

MERGER BRAINSTORM SESSION

March 15, 2022

Via Zoom

Q1: How do we preserve and strengthen our local (municipal) presence? (*Advocacy, Observing, Visibility, ...*)

- 1-1. Focus on individual activities within our local areas—local schools, registration drives, etc.
- 1-2. Create “directors” (in addition to officers/president) for specific geographic areas.
- 1-3. Provide forums to provide nonpartisan facts on local hot issues.
- 1-4. Activities (like Observer Corps) expanded in different localities, sensitive to the situations and issues in those localities. Strategic local focus. What do we do with observations—how to disseminate?
- 1-5. Keep high visibility with press (letters to editor, e.g.) connecting League work to local issues.
- 1-6. Visibility—when we go to observe government bodies—t-shirts, button that shows municipality.
- 1-7. Municipal Teams that focus on specific town—keep tabs on issues that are coming up in several bodies (within and across municipalities). Opportunity to identify issues that span across or recur in different towns.
- 1-8. Town Directors would have local connections.
- 1-9. Outreach to homeowner association to build an identity. Let them know who we are and that they can reach out to us.
- 1-10. Town Teams—recruit members (5 for each Mon Co municipality) locally. Have a presence in every town.
- 1-11. Put on programs with speakers with an outside voice—new perspective.
- 1-12. Promote fact that League is getting stronger by sheer numbers. Capitalize on our numbers.
- 1-13. Focus town-by-town on growing membership.
- 1-14. Start out getting presence locally, create a presence in each town—observing, partnering, using model of personal relationships that we’ve created at County level. Create liaisons to towns.
- 1-15. Land issues in every municipality—focus on issue-based collaboration across towns. Outreach for partnering with other people/organizations on issues.
- 1-16. Love idea of local presence by reaching out to school boards, etc. Local League person can be reaching out to establish relationship.
- 1-17. Offer League reports at organizations and clubs to spread the word about our work.

Q2: How do we preserve and strengthen our County presence?

(Advocacy, Observing, Visibility, ...)

- 2-1. Same as for local—issue-based, collaboration, and outreach with other organizations that have same interest. Like button idea—know League representatives are present.
- 2-2. Participation/presence at County Commission meetings.
- 2-3. Go to the Commissioner work sessions. It's where the work gets done.
- 2-4. County looking for volunteers for county committees. Get League members to volunteer.
- 2-5. Make visible what Commissioners do and what they're responsible for
- 2-6. Work with Town Directors to keep in contact with what's going on locally to channel information up to county.
- 2-7. Great relationship with County Clerk. Repro that with other departments.
- 2-8. Love word *liaison*—need one for each community and for county. Lead who will coordinate observers, etc. Establish relationship with administrators (like Robin Major) to keep them informed of League activity.
- 2-9. Liaisons (Brookdale, Library, Seniors, Planning Board, etc.) and volunteers on boards. Regular observers at meetings. Back in touch with what we used to do.
- 2-10. When we secure access to agendas, can track municipal issues and share information among towns.
- 2-11. Team concept at the county level—a hub for communicating with Town Teams and act as core group for county level issues.
- 2-12. Find a way to engage younger people to grow organization. Look for people who are interested in issues we are working on.
- 2-13. Easier to have stronger County focus when we have >200 members to call on.
- 2-14. Create letters to mayors, etc., to introduce the LWV as first step in creating relationships. Create template for letter to introduce LWV to newly elected councils, boards, etc. Letter of introduction each year. Go to the meetings as follow up to letter of introduction.
- 2-15. Learned a lot when we invited county clerk to speak [may have meant County Administrator]. Do this more. Showcase LWV to them, we learn from them. Gives both us and them opportunity to see the other. See us as group with interest and value.

Q3: How do we continue to foster social relationships and networking within our new League?

