. Donated services and coordinated work can be considered a valuable contribution.

If LWVTC were to become an affiliate member we can expect mutual support through shared networking, such as co-sponsoring candidate forums. Interfaith Works seeks social inclusion for its clients. The League is adept at civic education and Voters' Services and can provide a needed link between marginalized community members and the larger Thurston community.

In response to questions Ms. Martin affirmed that an effective response to community homelessness requires a multi-faceted strategy that extends beyond shelters and supportive housing. She discussed the importance of "rapid rehousing", which is a quick-response intervention to get people stabilized when they begin to fall into homelessness.

Board members agreed that Interfaith Works is doing important work in the community and that the topic of affiliate membership will be discussed at the November Board meeting.

Club Express: Tony shared a tour of the draft LWVTC website, including navigation from the home page to various features. To show the capability of the tool, Tony showed examples from the Snohomish League's site, which is fully populated and open for business.

There is the possibility of including an "accessibility toolkit" for visually impaired or otherwise disabled users of the site. This feature is available for an additional annual subscription of approximately \$440. Karen asked for more information about the experience of other Leagues who have included this add-on.

There was discussion regarding the posting of personal email addresses or other board member contact information on the new site. No decisions were made but members spoke in favor of anonymized emails that use an organizational email contact. There was agreement that more research is needed to optimize this function.

Kathy reported that she has recruited an experienced web designer, Miriam Hewitt, who will help with page templates and other design aspects of the Club Express site. Board members thanked Kathy and

agreed to provide a membership scholarship for Ms. Hewitt in response to her volunteer work.

The League Does Not Support Candidates nor Political Parties: Karen asked members of the board to keep in mind that the League must not be viewed as promoting a particular candidate or political party. She acknowledged that we are in election season and it is easy to get caught-up in the moment.

Karen reported that there have been a couple of articles/emails that include candidate endorsements along with publicity about our candidate forums, which could be confusing to the public – making it even more important to protect against any perceived League bias.

Further discussion included a reminder that if someone represents themselves as a member of the League, their article or statement needs to have received prior clearance from the Board or should include a specific statement that writer is expressing themselves as an individual.

Up-coming Meetings and Actions: Karen asked for a check-in on plans for both the October 13 membership meeting and the November 4 forum. Kathy expressed the need for improved planning for internal and external communications about these and other League events. Our current procedures are okay but we can make improvements through a more intentional and organized approach. Karen noted communications with The Olympian requesting that they include an insert in The Olympian, Your Vote, produced by the state League and The Spokesman-Review.

Carol discussed our connections with the Mason and Lewis Leagues and asked if we would like to invite them to our upcoming activities. The consensus of members recognized the reciprocal value of staying connected with these Leagues. Susan and Julie have been coordinating with some members of these other Leagues and have seen benefits from collaborating. Our communications planning efforts can consider how best to invite participation from these members.

Karen recognized that we agreed to have a members' holiday party in December and asked for volunteers to help create the event. Julie, Laurie, Shelly, Kathy, and Karen will help plan the event.

Julie reported on the TC Media grant application to the Nisqually Tribe's Thurston Community Grant program. The \$10,000-12,000 request will advance civic engagement and civil discourse through at least three video productions and the distribution of 300 civics textbooks in elementary school classrooms.

TC Media would be the prime applicant and grant recipient. They would focus on the technical production of the video events. LWVTC would be responsible for the content of these productions and would work with schools and teachers for the textbook project.

The Board decided to place two items on the November agenda for future discussion. The first is a future follow-up to the October 13 and November 4th meetings on aspects of civics engagement. The second is proposed legislation concerning creation of a public bank. The state League supports legislation to create a public bank and the Tacoma-Pierce League is interested in partnering with us if we decide to do a forum on this topic.

Committee Reports:

- The theme of the upcoming “Voter” is tribal relations. The deadline for submissions is October 23. There is adequate material for a full publication; however, the committee is always looking for new articles including recommendations for the “Thank You, Thank You, Thank You” feature.
- Voter Services coordinated an excellent Youth Forum by collaborating with the Capitol High Debate Club. Susan and Brian Hovis contributed to this effort. Seven students prepared speeches and these were recorded on last week. Their work will be posted on the website on October 16. The committee is hoping to activate the site with these speeches and the interaction that they can generate.

Two students are looking for ways to help the League further connect with youth. A 16 year-old wants to register students to vote. The Board discussed ways to support this work, including waiving the \$10 student membership fee. A 13 year-old wants to prepare and deliver a persuasive speech about youth involvement. Board members suggested an associate membership for the younger student because the student member designation is age-limited.

Brainstorming by members included involving students in DEIS&J activities and students using our text books to teach younger kids about civics. Carol volunteered to sponsor student memberships.

- Loretta Seppanen provided an update from the League’s Ad Hoc Committee on Thurston County’s Community-Driven Review of Agriculture Policies and Programs. The County’s review is prompted by the on-going loss of local farmland, which is estimated to be more than 3,000 acres per year. The County has adopted a policy of no net loss.

Over the next year, County staff are expected to bring forward various proposals to help support agricultural activities. These pending proposals will proceed through the normal process of hearings and review. At least three proposals are expected, including:

- the geographical expansion of existing tax benefits for land in Ag production,
- improvements to the existing “transfer of development rights” program, and
- the potential “down-zoning” of privately held lands, which would restrict more intense uses, in favor of Ag uses.

