



League of Women Voters Of Weston

December, 2018

No. 205

OPENING MESSAGE

Katty Chace

We held a well-attended coffee hour at the Town Hall on Saturday, December 17 to learn about the plans for upgrading the Town Center and burying the power lines. The audience of about 40 seemed to be supportive of the proposals, although they had several suggestions of how to improve the plans, such as providing safe bike lanes. In the end, of course, the Town Meeting never voted on the two articles, because only one bid for the work had come in previous week, and that one was much higher than anticipated. The Selectmen were divided on how to handle the situation, with Harvey Boshart and Chris Houston wanting to proceed with the vote to get a sense of the level of support among voters, and Doug Gillespie thinking that that the bid was far too high, and they shouldn't be asking voters to approve a proposal without a clearer sense of the ultimate cost. At this point, the Board of Selectmen has agreed to put out another bid request in January, in the hope that more bids will be submitted then, and lower ones, in time for a Special Town Meeting in March. That March date may turn out to be problematic, as at our recent League Board Meeting three of the five of us present said that we will be away for some or all of March. And these are all people who would have supported the proposals.

The Massachusetts League study on referendum questions is moving ahead, with the consensus questions due back to the state in February. Karen Price, a state League Board member, has offered to come to Wayland (whose League, like Weston's, doesn't have its own study committee) to present the information and allow us to register separate responses from the Wayland and Weston Leagues. The date for this event will be Tuesday, January 29th at 6:30 pm at a location in Wayland to be announced. If you would like to participate, let me know, and we can carpool to Wayland together.

We are still hopeful that we will be able to hold a coffee hour in early February with our legislators Mike Barrett and Alice Peisch. January of a new legislative session is always frantically busy, but by February new legislation will have been filed.

Please take this moment to renew your League membership, if you haven't already done so. There's a membership form in the back of this Bulletin.

League of Women Voters of Weston

President..... Katty Chace
781-891-1087

Treasurer..... Tack Chace
781-891-1087

Membership..... Lenore Zug Lobel
781-789-3920

Bulletin Editor Katherine Wolfthal
781-891-9549

This LWV/Weston Newsletter is published monthly except June, July and August. The LWV is a nonpartisan political organization open to all citizens of voting age.

League of Women Voters of Weston
15 Conant Road, Weston MA 02493

VOTER INFORMATION

1-800-882-1649

League of Women Voters
of Massachusetts
133 Portland Street
Boston MA 02114
(617)523-2999

Submit articles
to Katherine Wolfthal by e-mail at
kate@weichi.com

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2018 - JANUARY 2019

December 25, Tuesday.....CHRISTMAS

January 1, 2019, Tuesday.....NEW YEAR'S DAY

January 8, Tuesday.....LWVW Board Meeting
9:15 a.m. All Members Welcome
26 Love Lane, Weston
(Diana Chaplin, 781-893-6288)

January 29, Tuesday.....Consensus Meeting
6:30 p.m. on Referendum Questions
Wayland, Location TBD



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WHEN IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

President

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20510
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>

U.S. Senators

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
(617) 565-3170

317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4543
Contact:

www.warren.senate.gov/?p=email_senator

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
617-565-8519

218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-2742

www.markey.senate.gov/contact.cfm

U.S. Representative 5th District

The Honorable Katherine Clark
1415 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-2836

<http://katherineclark.house.gov/>

Governor

Governor Charlie Baker
Office of the Governor
State House, Room 280
Boston MA 02133
(617)725-4005

<http://www.mass.gov/governor/constituent-services/contact-governor-office/>

State Senator 3rd Middlesex District

The Honorable Michael J. Barrett
(617) 722-1572
State House, Room 213A
Boston MA 02133-1054

E-mail: Mike.Barrett@masenate.gov

State Representative 14th Norfolk District

The Honorable Alice Hanlon Peisch
(617) 722-2070
State House, Room 473G
Boston MA 02133-1054

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Weston Board of Selectmen

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Weston Town Hall, P.O. Box 378
11 Town House Rd.
Weston, MA 02493

E-mail: selectmen@westonmass.org

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

Kathleen Rousseau
Secretary

The December meeting was held at the home of Kathleen Rousseau.

We are very thankful for the work of our new treasurer, Tack Chace. Our bank balance is good.

We discussed the presentation on the Town Center at the Town Meeting. A number of improvements were suggested: a pointer, larger pictures. We feel that many people will be out of town in March when the next Town Meeting may be held.

The LWVM has a study on referendum question procedures. We were asked to go together with Wayland on this study and Katty has agreed to this.

Katty went to the School Committee meeting on Roxbury-Weston bussing. The room was packed, and the committee said they would try to see how to work this out. The schools will no longer use the pre-school as a feeder for Weston Metco because that does not seem fair. There is a long waiting list for the Metco program.

