

# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF AMHERST 75TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM

Welcome	Katherine Vorwerk Feldman, Co-President
Recognition of 50-year Members and Past Presidents	Cynthia Brubaker, Co-President
Greetings	Marilyn Peterson, Co-President League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
Presentations	James McGovern, U.S. Representative Stan Rosenberg, State Senator Ellen Story, State Representative Alisa Brewer, Amherst Select Board
Award Recipient Amherst-Pelham Regional High School	Grace Findlen-Golden
Reflections on the League from Three Generations of Past Presidents	Rhoda Honigberg Nancy Eddy Rebecca Fricke
Concluding Remarks	Cynthia Brubaker, Co-President

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75th Anniversary Committee  
Janice Ratner, Chair, Cynthia Brubaker, Katherine Vorwerk Feldman, Phyllis Lehrer,  
Maija Lillya, Kathleen Woods Masalski, Deanna Pearlstein,  
Adrienne Terrizzi

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## AN INTERVIEW WITH LUCY WILSON BENSON, January 13, 2014

Lucy Wilson came to western Massachusetts from New York City to attend Northfield Academy and was destined to remain here to the present day. She moved to Amherst in 1950, the year after she graduated from Smith College. She married Bruce Benson who was professor of physics at Amherst College from 1946 to 1990. From the beginning, the League of Women Voters played a major role in her life and helped her make an impact on her town, state, and nation. Over the years she served as local, state, and national League president. "I learned a lot about how government works, about working with people, and about working with people to get things done," she said about her membership in the League.

At the town level, she was a member of Town Meeting for seventeen years and the Finance Committee, and was Chair of the Board of Amherst Cinema. When she was local League president (1957-58 and 1959-61), Lucy said that the town manager form of government was under siege. Having a manager system "requires people with ability - the ability to learn, the ability to do things, to work with other people. It's professional without making it inhumane; you keep the human element."

In 1961 Lucy was elected President of the Massachusetts League. She served until 1965. Her experience in the League led to an appointment as Massachusetts Secretary of Human Services in 1974-77. She ascribes much of her success in this and subsequent government positions to the knowledge and training she acquired in the League. "It was incalculable," she said.

One of the many achievements of her tenure as President of the National League of Women Voters from 1968 to 1974 was the admission of men to full membership. Bruce Benson became the first male member to sign up. "I had his check with me at the national convention," Lucy said.

Lucy's tenure as national League president put her abilities into the national political spotlight, which led President Carter to appoint her as Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, 1977-80. Again she credits the League for her ability to adapt to new situations. "You're never finished learning with the League. There are new issues, new problems. It's wonderful to solve problems with people. People cooperate who have mutual interests," she said. She subsequently served on several corporate boards, had a consulting firm for business and government, and was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, among others. She's also the recipient of many honorary degrees and other awards.

Lucy Wilson Benson's papers have been donated to the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe. In the meantime, Lucy Wilson Benson remains our own Amherst treasure.

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF AMHERST

### SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OF ACTION

Seventy-five years ago, on March 21, 1939, Mrs. Gail Kennedy organized a meeting to establish the League of Women Voters of Amherst. The founders included five Amherst residents who belonged to the Northampton League and twenty members of an Amherst reading club. The latter group had just read Gunther's *Inside Europe* and wanted to continue studying world affairs.

During the next seven and a half decades the Amherst League has studied and taken action on a wide range of national, state, and local issues. It has also provided voter information, registered voters, and worked on special projects. This brief history concentrates on local study and action. Of the many issues that have engaged the Amherst League, schools, planning, and town government have appeared on the agenda almost continuously over the years. In the past quarter century the issues of campaign financing and health care have emerged as major topics.

A brief review of the growth and change in Amherst over the past 75 years may be useful as background for the history of the League's involvement in town affairs. In 1939, the town's off-campus population was 6400. According to T. Greene in *Essays on Amherst History* (1978), the town was much the same in 1939 as it had been at the turn of the century. "Residents outnumbered the student population by almost three to one, and ... the 1450 cattle in town outnumbered the 210 faculty." In 1939 the town population was 6473 and in 2010 the Amherst census stood at 37,819. The University grew from 1700 students in 1939 to 6500 in 1960, 21,000 in 1970, and over 28,000 in 2012. Amherst College now has 1817 students, and Hampshire College, 1400.

