

Welcome: Rev. Robert Dye, MARCC President, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Greater Cincinnati

Prayer: Rabbi Margaret J. Meyer, Jewish Community Relations Council/Jewish Federation of Cincinnati

Minutes: Delegates Council Minutes of 10 June 2020 – Brief minutes accepted and approved as presented.

Agenda: Delegates Council Agenda for 9 September 2020 – Accepted and approved.

Today's Attendance: 30

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES, USA, Miami Association: *Absent*

ARCHDIOCESE: Bob Ehram, Louise Lears, SC, Karen Martin, Connie Widmer, Lee Wilson

BAPTIST MINISTERS CONFERENCE: *Absent.*

CINCINNATI ISLAMIC COMMUNITY CENTER: *Absent.*

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST: Thomas Barnes

DIOCESE OF SOUTHERN OHIO (EPISCOPAL): Elizabeth Brown, Ariel Miller, Karen Montagno

FRIENDS RELIGIOUS SOCIETY (Quakers): Doug Burks, J.P. Lund

INTERDENOMINATIONAL MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE: Robert Dye

JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL: Leah Marcus, Margaret Meyer

MARCC: Margaret Fox, Alice Skirtz, Angela Wright

PRESBYTERY OF CINCINNATI: Patricia Brown

UNITED METHODIST ORV DIST: T. Duane Gordon, Mary Beth Owens, Jan Seymour, Cathie Schick

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST/SONKA: Mimi Chamberlin

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST COUNCIL: Lee Meyer, M.J. Pierson, Dan Schneider, Martha Stephens

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA: Erica Bailey, Marci Cook

Guests: Joyce

OPENING PRAYER – Rabbi Margaret Meyer: Good to see everyone. As we are reaching the end of Summer, this is a special time for the Jewish people. We are approaching the new year, Rosh Hashanah. During this day before our holy days arrive, we are taught to open our hearts – hearts free to pray and allow others to enter in our lives. This year, it is more difficult to open our hearts. All of us, no matter our religion, are physically closed off from friends and family and our nation is in turmoil. We find ourselves questioning so much of what is going on around us; we are witnessing more hatred and violence than we've seen in many years. It would be so easy to close our hearts, shut out the world and to turn inward. It is hard at this time to see the good around us when there is so much darkness obscuring the light, but as religious people we are commanded to find the good, reach for the light, open our hearts to care for each other, to love and respect every one we meet and know. During this difficult time for all of us, **I pray:** *'For our community, for our nation, may we strive to open our hearts to each other, to learn from one another and truly see each other. As we head toward an election, when we will have the privilege and the responsibility to help shape our nation's future. Pray as if everything depends on G-d; Act as if everything depends on you. Today we pray; tomorrow and every day, may we complete our prayers with our acts. Amen.'*

MARCC Updates – Margaret A. Fox, Executive Director

Court Watch Project. Under our chosen COMMUNITY-POLICE RELATIONS/JUSTICE REFORM concern for 2020, our CW group is working on a final report for the 3-Month CourtWatch from August pilot and November 2019, February 2020 observations and trainings. There were 850+ observations. You will receive a link to the report once it is completed. Our recommendations relate directly to Hamilton County Municipal Court system, and to the prosecutor's office. I want to thank our court observers for their time and work. This could not have been done without your willing participation and commitment. We had to pivot in our court watch program to focus on the recent eviction crisis caused by the pandemic. During the months of June and August, we thought the Eviction Court would be full-25 cases per hour during the 3 morning sessions. In the meantime, the U.S. Department of Housing, Urban and .Development called a moratorium on evictions for public housing and any landlords receiving housing vouchers. In August, when the moratorium ended, the courts were packed. These dockets were administered by 5 magistrates and the Justice Center instituted CDC protocol which was enforced for all who entered the Justice Center and their courtrooms (masks, sitting six feet apart, temperature checks). For September, there is now a moratorium for all evictions – public housing and privately owned housing IF the evictions are COVID-related, dating back to March 23rd. The looming question: How will landlords get paid until the first of the year? There is no money with the moratorium but there is rental assistance if the eviction was served 3/23 or later. Legal Aid is overwhelmed; the Help Center that the clerk of courts is running with rental assistance could use more capacity. Our Court Watch Project will break from the Eviction Docket until further clarification is known. Stay tuned for the next court watch.