It would be good to have a coffee on 40Bs, particularly the difference between friendly and unfriendly ones. The rules are not well known. It was suggested that we find someone from the state who could explain things.

We discussed our advertisers for the next year. We are very happy to have them.

COUNCIL ON AGING
MIDDLESEX COUNTY D.A. MARIAN RYAN
TALKS ABOUT SCAMS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

Katty Chace

This morning I attended a talk by Middlesex County District Attorney Marian Ryan at the Council on Aging. She was there to warn people about the many scams that are used, especially against elderly people. She said that speaking to groups to warn them is one of her favorite activities, since so much of her job is cleaning up messes (crimes) after they happen, but this way she gets to prevent crimes before they happen. She talked about the simplest scams as being those in which someone knocks on your front door and says, "Hey, I'm doing some work on your neighbor's house, and noticed that you could use some help in shoveling snow off your roof (cutting down dangerous tree branches, repaving your driveway, cleaning your chimney, etc.), and we can give you a good price since we're here anyway". She warned against giving business to people who knock on your door, rather than having been called by you on recommendations from friends or neighbors.

She also talked about phone calls you might get from someone (called Grandma calls), which seem to come from someone claiming to be your grandchild (in trouble), asking you to send money to pay his/her bail after being arrested for a crime he/she didn't commit. Even worse are the calls from someone who demands money in order to make sure that your grandchild (whose name he knows) will arrive safely at an event you know your grandchild is planning to attend in the near future.

There are also phone calls claiming to be from the Social Security office, saying they're about to send



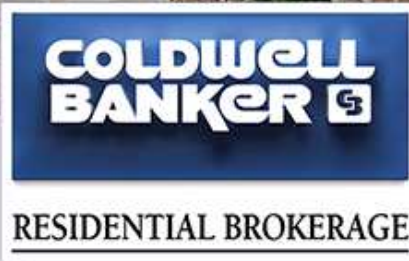
out your new Social Security card, and asking you to confirm your number by stating it to them. As Ryan says, " If they don't know your number, we're already in trouble, and they would never conduct such business over the phone".

In general, Ryan warned against mentioning private information in public places (such as your charge card number) over the cell phone, or chatting too freely in any public place (such as a doctor's waiting room) about your personal information, such as grandchildren's names, colleges, place of residence, to a friendly stranger.

Evidently, some scammers tell their victims to go to the nearby Walgreen's (or such) to get gift cards to send them to ward off bad results (like getting your heat turned off or getting arrested for not having shown up for jury duty of which you don't even remember getting notified). She had horror stories of people getting scammed for as much as \$140,000 in schemes such as these.

Ryan recommended reporting scams to the local police, whether or not you actually fell for them. Especially those with a threatening tone, like the woman who gave two men the go-ahead to do some tree work in yard without agreeing beforehand on a price, and then, when they had done the work and asked for an outrageous payment, found herself standing in her kitchen with two large men, one of whom was holding a chainsaw. She called the police, who managed to stop payment on her check at her local bank.

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COUNCIL ON AGING
LOCAL AND GLOBAL DISCUSSION GROUP
TO FOCUS ON “THE WANING (OR NOT) OF PAX AMERICANA”

Susan Wagner

“**T**he Waning (or Not) of Pax Americana” will be the focus of the next meeting of the Local and Global Discussion Group of the Weston Council on Aging.

Just what IS Pax Americana? Is Pax Americana over or not? Does the United States have a grand strategy informing foreign policy today? What will the international order look like if the United States steps back from a global leadership role? Under what circumstances, if any, is U.S. military intervention advisable? Nationalist and populist policies have been on the rise not only in the United States, but around the globe; how will this shift affect the international flow of people, goods, services, and capital? Will the world look back at

this time as an inflection point in America’s world leadership or a major turning point in getting other countries to step up to their responsibilities? These and other related questions will be discussed.

The meeting will be held on Thursday, January 10 from 1:15 to 3:15 pm at the Weston Council on Aging. It is free and open to anyone interested in an informed and civil discussion of the issues, with an emphasis on broad participation around the table.

For further information on the group in general or this meeting in particular, contact Paul Sullivan at paulrsullivan@yahoo.com or 781-893-5005 or Susan Wagner at susanwgnr@gmail.com or 508-733-8810.



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At our Annual Meeting Last May, Jim Henderson of Voter Choice Massachusetts spoke about ranked-choice voting to the Weston LWV. There has been great interest in ranked-choice voting reform after the state of Maine enacted it statewide last November to give voters more power, better accommodate newcomer candidates, and challenge the status quo.

The December 9 issue of the Boston Globe Magazine published the following article, which we reprint here.