In Amherst and throughout the area, the baby boom generation caused school enrollments to bulge in the 1960s. In the 1980s, this same age group, now adults, caused a rapid increase in the number of households across the region and a secondary boom in school enrollments. By 2013 the public school enrollment declined and the Marks Meadow Elementary School was closed. There were 9700 dwelling units in Amherst according to the 2010 census. Of those 4350 were owner occupied.

#### 1939 - 1949

The League began with 27 members who paid annual dues of \$1.50. The first officers were Mrs. Gail Kennedy, President, Mrs. L.B. Packard, Secretary, and Mrs. Harold Elder, Treasurer. The group studied civil liberties, taxation, foreign policy, flood control in the Connecticut River Valley and the local school system. It met each month at the President's home and held public meetings in the Jones Library.

An article in the October 1, 1969 Amherst Record described the early days of the League as follows: “One of the first issues to involve these ladies and create a public stir was a lunchroom crisis... Mrs. Colby and others are reputed to have visited school lunch rooms where they employed a stop watch to prove that children had an inadequate lunch period. The town quickly remedied the situation.”

Discrimination against married women teachers became the focus of another early local action campaign. In 1940, after the superintendent of the Amherst schools had fired five such teachers, the League formally protested against the policy of barring married women from teaching positions. An article published in the May 9, 1940 Springfield Daily Republican was headlined “MARRIED TEACHER BAN CRITICIZED BY LEAGUE; Women Voters feel school board should go slow in blanket move.” The article says that the League issued a statement opposing the blanket indictment of married women as teachers in the Amherst schools. “There is no special lack of effectiveness that is present among married teachers as a group that would not be present among unmarried teachers as a group. The League therefore feels that the teachers’ effectiveness should be decided on their individual records.” The policy changed, and the League’s effort brought it recognition and new members.

The League continued to study the schools, including teacher turnover and the size of the School Committee. It recommended that the School Committee be enlarged from three to five members, one of whom should be a woman. By the end of the decade, the committee had been expanded, and the voters had elected the first of an unbroken succession of women members. In 1944, the League adopted a position in favor of a new elementary school, thus embarking on a series of campaigns for new school buildings that was to last for the next 25 years. By 1945, the League had 74 members. That year, it recommended the establishment of public kindergartens, a goal that was not achieved until 1968.

During its first decade, the League also began to work for a change in Amherst’s form of government. According to Essays on Amherst History, “Meanwhile since 1947 the town, urged strongly by the League of Women Voters... was debating the proposal for a Town Manager to replace its traditional system of a board of three Selectmen and about forty other elective officials”.

The League held its first book sale in 1948.

1949 – 1959

Throughout this decade, the League continued to study and act on issues related to the schools. The most pressing problem in the early 1950s was overcrowding. In 1952, following votes in favor of a new elementary school by the School Building Committee and Town Meeting, the voters defeated the proposal in a referendum. The League then joined with others who were seeking approval of a new regional high school. Amherst

entered into a regional school district agreement with Pelham in 1953. The new high school opened in 1956. Shutesbury and Leverett join the district in 1957.

The League's studies of the schools continued with an examination of the curriculum in 1955, followed by a study of the possibility of regionalizing grades 1-6. Once again, the League examined the need for public kindergartens. In 1958, it studied the secondary schools and concluded that it was better to establish a separate junior high school than to combine it with the high school. The need for a new elementary school was investigated as well as the possibility of a town-university elementary laboratory school.

In 1950, the League published the first edition of the Town Meeting Handbook,

In 1950, Town Meeting voted to submit a proposal for Town Manager form of government to the state Legislature. It was approved by the Legislature and submitted to the town's voters, who rejected it decisively. In 1953, the League collected enough petition signatures to place the plan on the ballot again, and in 1954 it was adopted by a 13-vote margin. After its passage, the League held additional meetings to further familiarize the townspeople with the workings of the plan. Referenda were held on the selectman-manager plan in 1957 and again in 1960. League members campaigned for the plan both times. Although the Town Manager Act permits referenda at three-year intervals, none have been called since 1960. In 1959, the Select Board commended the League for preparing a record of accomplishments of the new form of government.