(A. Miller) I heard that the United Way reported that the agencies handing out money to prevent evictions could give up to \$1,200 per household, which won't go very far. **(Fox)** Prior to the pandemic, when someone goes to one of the agencies asking for rental assistance, they are already behind in rent. The amount needed is usually \$2,500 which addresses the previous month and the current month. There needs to be a more robust response from the federal government or the state. The government assistance is being administered through the Community Action Agency, St. Vincent De Paul, and Talbert House. This money will eventually run out. **(A. Miller) Q:** Is there advocacy with the state or other advocacy resources, e.g. the CARES Act? **(Fox)** People are regrouping from the surprise of all this happening at once. There will probably be more information in the next few weeks to answer that question. MARCC was advocating with the Legal Aid Society, the Homeless Coalition, Housing Opportunities Made Equal, and many other groups doing this. We are not sure whether the governor's rainy-day fund will be used. The other procedural glitch is Eviction Court. It would be helpful if the magistrates advocated for the tenant by asking if they've looked into rental assistance, if they know about signing a release form to receive rental assistance through the "Help Center", 1st floor, Court House on, sponsored by the clerk of courts office.

MARCC Office is Moving. Our lease for our current rental space was not renewed. This was due to the expansion of the law firm next door. We have spent the summer looking for new office space and may have found a spot. We must be out by September's end. The pandemic has not caused lower office space rent downtown, but quite the opposite. Some of this is because downtown buildings are being purchased by out-of-state and country corporations. Look for a MARCC Updates soon that will list our new address.

Next MARCC ID Card Registration. 16 September, Wednesday, MARCC ID Card Registration – **by appointment ONLY**, 5:30-7:30 PM, Catholic Charities of SW Ohio, Su Casa, 7th Floor, 7162 Reading Road 45237, CDC Protocol will be followed. For more info call (513) 672-3721 or the MARCC Office at (513) 721-4843 or marcc@marcconline.com

TODAY'S PRESENTATION:

'VOTING PRIMER FOR A PANDEMIC'

Elizabeth Brown, Co-President, League of Women Voters of Cincinnati

<https://my.lwv.org/ohio/cincinnati-area>

(513) 281-8683

(for speaker's bio information, please refer to email sent on Sept. 8th. Thank you.)

<https://www.vote411.org>

<https://olvr.ohiosos.gov>

info@lwvcincinnati.org

Ms. Brown

The League of Women Voters (LWV) operates at the national, state, and local levels. We are a nonpartisan organization encouraging informed and active participation in government with membership open to anyone, male or female, 16 years of age or older. There are 29 local area/city leagues in Ohio. Formed in 1920, the LWV of the Cincinnati Area is one of the oldest Leagues in the country.

League resources for Voters

- The Annual Voter Guide – this is in print and will be available at our branch libraries and available in bulk at the LWV office in Mt. Auburn.
- Vote411.org – this is online election information, candidate guide, and voter registration.

Important Dates to Remember

- Voter registration/Name or Address changes – now thru October 5th.
- Absentee Ballot request applications – now thru October 31st. Ballots will be sent out after October 6th.
- Early Voting at the Board of Elections – October 6th – November 2nd.
- Election Day is November 3rd, 2020.

Ways to Register to Vote

- Fill out the form and return it to the county Board of Elections
- By Mail-In form
- Online at voteohio.gov

You Are Eligible to Register and Vote If -

1. You are a citizen of the United States
2. You will be at least 18 years old on or before the day of the general election
3. You will be a resident of Ohio for at least 30 days immediately before the election in which you want to vote
4. You are not currently incarcerated (in jail or in prison) for a felony conviction
5. You have not been declared incompetent for voting purposes by a probate court
6. You have not been permanently disenfranchised for violations of election laws

Ohio Voting in a Pandemic

- Vote by Mail
- Vote early at the Board of Elections
- Vote at the polls on Election Day

Voting by Mail - YOU MUST REQUEST AN ABSENTEE BALLOT!