Eric Maskin is a Nobel-Prize-winning economist at Harvard University and a member of the advisory board of Voter Choice Massachusetts, a proponent of ranked-choice voting.

FIVE REASONS RANKED-CHOICE VOTING WILL IMPROVE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

by Eric Maskin, reprinted from the Boston Globe

Now that Maine has become the first state in the nation to use [ranked-choice voting for congressional elections](#), what's next? Will we see this voting method gather more steam? Or will the status quo win out? Already, cities such as Memphis, Amherst, and Las Cruces, New Mexico, are planning to change their municipal elections to let voters rank candidates, following big cities such as San Francisco and Minneapolis, and smaller ones such as Cambridge and Telluride, Colorado. I am involved in an effort to get Massachusetts to follow Maine's lead at the state level.

There are good reasons for the growing interest in ranked-choice voting. Under the plurality rule voting system predominant in the United States, each citizen votes for a single candidate, and the candidate with the most votes wins, even if far short of a majority. Thus, this year in Massachusetts, Lori Trahan won the Democratic primary in the Third District despite getting [only 22 percent of the vote](#). Back in 2016, Donald Trump won the Republican primary in Arkansas with only 33 percent of the vote; two-thirds of Republicans preferred someone else. In fact, at least one poll at the time found Trump would have lost to [either Marco Rubio or Ted Cruz](#) in a one-on-one contest. Instead, they split the anti-Trump vote, handing him victory.

A [ranked-choice voting system remedies](#) these flaws by allowing a voter to rank candidates in order of preference. If a candidate gets a majority of the first-place votes, she is elected. Otherwise, the candidate ranked first by the fewest voters is dropped, with that person's ballots going to the second-place choices of her voters. The process repeats until a majority winner emerges — no candidate can win with a mere third of the vote. Moreover, the danger of vote splitting is greatly reduced.

Any proposal for major political change evokes skepticism and fear. Here are five common objections to ranked-choice voting I'd like to debunk:

1. Ranking does not mean more work for voters.

Critics say this approach demands more than usual of voters. It needn't — a voter can rank just a single candidate, with the other candidates treated as tied for second place. Indeed, it might make voting easier in some cases. In our Arkansas example, anti-Trump voters had to guess whether backing Rubio or Cruz was the surer way of stopping Trump — and ended up miscoordinating. In a ranked-choice system, they would just rank Trump below Rubio and Cruz, and one of those two would win.

2. Voters will not be confused by the ranking system.

While ranking systems are a little complicated to explain, studies so far suggest voters have had little difficulty comprehending them. A 2009 survey in Minneapolis found that 95 percent of voters there thought the system was easy to understand. In the most extensive study to date, David Kimball, a political scientist at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, finds that places using ranked-choice systems [see higher voter turnout](#) than under the primary and runoff systems they replaced.

3. It does not throw the door open for unintended winners.

Ranked-choice voting could result in electing a candidate ranked first by a small minority of voters. But this already happens under plurality rule, and probably more often than you might expect, as we saw in our Massachusetts and Arkansas primary examples. Ranking will not spark a huge jump in these incidents.

4. It will not overwhelm us with fringe candidates.

Ranked-choice voting does give third-party candidates greater incentive to run. But that doesn't mean it will consign us to the unruly world of European-style parliamentary republics. Michael Bloomberg, a centrist, has said he did not run as an independent in the 2016 presidential election because he would have split the center vote with Hillary Clinton, guaranteeing Trump's election. Under a ranked-choice system, his candidacy would not have helped Trump; indeed, as a compromise between two poles, he might even have won. But only third-party candidates near the center, like Bloomberg, have much chance of capturing majority support and winning under ranked choice. Rather than fringe candidates, ranked-choice

voting promotes moderate independents — perhaps not such a bad outcome in a polarized society.

5. It could work for presidential elections, with one big change.

Ranked-choice voting reduces vote splitting within a state. But because of the Electoral College, the problem reemerges across states for presidential races. If ranked choice had been used in 2016, bringing Bloomberg into the race, he and Clinton might have split enough of the electoral vote so no one would have gotten the 270 votes needed for election. Thus, until the [Electoral College is abolished](#) (the [National Popular Vote Interstate Compact](#) is the best current prospect for that), introducing ranked-choice voting for presidential general elections is probably a mistake. Of course, this problem does not arise in congressional elections (and the approach has worked well for decades in Australian and Irish parliamentary elections).

Ranked-choice voting is not an ideal election system (a famous discovery in election theory — the [Arrow impossibility theorem](#) — establishes that there is no such system). It is not even the best possible system — Partha Dasgupta and I have [published a paper showing mathematically](#) that that distinction belongs to a system called Condorcet voting. But by seeking a majority, ranked-choice voting better reflects voter preferences — it is more democratic — than the method currently used in Massachusetts and 48 other states. That's why I want to see our state adopt it.