By the mid-1950s, the League was sponsoring warrant meetings before each town meeting. These previews were well attended by Town Meeting members and helped expedite the business of Town Meeting. Warrant meetings were discontinued in the 1970s when town meetings began to last several evenings.

In 1956-57, the League studied Amherst's water and sewer needs, the regional school district, and recreation facilities for the youth of Amherst. There was continuing support for the selectman-manager form of government and for a regional mental health clinic. In 1957, the League studied the regionalization of grades 1 through 6, the need for a new junior high school, and the establishment of public kindergartens. During 1958-59, the League examined the fiscal effect of the University's growth on Amherst. From this study came the current League position supporting adequate payments by the University and colleges for town services. The League added town planning and zoning to its current agenda in 1957. The zoning bylaw adopted in 1940 had remained virtually unchanged for almost two decades. In 1958, Town Meeting approved a revised bylaw, but a petition brought the matter to referendum. The League campaigned for its passage, but voters defeated it in March 1958. Many of the bylaw's features were enacted over the next few years.

1959 – 1969

The first edition of *You and Your Amherst Government* appeared in 1959.

It was funded by several Amherst businesses. Since at least the early 1950s, local businesses and individual citizens have supported the League through contributions to the finance drive and special appeals.

In 1960, the League established a memorial fund in the name of Eunice Mannheim, a former Amherst League President who died that year. She was the first woman to serve on the Amherst Select Board. First elected in 1954, she chaired the Board at the time of her death. In 1963, the League used the Mannheim fund to publish *The Amherst Citizen's Guide to Town Meeting and Political Parties*. The League published the second edition of *You and Your Amherst Government* in 1966 and produced a *Guide to Health and Welfare Services* in 1966.

By 1960, the League's membership had grown to 179. Activities that year included voter service, with candidates' questionnaires published in the newspaper and two candidates' meetings. The League's membership grew throughout the decade, reaching 221 in 1966. In 1961 the League established a three-member committee to explore ways in which it could be more effective. The result was several new activities: the League held a reception for League members and town officials at the Lord Jeffery Inn, a practice that continued into the 1970s; it co-sponsored a series of three workshops on political parties with the Jaycees; and the Voter Service Committee began sending observers to Select Board meetings. (League representatives had observed Select Board meetings at times since at least the mid-1950s.)

The book sale continued to prosper. The 1960 sale grossed \$874. The 1961 sale, the 13<sup>th</sup>, had a bigger tent, more tables, and a children's corner. On Friday sales were \$730. Saturday was slower. The report on the 1966 book sale begins with the fear that there would not be enough books. In prior years, Amherst College and the Jones Library had donated many books. The fear proved unfounded; the sale grossed \$1288. In 1967, more than 230 cartons of books resulted in an increase in profits of \$100.

Lucy Wilson Benson, past president of the Amherst League, was elected President of the Massachusetts League in 1961. She served until 1965. She was President of the League of Women Voters of the United States from 1968 to 1974. One of the many achievements of her tenure as president of the national League was the admission of men to full membership. Bruce Benson became the first male member of the LWVUS, and of the Amherst League, in 1974.

Public education was an important part of the League's agenda throughout the decade. Issues included school buildings, public kindergartens, foreign language programs, and programs for intellectually gifted children. In 1959, units were held on the school budget and the role of the School Committee. It was at this time that the League began the practice of sending an observer to each School Committee meeting.

The League reaffirmed its support of new school buildings in 1961, when it adopted the current position in favor of school construction to serve the town's population. Between

1963 and 1973, Amherst saw construction of a new wing on the high school, a new junior high school, and three elementary schools. The League supported all of them. The junior high, with its swimming pool, tennis courts, and cost of \$4.8 million, was the most controversial. After Town Meeting approved the project 132 to 12 in November 1967, opponents called for a referendum. The League campaigned for the school, and it was approved 1019 to 933.

In 1961, the League petitioned the School Committee to establish public kindergartens and urged that space for such classes be included in the plans for new schools. It supported the formation of a general citizens' group seeking the establishment of kindergartens. In 1965, the League intensified its campaign for kindergartens by holding meetings, conducting a survey of the parents of preschool children and analyzing costs. The first public kindergarten students entered the schools in 1968.

