

League of Women Voters – Acton Area Local Program Positions - ACTIVE 1961-2016

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EDUCATION POSITIONS

EDUCATION

AREA Position, 1998

This area position was updated from Littleton's position on Education: High School (1981), Acton's Survey of Schools position (1970), and Stow's School Study position (1979-80). The area position was adopted by concurrence in 1998.

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- The development and adoption of stated goals and philosophy of education for each school system. Recognizing that the ultimate responsibility for formulating philosophy and goals rests with the School Committees, we feel that the opinions of the professional staff, citizens, and students should be taken into consideration. Goals should be subject to periodic review in order to reflect changes in educational approaches as well as changes in the community.
- K-12 curriculum coordination. Curriculum standards and any proposed changes should be well publicized.
- On-going evaluation of programs. Procedures for evaluation should be built into every program. We recommend post-graduate follow-up to assist in the evaluation of the effectiveness of programs.
- The use of para-professionals, aides, and volunteers throughout K-12. We recommend orientation and training for such personnel.
- The uses of a variety of educational approaches, courses, and program offerings that reflect the individuality of children. We support flexibility, diversity, and innovation.
- Increased cooperation and communication between schools and community (citizen advisory councils, individual school-parent or parent-teacher organizations, encouragement of parental school visitation). A real effort should be made to coordinate with other groups that offer activities for children.
- Buildings, classrooms and other facilities that are healthy, safe, and well maintained.

The criteria for taking action on these positions should be that it:

- is a clearly formulated plan,
- is financially feasible,
- includes alternatives, and
- is for the benefit of children rather than for ease of administration.

LOCAL EDUCATION – FINANCING OF SCHOOLS

Acton Position, 1977

This position was revised in 1984 and updated with minor edits in 1998

The Acton members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support the following areas:

Budget Procedures

School budget hearings should be scheduled in such a way that citizens' expression of budget priorities can be timely and effective.

Following a preliminary budget hearing, the school department should organize their meeting so that each department will be reviewed at a specific time and the citizens in the town should be informed as to what budget area will be discussed on which night.

When the final budget hearing is held, the School Committee should present the budget in such a manner as to make it easily understandable to the average citizen. Graphs and pie charts would be helpful. The budget should be presented in line item and program form.

Funding

The School Committee and Administration should actively seek money from the State and Federal Governments with the following reservations:

- There should be a need among the students for the program.
- The long-range financial impact to the town should be considered.

Raising monies and seeking contributions from sources other than the Federal and State Governments should be based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated need
- Effective method or plan
- Financial impact

Salaries vs. Instructional Materials

The balance between expenditures in salaries and instructional materials and methods should be considered by the School Committee when making budget decisions.

HUMAN RESOURCES POSITIONS

ACTON NURSING SERVICES

Acton Position, 1991

This position was updated with minor edits in 1998 and 2016.

The Acton members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- The three missions of the Acton Nursing Services (ANS) are to provide: preventative health care, screening to detect disease, and home health care services.
- The retention of local decision making regarding nursing services in Acton.
- The use of the following criteria for evaluating Acton Nursing Services:
 - cost effectiveness
 - qualified staff to meet the health care needs of the public
 - flexibility in order to respond to changing health needs, fiscal conditions, demographic trends and state and federal regulations
 - continuity of care
 - use of support staff and up-to-date technological equipment
 - the level of community support
 - establishment of the need for the service(s)
- Flexible funding options for the Acton Nursing Services; i.e. Enterprise Fund, Revolving Fund, private fundraising, community groups, user fees, grants, endowments, and local, state and federal tax support.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

AREA Position, 1998

This area position was updated from Acton and Stow's position on Mental Health Services (1983). The area position was adopted by concurrence in 1998. Edits in 2016.

The members of the League of Women Voters - Acton Area believe a well-balanced mental health care system is integral to the quality of life in our community. Therefore, a mental health care system should be supported by all facets of the community. A comprehensive program would have flexible priorities to meet changing needs of the community and would include crisis, chronic, and acute care, aftercare, preventative and education programs, and support groups.