Related:

[Could Maine's new ranked-choice voting change American elections?](#)

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According to Wikipedia*, the word "biochar" is a combination of "bio-" as in "biomass" and "char" as in "charcoal". It has been used in scientific literature of the 20th and 21st century.

Biochar is [charcoal](#) used as a [soil amendment](#). Biochar is a stable solid, rich in [carbon](#), and can endure in soil for thousands of years. Biochar is under investigation as an approach to [carbon sequestration](#)** , as it has the potential to help mitigate [climate change](#). Independently, biochar can increase [soil fertility](#) of [acidic soils](#), increase agricultural productivity, and provide protection against some foliar and soil-borne diseases.

Pre-Columbian Amazonians are believed to have used biochar to enhance soil productivity. They seem to have produced it by smoldering agricultural waste (i.e., covering burning biomass with soil) in pits or trenches.

*For the complete Wikipedia page and source footnotes, visit: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biochar>

** Carbon sequestration: the long-term storage of carbon in plants, soils, geologic formations, and the ocean.

A LITTLE BIOCHAR GOES A LONG WAY

by Pat White

Pat White has a full time job working for a web design company. His passion is educating the public to the merits of biochar. About a year ago he started a little side business called Kalanso, which is a small company that sells biochar.

Biochar is currently revolutionizing the agriculture world. This naturally-occurring charcoal that can be added to the soil, and the oldest form of carbon sequestration you may have heard about, is captivating scientists, farmers and gardeners from across the planet.

Here are eight field-tested qualities of biochar that can help explain its usefulness:

1) It keeps greenhouse gases in the ground.

Carbon, a greenhouse gas, naturally cycles from the air, through plants into the ground, and back into the air again. Biochar, however, doesn't cycle the same way other carbons do. Instead, it stays in the ground for up to thousands of years before returning to the atmosphere.

2) It boosts the garden's yield.

Astarte Farms in Hadley, Massachusetts found that biochar increased their tomato yield by 75% during a drought year in 2015.

3) It's water efficient.

Biochar holds onto 25% more water than typical soil.

4) It prevents leaching and agricultural runoff.

Biochar binds with nutrients in the soil and prevents them from leaching into and contaminating the groundwater.

5) It helps save on fertilizer.

Plants only take up the nutrients they need. The rest usually leach out of the soil into the groundwater. However, in biochar-amended soils, excess nutrients remain in the soil ready to be used by plants when needed.

6) The microorganisms in your soil love it.

Biochar is microporous, just like a sponge. All these pores are the perfect places for beneficial soil microorganisms to thrive. They're a vital part of what's called the "Soil Food Web."

7) It doesn't take much - just a handful will do.

Biochar has an enormous amount of surface area, which helps it retain water and nutrients. One gram has the surface area of a football field. That means you typically don't need much to have a big impact on your garden.

8) It lasts a lifetime.

We know biochar lasts *at least* a lifetime because its first reported use dates back to ancient Amazonian civilizations. Researchers found the

soil in these ancient civilizations to have man-made amounts of carbon, which was found to be over 2000 years [old].


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League of Women Voters of Weston

MEMBERSHIP FORM 2018-2019

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan, political organization, which encourages informed and active participation in all levels of government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. We serve the local community in many ways:

- Sponsor Candidates and Issues nights before elections
- Provide voter information and conduct voter-registration drives
- Encourage voter participation with banners and rides to the polls
- Study local, state and national issues and hold open meetings
- Act upon carefully considered positions by lobbying and circulating petitions
- Publish a "Know Your Town" booklet
- Train members to be active and involved citizens.

Our membership year runs from July 1 to June 30. As a Weston member, you also belong to and receive publications from the State and National Leagues.

Name _____ Date _____ Address _____
_____ Phone _____
Email _____ Check one: Renewal New Member

I enclose a check made payable to **The League of Women Voters of Weston*** for:

- \$60 Individual Membership (covers required local dues to the State and National Leagues)
- \$85 Family Membership (two individuals in the same household) Name of second household member: _____

Any contributions above and beyond regular dues are greatly appreciated and assist our local league in providing more services and offsetting our operating expenses.

\$ _____ TOTAL ENCLOSED

\$ _____ LWV Education Fund (Tax-deductible contribution made payable by separate check to the LWV Education Fund)

Return form to: Katty Chace, 15 Conant Rd., Weston, MA 02493

Do you know a friend who might be interested in joining the League of Women Voters?

Name, address & phone _____

* It is the policy of the LWV of Weston that no resident shall be refused participation in the League because of inability to pay. If a hardship preventing payment of dues exists, please contact Katty Chace at 781-790-1087.