In 1961, the League began a two-year study of the need for and methods of tax equalization in Amherst. The following year, it undertook a two-year study of master planning. In 1964, the League began a study of the town's building regulations and proposals for change. The study of tax equalization did not result in a new support position, but consensus was reached in support of a performance building code and a master plan, including sound zoning.

In 1962, the League supported successful efforts to establish a town conservation commission. In 1964, with the League's support, the town adopted a standard building code. Town Meeting updated the code each year until a state building code preempted local codes.

During 1964-65, the League studied recreation and conservation. The consensus included support of additional recreational facilities and conservation areas. The same year, the League undertook an evaluation of health and welfare services available to Amherst residents. It conducted a survey and concluded that a guide to health and welfare services was needed. As noted previously, the League published such a guide in 1966.

In 1965, the League studied the availability of low income housing in Amherst. Consensus was reached to support such housing and to encourage or even initiate a community group to study and evaluate on a sustained basis low income housing needs. In an effort to be a catalyst for such a group, the League carried out a variety of activities including a radio program called "Problems in Providing Low Cost Housing in Amherst".

In 1965, the Amherst League joined with 29 Leagues from the four states on the Connecticut River to form the Inter-League Committee on the Connecticut River.

A 1966 study of the town's libraries looked at both school and public libraries. The consensus was to affirm the public nature of the Jones Library, to support improved

collections and salaries, and increase tax support of the library. During this year, the League had a monthly radio program on WFCR.

The League's attention returned in 1967-68 to recreation, specifically year-round programs and facilities. From this study, the League's support of recreational facilities was expanded to include the acquisition of land, the hiring of a full-time professional recreation director, a fee schedule that would not exclude any residents, and continued investigation of the feasibility of a lake for Amherst. This last item was dropped at the 1971 Annual Meeting.

The League's 1968-69 study of town government emphasized Town Meeting. A League survey indicated public support of Town Manager form of government as well as concern about the effectiveness of Town Meeting. The study continued the following year.

1969 – 1979

The League's membership reached 243 in 1969, climbed to an all-time high of 260 members in 1971, but dropped below 200 by 1979. Book sale revenues increased. Net receipts were \$2200 in 1969 and \$2600 in 1978.

In 1969, the League published *Where the Action Is*, a guide to becoming a candidate, and the third edition of the *Town Meeting Handbook*. It published the third edition of *Your Amherst Government* in 1971. The fourth edition appeared in 1975 and was followed a year later by the fourth edition of the *Town Meeting Handbook*.

During the 1970s, the League, which had observed the Select Board and School Committees for many years, began to observe other major boards regularly. The February 1975 newsletter reported that the Observer Corps was expanding its role. Its 18 members were observing 10 town committees and meeting once a month "to discuss what is happening within town committees." In 1979, "Observer Corps Notes" became a regular feature in the League newsletter.

In 1969-70, while the study of Town Meeting continued, the League turned again to an appraisal of the master plan, with particular attention to zoning, low income housing, recreation, conservation, and traffic flow.

The study of Town Meeting led to the League's agreement on several points, including greater visibility for Town Meeting members, better information prior to Town Meeting, and more than one regularly scheduled Town Meeting per year. Many of these goals were realized in the next few years. The regular fall Town Meeting was established in 1971. In 1972, the Moderator appointed a Town Meeting Study Committee, which proposed a tally vote, but Town Meeting defeated the proposal. The League then modified the plan in order to satisfy the opponents' objections and placed the issue before Town Meeting by petition. Town Meeting passed the bylaw in November 1974, and in January 1975, the Attorney General approved the only provision in Massachusetts for

tally votes by a Town Meeting. As an additional measure to promote the visibility of Town Meeting members, the League began publishing They Represent You, a list of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of Amherst's Town Meeting members and elected officials.

The 1969 study of the master plan concluded with a consensus in support of long-range planning, regular review of the zoning bylaw, preservation of open space, and capital budgeting. In 1969, the League opposed a plan to divert water from the Connecticut River into the Quabbin Reservoir and testified in support of a Connecticut River Recreation Area.

A study in 1970-71 led to support of transportation planning including bike paths and improved bus service. The same year, the League began a two-year study of the structure of town government, focusing on the executive branch, especially the relationship between the Select Board, Town Manager, and town committees. The result was the present support position on ways to improve the effectiveness of town committees and boards.