- Absentee ballot **application forms** will be mailed to all registered voters around Labor Day!
- Forms can also be found at VoteOhio.gov or your county board of elections
- Application forms can be sent to the BOE now. The ballots will be mailed out when early voting starts October 6
- Return ballot early – don't wait until deadline and risk mail being delayed. Ballot may also be dropped off at BOE through Election Day.
- Flatten the ballot request curve! Apply for your absentee ballot TODAY.

Drop Box. Drop Box for Hamilton County is at the Board of Elections in Norwood, 4700 Smith Road, 45212. Access to the Box is in the visitor parking at their main building entrance off Wall Street.

Early Voting at the Board of Elections

October 6 – 16

Mon thru Fri, 8am – 5pm QUICK IN AND OUT

October 19-23

Mon thru Fri, 8am – 6pm QUICK IN AND OUT

October 26-30

Mon thru Fri, 8am – 7pm

Weekends, **Oct. 24-25 & Oct. 31-Nov.1**

MAY BE LINES

Saturday 8am – 4pm

Sunday 1pm – 5pm

Monday, Nov. 2

8am – 2pm

Voting in Person

- Maintain 6' social distance
- Keep hand clean. Bring your personal sanitizer & blue or black ink pen
- If possible, bring your own face mask/covering

Poll workers will regularly clean high touch areas & voting equipment. Hand sanitizer, masks & pens will be available.

What's the best way to help ensure a smooth election? Be a Poll Worker!

Election workers are essential to ensuring that elections are a success. With each election, millions of Americans dedicate themselves to sustaining the backbone of democracy – our election process. This year the pandemic has caused many older, experienced poll workers to wisely decide to stay at home. The lack of an adequate number of poll workers will cause long lines to the polls. The Boards of Elections are recruiting poll workers now. Poll workers set up voting machines, hand out ballots, assist voters with disabilities, check in voters, and review their IDs where they are required. (And yes, they get paid!)

Ideas for Congregations

- Form a team and decide what would work for your congregation
- Insert reminders about voting in bulletins and newsletters. Announce League of Women Voter candidate forums
- Registration drive among congregation; “Do you need to update your address?”
- Distribute LWV Voter Guides to congregation and neighbors
- Target information and forms (registration and vote-by-mail requests) to places where you have a relationship, e.g. senior residence, food pantry, community dinner)
- Host a LWV virtual speaker to answer voting questions

RESOURCES

- Ohio Secretary of State website
VoteOhio.gov
- County Board of Elections website
votehamiltoncountyohio.gov
- Nonpartisan information on candidates
Vote411.org and *LWV Voter Guide*
- LWV Cincinnati Area website, lwcincinnati.org
- “Who are you to Judge?” virtual judicial candidate forums sponsored by LWV and Bar Association, Sept. 29 and Oct. 1

Q&A

Lee Meyer, Unitarian Universalist Council

Q: Does a poll worker need to be of voting age? A: The exception of the 18-year old requirement – they want high school seniors to do it, which they are sometimes 17 years old as a high school senior. They have created something called ‘Youth at the Booth’ which they have competitions at high schools for seniors to work at the polls. They have proven to be some of their best workers, partly because they understand some of the technology better than some of us older people do and bring their energy. I think it is a great program because they will be voters for the rest of their lives because of this experience. The major problem with this has been transportation if they cannot drive themselves.

Sr. Louise Lears, Sisters of Charity/Archdiocese

Q: How can we access the virtual judicial candidate forms? **A:** There will be links on the League of Women Voters' site. We are working with the Cincinnati Bar Association and the Urban League. I have not seen the link yet. Soon as they are posted we will share it. If you don't see it flashing on our front page, check out our calendar

Cathy Schick, United Methodist/Ohio River Valley District (ORV)

Q: When can the Board of Elections begin counting the Mail-in ballots? **A:** They can't tabulate or count them until election day, but they can process them, doing the up-front work before election day – opening envelopes, verify registrations and signatures. They are very hyper about giving out results before the actual day for fear of this affecting other voters.