- 3-1. Think past COVID to a time when we can reach out personally. Met in person occasionally.
- 3-2. Zoom meetings effective, but socializing and interfacing missed. Not a big deal to have social activity every few months—coffee at someone’s house, e.g.
- 3-3. In-person meeting with dial-in option (Zoom). Not either/or—both.
- 3-4. Where and how we’re meeting—move meetings around the County so people get a chance to get out and mix.
- 3-5. Large numbers make in-person venues a challenge. Need to find 3 venues that will hold us.
- 3-6. Quarterly speaker meetings that are also social.
- 3-7. Board/administrative meeting can continue on Zoom. Find a few locations that would accommodate all of us three or four times a year.
- 3-8. Some Leagues around the state are doing book clubs.
- 3-9. Should be a fun component. Speed-dating event to get to know each other!
- 3-10. Organize teams around functions—each team can decide how to meet. Smaller group can build cohesive bonds.
- 3-11. At least once a year, volunteer to do visible good works (Fulfill, e.g.)
- 3-12. Speed-dating with the Commissioners, politicians, board members, etc. A way to open things up. Building trust between LWV and officials. Once a year, give back to the community. Meet at Brookdale once year.
- 3-13. Trust creative people to come up with great social activities.
- 3-14. At least one social event every 3 or 4 months.

Q4: How do we strengthen our effectiveness? (*Brand, Active Membership, Leadership development*)

- 4-1. Five realistic numerical goals as merged organization (grow membership by X%, Enroll X Organizational partners, etc.) to track for the year.
- 4-2. Structure organization to involve the maximum number of people. Ensure interests are addressed (why they joined the LWV). Keep members—get them active.
- 4-3. We appreciate our volunteers, but keep reminding ourselves we're at different levels—mentor those who show interest. Mentors also create social ties. Annual workshop on levels of League to let people know what state League offers, for example.
- 4-4. Encourage our members to join state League committees.
- 4-5. Be thorough and efficient at municipal and county levels and be out there, visible and effective.
- 4-6. Met and greet with other organizations—maybe two a year. Get to know us, we get to know them.
- 4-7. Powerful tools—website, social media. Rethink use of these tools from a fundamental basis for effect.
- 4-8. Like idea of meet-and-greet events.
- 4-9. Deliver Citizen Guides, for example, to new council, board of ed, etc.
- 4-10. Offer things to encourage better behavior in public officials—integrity, bi-partisanship. Certificates of acknowledgement to public official who exemplify good behavior.
- 4-11. Advertising—run an ad on regular basis “Join the LWV.” Not everyone is on social media. Newspapers have their place. Most people don't know where to begin. Show people the way in—make us easily available
- 4-12. Get message out to neighborhood sites that don't cost anything. There is a League and it's local, etc. New resident packages.
- 4-13. Design teams focus new structure to be as efficient and effective as possible—more opportunities, less time on administrative things.
- 4-14. Outreach to students (High School and College) on civics. Provide information to students and open door to recruiting young people.
- 4-15. If we accomplish half of this, we'd have greatly improved our brand.
- 4-16. Brochure on local zoning and planning and how to get involved. Educate public on how it's done in NJ.
- 4-17. Hot Topics have been a great success. Maybe it's time to increase number (maybe 6 a year). Would put our brand out.
- 4-18. Model UN works out of county YMCA—potential to partner with them, build a relationship.

Q5: How do we operate more efficiently? (21st century technology, Streamlining)

- 5-1. Let's be careful not to tie our own hands. Create structure and has as few limits and allows us flexibility. Don't want a lot of bureaucratic layers.
- 5-2. Use the technology wisely.
- 5-3. Merger itself will make us more efficient.
- 5-4. Break it down. Keep it as small and manageable as possible.
- 5-5. I hope to learn to be more efficient and open to suggestion. I worry a little that everyone involved in our expanded work needs to be schooled in our nonpartisanship—so there is some degree of control that's needed.
- 5-6. Stay more efficient by disciplined focus. Only take on what we can handle. Know our strengths.
- 5-7. Compliments on the merger process. Keep that model in mind.
- 5-8. Play to our strengths and let go of the rest of it.
- 5-9. Make sure we know what we are recruiting members for—have meaningful work for them.
- 5-10. Make sure we safeguard nonpartisanship. Need introductory sessions for new members to share history, context, nonpartisanship, etc.
- 5-11. Mentor new members. Introduction to positions.