In 1972-73, the League conducted a general review of its local support positions. That year it also began a study of the functions and relationships among the school administration, teachers, school committees, parent councils, students, and citizens. The result was the current local position on citizen participation in the schools.

In 1972, Town Meeting appropriated funds for a new elementary school in east Amherst. The League supported the proposal. Fort River School opened in 1974. The University's expansion had ended, the youngest members of the baby boom generation were in school, and for the first time in thirty years, the League was not actively involved in the planning of new school buildings.

In 1974, the League successfully urged the town to expand its recycling efforts to apartment complexes. The ecology wagon, a cart built by a high school shop class, was intended to give apartment dwellers a convenient place to recycle paper and glass.

In 1975, the League worked for passage of a revised zoning bylaw. Although the proposal was the result of several years of study involving both town boards and community groups, Town Meeting rejected it three times, once by a single vote. The effort was abandoned.

The League began a study of police practices and procedures in 1975 and adopted its current position on the police two years later. In 1977, the League, with Attorney Richard Howland, published Advice to Defendants in the District Court of Hampshire County in both English and Spanish editions. The following year, the League again turned its attention to housing, including rent control. The result was an expanded position on housing, but no agreement on rent control.

Amherst taxes and services were investigated in 1977-78. The study continued the following year with specific attention to school finances.

1979 – 1989

During the early 1980s, the League's membership was about 180. It has increased steadily since 1986, and in February 1989, passed the 200 mark.

Revenues from the book sale tripled between 1979 and 1988 as more books were received, larger tents were rented, and the length of the sale was increased from 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 and then to 3 days. The sale netted more than \$5000 in 1985. In 1988, there were 900 cartons of books, including more than 60 of hard cover fiction, 50 of paperback fiction, and 31 of psychology. Net income was just under \$8000.

The fifth editions of *Your Amherst Government* and the *Town Meeting Handbook* were published in 1985 and 1986, respectively. The League has continued to publish *They Represent You*, and in 1986 added a new pamphlet, the *Directory of Town Services and Departments*.

Health care was the subject of both state and local studies in 1979-1981. In 1982, the League looked again at the town's schools, this time emphasizing finance. Of special concern was the effect of proposition 21/2, which set limits on property taxes. The League's voter service activities extended from candidates' forums and election guides published in the newspaper to registration of high school students at the school. A new VOTE banner was made for display over South Pleasant Street.

In 1983-84, the League looked at child care in the community. At the same time it participated in a state League study of the issue. The Amherst League also initiated a study of Hampshire County government and invited the Northampton and Belchertown Leagues to participate in the study and to work at the same time on a state League study of county government. The resulting position on Hampshire County included support of a home rule charter, a full-time professional administrator, a county personnel board, and a more informative budget. Most of these reforms were achieved with the adoption of a new county charter in 1988.

In 1984, the League studied fluoridation of the Amherst water supply, reached agreement, and joined in successful efforts to win voter approval of fluoridation in a town referendum, held November 8, 1984.

In 1985-1988, the League turned again to issues of growth, planning, and housing. The 1985-86 study of planning, land use and development focused on the rapid pace of housing development in Amherst. The 1986-87 study of low and moderate income

housing resulted in a reaffirmation of the League's support of affordable housing and a new emphasis on the need for balance in order to achieve both housing and environmental goals. In 1987-88, the League held meetings on planning, land use, housing, and development. Town Meeting adopted a moratorium on new housing construction in 1986, and over the next two years, the town adopted a wide range of protective measures, including a limit on the number of housing permits issued each year. The League took no stand on the freeze or the limit on permits, but supported several other actions, some intended to encourage low and moderate income housing and others to protect the environment.

1989-99

In 1988-89 the League began a new study of Amherst's system of government that became a focus during the decade. The League studied alternative forms of town government. A charter Task Force was formed and reviewed two mayor/council proposals. Neither was supported. In 1995, the League supported a Select Board manager form of government.

In 1990, the League evaluated public/private mechanisms for the delivery and financing of health care in the country. During the decade the League worked successfully to implement the Motor Voter Law in Massachusetts, and members lobbied for the successful passage of a domestic violence bill. The local League worked on state issues, including childcare, casino gambling, and reproductive choice. In 1993, the League provided information on override ballot questions.