When these proposals are brought forward, there will be a short window for public comment. This is a “heads-up” that proposed changes are coming and will need prompt League involvement. The Ad Hoc committee expects to draft a letter for Board action in response to each proposal.

Board members asked for a “position statement” for each draft letter, providing the background and implications of the proposal, how the draft letter relates to LWVWA positions on agriculture, and how it diverges from the County proposal. They also suggested that the Board’s review needn’t be tied to the formal Board meeting calendar. The Ad Hoc committee will consider other position statements that have been used to keep the Board engaged.

- Carol reported that the Tribal Rights Update Committee is looking at the Land Acknowledgement statement that we have been using to preface our larger meetings. She asked that Board

members review a proposed statement and provide comments. There was healthy discussion on this topic.

Board members had comments about both tone and content. Some concerns related to:

- communicating with a diverse audience and still telling the truth about past atrocities,
- recognizing our agency to move forward responsibly while also recognizing the past,
- acknowledging that there is much to be done to heal wounds yet we are not starting from zero, and
- recognizing that indigenous community members are active and present in Thurston County—they did not go away.

Members expressed strongly held opinions and a desire work together on this issue. And they agreed that the land acknowledgement consideration will be on our November agenda.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:12 pm.

Attachment



SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE
THROUGH INTERFAITH
UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION

Affiliate Organization Membership Application Packet

Last Updated: October, 2021

Interfaith Works (IW)

Established in 1974, IW has a legacy of promoting interfaith understanding and collaboration through social justice, community, and educational endeavors. We create and support the intersection between the values of the world’s wisdom traditions and the public square through diverse programming and ongoing nurturing of relationships across and between faiths. Our Interfaith Relations program convenes a coalition of member faith communities who come together to promote and support social justice and peace through deepening interfaith understanding and cooperation. Our Homeless Services Program offers a continuum of support, including outreach and advocacy, 24/7 shelters, daytime respite, service connection, and permanent supportive housing. We prioritize those who are over 50 years old, BIPOC, LGBTQI2A+, living with chronic health conditions, and have a disability and/or mental health/substance use challenges. Our work is rooted in empowerment, social inclusion, and community education to end the stigmatization of the most vulnerable.

MISSION

Social justice and peace through interfaith understanding and cooperation.

VISION

Interfaith Works promotes interfaith understanding and serves the community through charitable, social and educational endeavors.

VALUES

Dignity: We recognize that there is inherent worthiness of all persons regardless of circumstance.

Equity: We recognize the legacy of social, political, and class disparity that expresses itself as

office@interfaith-works.org PO Box 1221, Olympia, WA 98507 (360) 357-7224

racism and commit ourselves to work that promotes the dismantling of racism and all systems of discrimination and oppression.

Interdependence: We recognize and honor the interconnectedness of all life and our responsibility to care for the planet and all persons regardless of circumstances.

Inclusivity: We welcome, all are listened to, our table always has a seat. We embrace a shared obligation to one another and recognize that inclusivity does not always equal harmony. We are committed to lifelong learning, interrogation of oppression in all forms, and continuous self and community healing.

Compassion: We are committed to sitting with the suffering of our community and within ourselves. We see it, believe it, feel it, and take action for the betterment of us all.

Integrity: Commitment to seeking the highest ethical standards in all we do, rooted in justice to build a safer community for all.

Transparency: Openness, honesty, and accessible communication in all organizational decisions. Commitment to fostering a culture of feedback, education, and accountability working throughout all levels of our structure.

Interfaith Works does not promote, advance, or engage in religious messaging or recruitment with any of our services. Interfaith Works will not discriminate on the basis of ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, race, physical ability, religion or religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to actively participate in a religious practice.

Affiliate organizations are nonprofit organizations or associations that support the vision and purpose of Interfaith Works. Affiliate members are non-voting members as defined in the Interfaith Works bylaws. Affiliate Membership is granted by the Board of Directors and is continuous until either Interfaith Works or the affiliate member ends the membership. Affiliate members are expected to make at least one annual donation to Interfaith Works. These donations may be financial, in kind, or service.

Affiliate members may:

1. Recommend projects and activities to Interfaith Works;
2. Participate in any of the projects and activities of Interfaith Works;
3. Nominate and/or be nominated as a candidate for the Board of Directors;

4. Attend monthly Board of Directors meetings, unless the nature of discussion legally or reasonably requires confidentiality;
5. Publicize their community events and programs through Interfaith Works.;
6. Participate in any advisory council meetings and the annual meeting of the membership.

APPLICATION FOR AFFILIATE ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP

Please scan and send completed application to office@interfaith-works.org with the following subject line: "Affiliate Membership Application"

Organization Name _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Email address _____ Website: _____

Contact Person _____

Role within organization _____ Email address _____

Please provide the following information. Attach additional sheets as necessary. Please provide informational material, such as an organizational brochure.

1. Mission, Vision, Values Statement(s):
2. An explanation of the major goals and objectives of your organization and how these are carried out:
3. Reasons for wanting to become an affiliate member of Interfaith Works:

I understand that Interfaith Works affiliate member organizations are expected to support the vision and purpose of Interfaith Works, make an annual contribution to Interfaith Works, and to appoint a delegate who attends and participates in program council meetings. By my signature I agree that we will do so.

Signature of authorized representative: _____

Date: _____