Jan Seymour, United Methodist Church/ORV

Q: People are confused about applying for a ballot since Secretary of State LaRose sent out these applications after a lot of people had already sent in their ballot? **A:** He did a blanket send to every registered voter in the state. His office did not compare and do a matching process. If you've already sent in an application, you don't need to send in another. There is a tracking system on the Secretary of State's website <https://olvr.ohiosos.gov/> and through the county's website <https://votehamiltoncountyohio.gov/> then go to the tab 'Track Your Ballot'. This will also include your application, which you can do now to see if it has been received and accepted for the General November Election 2020. **(Seymour)** There were many in my book club thinking that the one from LaRose was the 'official' ballot and not the one they've already completed and sent in. Others may also be confused by this. We must continue to tell people that they don't have to fill out the one received from him if they already have one sent in. **(E. Brown)** Filling out two ballots will only make more work for the Board of Elections.

Mary Beth Owens, United Methodist Church/ORV

Q: Has any consideration been given to shortening the hours for the indoor poll workers? I recall the hours used to be 5AM to 9PM, a 16-hour shift. That is a long day. **A:** There have been discussions for a long time to change that but there has yet to be an agreement on that. If they shorten the hours, they will end up needing more poll workers. At this stage, they are scrambling to get what they need. They may be trying to avoid having multiple shifts and making this as smooth as possible. When I listen to the policy discussions on this, I wouldn't be surprised that in a few years they work this out. The disadvantage to shortening the hours is that they wouldn't have enough poll workers if they didn't work the entire day.

Margaret A. Fox, MARCC Executive Director

Q: Are there any public schools that take off on Election Day? **A:** I have heard that some do but I don't know which ones. Some schools schedule it as an In-Service day for the teachers. I understand that the high school seniors can work the polls that day and it is encouraged. Some high schools recruit workers: others barely tell them about it. There have been discussions for years on making Election Day a federal holiday since many businesses are closed. In thinking of ways to increase turnout for elections, I'm not sure declaring it a holiday would be the best way to do it. Community service for high school seniors seems like a constructive way to go about this. **Leah Marcus, Jewish Community Relations Council.** **Statement: Our remote learning school will be off due to the election.**

Lee Meyer, Unitarian Universalist Council

Q: Would it be easier to recruit for a shorter poll workday? It might be easier for retirees who would want to volunteer. **A:** This is the other side of the policy argument that if the days were shorter the BOE could get more to volunteer. There have been many improvements proposed to the systems to make better access that were not passed this year in the General Assembly. The details of the Ohio's election system's details are controlled by state law so we must go through the General Assembly to get changes made. The League and other voter rights groups will be pursuing it in the coming years. Simple things, e.g. being able to go online to request your Absentee Ballot instead of having to send in a paper form. The General Assembly didn't see it that way and didn't pass this proposal.

Connie Widmer, Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Q: Do some places of business allow their employees to take off to work at the polls? **A:** Yes, especially this year with the greater need for poll workers. Many businesses have stepped forward to allow this, Western Southern Insurance Company was the first, making a big press release. Many businesses are granting CEU (Continuing Education Unit) credits for people, e.g. lawyers, accountants, to do so. **Q: Do the speakers come from the League of Women Voters?** **A:** Yes. We are a volunteer organization and have trained people to be knowledgeable about the elections.

Cathie Schick, United Methodist Church/ORV

Q: Could you share about the ‘Devoted to Serve’ program? **A:** Through this program, a person can donate their pay from serving as a poll worker to a non-profit of their choice. This is a partnership between the Hamilton County Board of Elections (Board) and local nonprofit organizations to recruit poll workers and raise money through service. <https://votehamiltoncountyohio.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DEVOTEDtoServiceforNOV2020.pdf>