The League published the sixth edition of *Your Amherst Government* in 1992, and the sixth edition of the *Town Meeting Handbook* in 1998.

The League supported a successful initiative to make condoms available in the Amherst Regional High School and successfully supported bridge funding for the high school renovation. The League conducted a study of school choice in 1994.

In 1994, the position of League Media Director was established as an off-board position. The post included arranging for TV coverage of League meetings and programs, recruiting personnel for TV crews to tape them, and coordinating League planners with Amherst Community Television. The League initiated live town election night coverage as well as a weekly TV show, "Through the League Lens", that covered issues of local interest and interviews with elected officials. The League hosted an exhibit on suffragettes at the Jones Library in 1995.

The League membership peaked in 1995 with 254 members. It remained over 200 during the decade.

1999-2009

In 2001, the League studied and updated its position on low and moderate income housing, calling for housing rehabilitation, congregate housing, and balancing housing needs with other social and environmental needs. The study also noted the need to reevaluate height and density regulations within the zoning bylaw. Also in 2001, the Charter for the Town of Amherst, The Amherst Town Government Act, was approved by Town Meeting and the Massachusetts House and Senate. LWVA contributed a generous donation towards funding the publication, subsequently widely distributed and available to Town Meeting members and town committees.

The book sale shifted from four days to three in 2001. The first annual Birthday luncheon took place February 14, 2003 on the 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday of the LWWUS.

The LWVA Health Care Committee was formed in 2005 to study health care, educate the public, and advocate for legislation to enact a single payer health care plan for Massachusetts. Members of the committee have met with local legislators, testified at Statehouse hearings, and sponsored a resolution reaffirming support for the Massachusetts single payer bill at Amherst Town Meeting. The Committee has worked diligently, giving over one hundred presentations to civic organizations and colleges all over the state, as well as joining with state and national League members to hold workshops at LWWUS conventions, designing materials to educate the public, and in general, being powerful advocates for single payer health care. In 2010 they co-sponsored a conference entitled “Women’s Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” featuring experts on women’s health and drawing over 100 participants.

In 2005, the League updated its study on county government to reflect the change from a county government system to a Council of Governments. The League supported the concept of regional cooperation, which reflects consideration of the state League’s stand on the need for accountable and effective county/regional government. In addition, the League studied the protection of the Holyoke Range as part of the Connecticut River Basin Inter-League program.

The seventh edition of the Town Meeting Handbook was published in 2007.

In 2007, the League undertook a two-year study of business and economic development by conducting and analyzing numerous interviews with town staff and representative businesses all over town. This study led to a position that supports regional collaboration, zoning consistent with the goals of a community-developed comprehensive plan, as well as clear, efficient and well-coordinated permitting, licensing and inspection procedures and processes.

2009-2014

The seventh edition of *Your Amherst Government* was published in 2009 in honor of LWVA's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Town of Amherst. The League participated in the town's celebration with a reception and marched in the town parade.

The Emergency Preparedness Planning study in 2009-2010 recognized the need for ongoing regional planning, cooperation and coordination during emergencies by area towns and institutions and called for disseminating advisory emergency information to individuals, families, and businesses to help prepare for such situations.

The Follow the Money interest group formed in response to the 2010 Supreme Court's decision, *Citizens United vs. the FEC*, in which the Supreme Court struck down long-standing provisions of federal campaign finance laws on the basis that they constituted a "ban on speech" and were unconstitutional under the First Amendment. Endowing corporations with the same rights as natural persons, the ruling opened a floodgate of secret money into electoral politics. The interest group works to educate League members and the public on the impact of this decision on all levels of government and to strategize effective advocacy tools to promote fair, open and accessible electoral processes.

In 2011, the League conducted a Biomass study that said its use would be supported only if government regulations are in place that address the types of woody biomass that may be used, sustainable forest management practices and forest preservation, emission limits and effective enforcement procedures. This study group continues to work on broader energy issues, periodically making public presentations of their findings. The League also studied affordable housing, health care reform and continued to study education, with an update on financing and the quality of education.

On March 8, 2013, the LWVA joined in the global celebration of International Women's Day by recognizing five area women for their public and private achievements in strengthening their families and communities with 'In Celebration of Women' awards.