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- education in the schools and the community as a means of promoting citizen understanding of the problems surrounding mental illness.
- greater attention from our state and local agencies to the mental health needs of minors.
- the availability of mental health care on a sliding scale or an ability-to-pay basis, when appropriate. No one should be denied care if he or she is unable to pay for it.
- increased mental health care benefits provided by health insurance policies.
- increased efforts to facilitate access to public mental health services through dissemination of information about local mental health agencies and referral services.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

TOWN GOVERNMENT

AREA Position, 1998

This area position was updated from Acton's position on Executive Body (1975) and Littleton's positions on Executive Branch of Town Government: Personnel (1979) and Purchasing (1980). The area position was adopted by concurrence in 1998. Edits in 2016.

Local Government

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support local government that:

- is responsive to the needs of the community
- provides knowledgeable leadership
- is accountable
- is efficient
- is representative
- provides long-range plans

Executive Branch

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- Selectmen-Town Manager form of government
- periodic review of the executive branch form of local government
- administrative measures to maintain the authority of the Selectmen
- Selectmen's use of expertise of town board members and individuals in the community
- participation in regional meetings and boards
- publication of minutes taken at Selectmen's meetings
- open Selectmen's meetings and work sessions, except for those prescribed by the Open Meeting Law as executive sessions
- increased coordination and communication among town boards
- a procedure for making prompt appointments to town boards that would include:
 - immediate publication of board vacancies
 - interviews with all applicants
 - publication of duties of board positions
 - notice to all applicants of final appointment
 - public announcement of appointments

Personnel Management

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- a personnel management policy that facilitates the attraction and selection of the best possible candidates.
- the creation of a positive environment for employees which would foster effective and efficient government

- a policy that includes a central personnel file, job classification, pay scales, salary review procedures, an affirmative action policy, standard recruitment and selection procedures, and an adequate benefit schedule

Purchasing Procedures

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- the adoption of a central purchasing system with a uniform voucher system
- efforts to insure cost effectiveness through the use of bidding, discounts, interdepartmental purchases, state contracts, regional consortiums, and inter-community purchasing

TOWN MEETING PROCEEDINGS

<p>AREA Position, 1998</p>

<p>This area position was updated from Acton's position on Acton Town Meeting (1971, 1997) and Stow's position on Town Meeting Procedures (1987). The area position was adopted by concurrence in 1998.</p>

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support the Open Town Meeting form of local government.

Town Meeting Procedures

The League supports Town Meeting procedures which:

- encourage citizen participation
- facilitate informed decision-making
- promote efficiency
- respect people's time
- recognize the need to be flexible
- protect the individual's right to be heard
- insure a voting system that is efficient and fair

The League recommends the following:

Town Meeting Warrant

The Town Meeting Warrant should contain:

- understandable summaries
- inclusion of factual background on articles
- board recommendations
- identification of appropriate contact person for each warrant article
- consent calendar
- Town Meeting Guidelines and parliamentary procedures prominently placed

The Town Meeting Warrant should be distributed as widely as possible, in a cost-effective manner.

Town Meeting Management

Each session of Town Meeting should be scheduled according to the wishes of the community. Acton members support the scheduling of Town Meeting to:

- be held consecutive evenings
- be called to order before 7:30 PM
- continue approximately three hours each night
- not introduce a new article after 10:30 PM each night

High-interest warrant articles should be scheduled and publicized in advance of the Town Meeting.

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support expediting Town Meeting debate with:

- pro and con microphones
- initial presentation limitation of 15 minutes unless prior approval by Moderator
- floor debate limitation of 3 minutes per speaker
- presentations that are concise, clear, understandable
- audio-visual materials that are appropriate and visible to the audience
- motions and amendments for reconsideration submitted in writing and posted

The Moderator

As part of the Moderator's responsibility, the Moderator should:

- state the expectation of business to be discussed on each night of Town Meeting
- briefly review the rules of Town Meeting each night, if appropriate
- appoint a Deputy Moderator
- organize a pre-Town Meeting preparation session for warrant article presenters
- provide ongoing oversight to the Finance Committee
- identify a resource person for special questions outside the debate/discussion

Periodic Evaluation

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support periodic evaluation of Open Town Meeting with consideration given to these criteria:

- attendance
- population
- representativeness

LAND USE AND NATURAL RESOURCES POSITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

AREA Position, 1998

This area position was updated from Acton's position on Environmental Protection (1982). The area position was adopted by concurrence in 1998.