Pat Brown, Presbytery of Cincinnati

Q: Do you have any idea when the League’s Voter Guide will become available? **A:** It is scheduled to become available during the last week of September and by October 6th. Check with the League first to make sure it’s available. If your group would like to have a certain number of copies, it would help for you to email the League office to let us know so we may reserve those copies for you <https://my.lwv.org/ohio/cincinnati-area> / (513) 281-8683. Our voter guides will have free copies at the public library branches, and it will appear in the news publication, City Beat, and in a subscriber’s issue of the Cincinnati Herald. We have an interesting project with local barber and beauty shops now where we are putting up ‘mirror posters’ that can be placed on a mirror and easily taken down. It is crafted this way to become a discussion starter while people are getting these services. Many of these shops will also receive the LWV Voter Guides. This will require having enough volunteers to make these distributions.

Bob Ehram, Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Q: If someone applies for a Vote by Mail Ballot, receives it, then decides to go to the polls instead, can they do this?

A: Yes, long as they have not returned it. What will happen when they go to the polling place, they will be given a Provisional Ballot to submit their vote. This just means their ballot will be counted immediately after the other ballots are counted. Sometimes with the Provisional Ballots, they are held up because the voter’s I.D. was questionable. That person can go down to the Board of Elections after the election and show them an alternate I.D. if they didn’t have it when they initially went to the polls. They allow a few days to have this done so your ballot is not rejected.

(Ms. Brown) People will have to get used to the idea that we won’t have the results within minutes this year. Of course, it would be awful if the count dragged out weeks, but if it takes a few days after, people shouldn’t get uptight about it. What’s important is that all the votes are accurately counted.

Ariel Miller, Diocese of Southern Ohio (Episcopal)

(Ariel donned a facemask that had stitching in blue with ‘Vote’ on the front) Statement: Some of us wore these masks we got from the Democratic Party. I don’t go around saying that, but when people see it, they are delighted, then you can strike up a conversation about early voting and when registrations are due. It allows us to be a tiny human billboard. The Democratic party is not giving these masks away, you must send in cash money.

Connie Widmer, Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Q: With the move to get more drop boxes, will the additional ones also be located at the Board of Elections or elsewhere? **A:** The idea is to have them elsewhere, scattered around in the county. Of course, they would be in secure sites where cameras would be watching them. There is a lawsuit pending on this. Most people think more drop boxes for the ballots to be a good idea, as does the secretary of state but he doesn’t think he has the authority to do it. we’ll have to wait and see.

Martha Stephens, Unitarian Universalist Council - Q: If the only drop box people have is at the Board of Elections in Norwood, does that interfere in anyway with early voting? **A:** The box is off to one side of their parking lot. I can imagine that last weekend with many cars driving in and dropping off ballots it could get clumsy and crowded. They will most likely have people directing traffic, but it is set in a place where it’s not a problem and it is available 24-hours.

Mary Beth Owens, United Methodist Church/ORV

Q: What is the latest news about preventing voter suppression? **A:** Yes, this happens sometimes, but I think the phrase gets thrown around. People are losing trust in the system and there are a lot of improvements the system could have. Every improvement not agreed upon is not necessarily suppression. There are cases around the country that could be called voter suppression, but the courts have been very quick to correct some of those. There are lawsuits in just about every state on this issue. The League is always aware and talking about policy issues on this. There are two major lawsuits pending in Ohio that we are involved in and we argue why improvements should be made, but that doesn’t raise the question of the intent to keep people from voting. When we talk to people in Ohio, it has been found that our rural counties have the most trouble with voting. Because of the distance they must travel to get to the county seat to vote, it becomes troublesome. Our Board of Elections is incredibly professionally staffed and is doing a good job.

REMINDERS

16 September, Wednesday, MARCC ID Card Registration, 5:30 – 7:30 PM, Catholic Charities of SW Ohio, Su Casa, 7th Floor, 7162 Reading Road, 45237 (Roselawn). CDC Protocol will be followed. More info, Call 513-672-3721 or the MARCC Office at 513-721-4843 or marcc@marcconline.com

14 October, Wednesday, MARCC Delegate Council Meeting via Zoom, 12 Noon-1:15 PM

03 November, Tuesday, Election Day, Polls Open 6:30 AM – 7:30 PM. VOTE!

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