The local League worked with the state League to get an updated Bottle Bill on the next state ballot. The annual book sale continues to be the League's major revenue source. League dues are now \$30, and membership continues to be about 200.

## OVER THE YEARS

Throughout the seventy-five years of the Amherst League's history, hundreds of women and several men have played important roles. It is impossible to mention all of them and their achievements in these few pages. Similarly, throughout the decades the League has sustained a broad program of study and action. The topics ranged from local issues, most of which have been mentioned above, to state and national questions. The Amherst League, since its origin, has lobbied at all three levels of government, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. All the efforts have been to further the League's mission to encourage active citizen participation.

Although hardly necessary to recount to Amherst League members, it is worth mentioning that over the years League members have:

- registered voters
- published election guides in local newspapers
- conducted candidates' forums before elections
- held public meetings on community and national issues
- studied issues
- organized lobbying campaigns
- published handbooks
- had an active observer corps
- established a book group
- collaborated with other groups, such as the Town Meeting Coordinating Committee and Amherst Recycling and Waste Management Committee
- run increasingly successful book sales
- attended state and national conventions and Days on the Hill
- hosted receptions for our elected officials
- hosted orientations and receptions for new members
- celebrated National League's birthday every year, featuring state or local officials as speakers
- archived historical records at the University of Massachusetts Amherst W.E.B. Du Bois Library, Special Collections and Archives
- broadcast, taped and archived League programs with Amherst Media
- initiated a series: "Getting to Know Amherst: How a Small Town Makes Big Things Happen" about local town departments and institutions in honor of the League's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary In addition to their efforts as part of the League, members have served in Amherst Town Meeting and on the Select Board, School Committee, Library Trustees, Redevelopment Authority, Housing Authority, Finance Committee, Planning Board, and almost all of the rest of the many town boards and committees that make Amherst, Amherst.

## THE PRESIDENTS OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF AMHERST

Joy Kennedy (Mrs. Gail)	1939-1941
Elizabeth Rohr (Mrs. Charles)	1941-1943
Frances Warne (Mrs. Colston)	1943-1945
Marian Brown (Mrs. Bailey)	1945-1947
Eunice Mannheim (Mrs. L. Robert)	1947-1949
Janet Dakin (Mrs. Winthrop)	1949-1951
Ruth Skillings (Mrs. Hills)	1951-1953
Vera Longstaff (Mrs. John)	1953-1955
Edna Emerson (Mrs. Edward)	1955-1957
Lucy Benson (Mrs. Bruce)	1957-1958
Janet Dakin (Mrs. Winthrop)	1958-1959
Lucy Benson (Mrs. Bruce)	1959-1961
Rhoda Honigberg (Mrs. Bronislaw)	*1961-1963
Rita Kropf (Mrs. Allen)	**1963-1965
Nancy Eddy (Mrs. Philip)	1965-1967
Barbara Ford (Mrs. Norman)	1967-1969
Sally Klingener	1969-1971
Emma Jean Cole (Mrs. Charles)	1971-1973
Kathleen Masalski (Mrs. William)	1973-1975
Kay Moran (Mrs. Charles)	1975-1977
Lynne Stuart (Mrs. Bruce)	1977-1979
Dona Motts (Mrs. Ward)	1979-1981
Myrna Hewitt (Mrs. John)	1981-1983
Diana Romer (Mrs. Robert)	1983-1985
Joan Lambdin (Mrs. John)	1985-1987
Diana Romer (Mrs. Robert)	1987-1989
Lois Dethier	1989-1991
Harriett Shapiro	1991-1993
Joan Flood Ashwell	1993-1996
Myrna Hewitt	1996-1997
Caroline Olsen	1997-2001
Eva Cashdan	2001-2003
Mary Ann Garrand	2003-2005
Janice Ratner	2005-2007
Carol Rothery	2007-2009
Eva Cashdan	2009-2011
Rebecca Fricke	***2011-2012
Cynthia Brubaker/Katherine Vorwerk Feldman	2013-2015

\* In 1961 Esther Dimock was elected president and resigned soon after when she was appointed Town Clerk

\*\* In 1963 Mabel Garis was elected president but resigned shortly thereafter.

\*\*\* Rebecca Fricke resigned in December of 2012.