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- A comprehensive environmental protection plan at the local government level to deal with such interrelated issues as water quality and quantity, air quality, land use, and hazardous waste.
- Efforts to define environmental concerns and to clarify who has policy-making, monitoring, and enforcement responsibilities in these areas.
- Identification of the town board or department with responsibility for overseeing environmental quality.
- Emphasis within town government on planning and anticipation of potential problems in the environmental area.
- Use of a systematic approach to the development of policies on environmental issues, employing criteria such as those listed below.
- Regional cooperation on environmental issues, including communication among towns and use of available regional resources.

When evaluating policies or regulations that impact environmental quality, the League will apply the following criteria:

- The need for a policy should be clearly established by the body preparing it. When new regulations are proposed, they should meet a need not being met by existing regulations.
- Alternative approaches, including those used by other towns, should be evaluated. Potential for regional action should be evaluated.
- An effort should be made to specify dollar amounts associated with the costs and benefits of a proposed policy. Consideration of costs should include all direct and indirect costs of implementing the policy, including the cost of enforcement. Methods of funding should be examined, and implementation of the policy should be accompanied by provision for adequate funding.
- Regulations should be enforceable. The responsibility for enforcement should be clearly defined.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

AREA position, 2002

This is a new position based on member study and agreement 2000-2002 and adopted at the 2002 Annual Meeting. Edits in 2016.

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area agreed to make growth management and preservation of open space a goal in public policy decisions on land use in the member towns.

The members of the League of Women Voters - Acton Area support the use of these tools in meeting this goal:

- planning and zoning bylaws,
- cluster zoning
- conservation commission bylaws
- conservation trusts,
- conservation restrictions,
- land purchases.

Existing growth management tools in these communities should be evaluated periodically to assess their effectiveness and should be modified as needed or expanded by adding new ones.

The members of the League of Women Voters - Acton Area support the following methods of implementing the growth management goal:

- Employment of professional planners and consultants,
- Adherence to master plan,
- Clarification of definitions with regard to town's character and development goals.

The League recommends that each town prepare an inventory of unprotected lands to determine which parcels should be preserved as Open Space for possible use by the town for active or passive recreation. The methodology for prioritizing the inventory list should use a locally developed rating system using weighted criteria to assign a rank order for each parcel. Land value assessment should be based on a variety of land use scenarios such as regular subdivision, partial development, and the value of land fully protected from development.

The members of the League of Women Voters - Acton Area support the following methods of funding the purchase of land to protect it from maximum development:

- Funding through a municipal set-aside fund such as Stabilization Fund
- Community Preservation Act
- Local tax revenues (debt exclusion overrides)
- Conservation trusts
- Grants
- Private donations
- Other creative approaches

PLANNING AND ZONING

AREA Position, 1998

This area position was updated from Acton's positions on Flood Plain Zoning (1963, 1974) and Planning and Zoning (1973) and Littleton's positions on Zoning (1984) and Growth and Development (1981). The area position was adopted by concurrence in 1998 with edits in 2016.

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support the following actions:

Planning, Zoning, and Development

- Encourage long-range planning to study growth and development. The League recognizes the need for commercial growth, but supports a controlled plan for future development.
- Encourage cluster zoning, which potentially could meet the need for new homes while still preserving open space.
- Meet the needs for low- and moderate-income housing.
- Require developers to provide towns with impact statements at the developers' expense. Such issues as impact on town services, traffic impact, financial benefits, advantages and disadvantages to the town and impact on air, water, and noise quality should all be addressed.
- Encourage commercial development by introducing new kinds of desirable uses and tightening zoning to control less desirable uses.
- Have a procedure for design review, encouraging developers to submit aesthetically pleasing building plans.
- Expedite the development process by encouraging communication among permitting boards.
- Make a checklist available to landowners and developers to identify which boards need to be consulted in which order, what information each board needs, and any other pertinent information.
- Have each town board and/or department prepare a brief summary of its duties, responsibilities, and limitations with respect to growth and development.

Flood Plain Zoning

- Provide protective zoning along all waterways.
- Allow no filling or building below an elevation above mean sea level as established by law except by the express permission of the pertinent boards.
- Strictly enforce local Flood Plain By-laws and measures to prohibit permanent building in the Flood Plain.

The main reasons for supporting this type of zoning are as follows:

- To prevent flooding
- To provide land surface water storage (natural reservoirs)
- To lessen pollution problems
- For conservation purposes
- For control of water for better use in agriculture and industry
- To provide water recreation areas
- For aesthetic reasons (i.e., to provide green belts)
- To support the regional concept of preserving wetlands

WATER PROTECTION AND WATER SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

AREA Position, 1998

This area position was updated from Acton's position on Water Management and Water Resource Management (1979). The area position was adopted by concurrence in 1998 with minor edits in 2016.

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support an aggressive and comprehensive program designed to provide a supply of good quality water sufficient to meet present and future needs through:

- Comprehensive identification and protection of water resources.
- Periodic assessment of future needs.
- Cooperation with neighboring towns to assist with the protection of water supplies and to locate and protect possible additional resources.
- A continuous campaign of education and promotion of water conservation with incentives designed to secure maximum cooperation of all water users.
- Education of the public regarding toxic substances that have a potential for contaminating our water supplies.
- A program of water testing of public and private wells using the latest technology with regular public reporting and interpretation of the results.
- A program for the identification and regulation of potential sources of water contamination.

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- Cooperation between town government and the Water Supply District or Water Department by means of regular communication and inter-board meetings.
- Increased citizen participation in Water Supply District or Water Department meetings and elections.
- Accountability of Water Supply District Commission or Water Department Commission as a governmental body.

TRANSPORTATION

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

AREA Position, 1998

This area position was updated from Acton's position on Traffic Management (1987, 1988). The area position was adopted by concurrence in 1998.

In order to achieve the following traffic-related goals, the members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- Preservation of open spaces, scenic roads, historic buildings, and village centers
- Access to local services
- Mobility and lack of congestion
- Traffic control and safety
- Reduction in commercial sprawl
- Protection of environmental resources
- Public/private cooperation in solving transportation problems

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support the adoption of the following policies:

- Consolidate services to maximize the number of errands per trip.
- Achieve a pattern of commercial and industrial development compatible with the residential character of the area and with the residential neighborhoods that abut commercial areas.
- Identify and protect scenic, residential roads and historic areas, and channel traffic onto main, through roads.
- Improve traffic flow on main, through roads, and evaluate the use of signalization.
- Achieve a balance between development and the traffic capacities of existing roadways.
- Participate in regional traffic planning efforts.
- Require developers to include demand management plans and pedestrian access.
- Develop Master Plans and be proactive in reaching goals.
- Encourage public/private cooperation in solving transportation problems.

In order to implement the above policies, the members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support the following traffic management solutions:

- Establish traffic and land-use goals.
- Complete road and land use inventories; prioritize road improvements that will channel through traffic onto main roads; identify main roads; protect residential, scenic roads and historic areas from increased traffic.
- Develop traffic and land use policies.
- Develop criteria for all traffic studies; include among the criteria town-wide and regional impact and projected development.
- Limit commercial development to commercially zoned areas.
- Include pedestrian links, such as sidewalks and bridges, in design standards.

- Encourage the use of demand management solutions, such as on-site services, ride-sharing, shuttle services, and flexible work hours; establish design standards that encourage these solutions.
- Provide a focal point and appropriate staff resources to implement traffic policies.
- Participate in regional planning groups.

TRANSPORTATION

AREA Position, 1998

This area position was updated from Acton's position on Transportation (1981). The area position was adopted by concurrence in 1998.

The members of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area support:

- A body of town government that has continuing responsibility for immediate and long-range planning of all forms of transportation. This body should ensure the communication and coordination of the efforts of the boards, committees, and departments that have an impact on transportation, including the schools.
- Cooperative regional bodies that have responsibility for long-range planning of transportation for areas wider than individual towns.
- A safe transportation network, which facilitates mobility within the community, links neighborhoods and services within the town, and reduces isolation.
- A more efficient and greater use of existing transportation.
- Increased ridesharing.
- Sidewalks/bikeways.
- Alternatives to the automobile.
- A program of public education which will collect and disseminate information regarding transportation options, promote pedestrian and vehicular safety, and investigate alternatives to the automobile.
- An increase in the town's effort to seek funding from all levels of government, as well as from private sources and user fees, and to investigate all possible uses of such funds.

The League of Women Voters – Acton Area will apply the following criteria when determining support for transportation positions:

- need/demand
- cost effectiveness
- energy conservation
- environmental impact
- regional impact
- safety