**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGION INTER-LEAGUE ORGANIZATION**

**Board Meeting & Visioning Session --- June 7, 2021**

**Zoom Video and Phone Conference**

The thirty second board meeting of the Upper Mississippi River Region Inter-League Organization (UMRR-ILO) was called to order by Chair Mary Ellen Miller (IA Des Moines) on June 7, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

**Board members attending the meeting in addition to the Vice Chair were:**  Gretchen Sabel (MN-ABC), Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkin (WI La Crosse), Sue Wilson (IA Dubuque), Lee Ekstrom (IL McHenry County), Paula Ekstrom (IL McHenry County), Mary Ploeser (WI Madison), Steve Ploeser (WI Madison), Nancy Porter (IA Iowa City), Lonnie McCauley (MN Coon Rapids), Jeri McGinley (WI Stevens Point), Shawn Choinard (IL Rockford), Kay Slama (MN Willmar), Nancy Hill (WI La Crosse), Sue Johannsen (IA Muscatine)

**Approval of Agenda**

L. McCauley moved and L. Ekstrom seconded that the agenda be approved. Motion carried.

**Minutes from April 5, 2021**

T. Prenosil’s minutes from the 5-5-2021 UMRR-ILO Board Meeting were included in the information sent to Board members prior to this meeting. J. McGinley pointed out that the wording regarding the Great Lakes ILO be corrected to say Lake Michigan ILO. L. Ekstrom moved and M. Ploeser seconded that the minutes be approved with the above-mentioned change. Motion carried.

**Financial Report**

J. McGinley, treasurer, sent the treasurer’s report as well as the REVENUES & EXPENSES with BUDGET for July 1, 2020 through May 31,2021 to Board members prior to this meeting.

Revenues – April-May: $105.16 (Memberships: $50, Interest $.16, Unrestricted Individual donation (“In recognition of Gretchen Sabel’s outstanding and continuous dedication to our environment”)

Expenses - $76.70 (Quickbooks Online for 12 months & $1.70 PayPal fees)

Bank Balance as of May 31, 2021: $10,136.08. (Includes ERC II Grant of $326.82 and Judy Beck Memorial Fund of $300).

Treasurer’s report was accepted and will be filed.

**Board Positions to be Filled**

Kay Slama was welcomed as the new Board member from Minnesota. Shawn Choinard was welcomed as the new vice-chair. Mary Ellen Miller is waiting to hear back from a member from Iowa to fill Nancy Porter’s former position when she became vice-chair.

L. McCauley explained the role of advisory persons to the UMRR-ILO Board is to offer technical input when an issue arises for which they have expertise. Currently they are from the Izaak Walton League (Upper Mississippi Initiative), Land Stewardship, and University of Minnesota.

L. McCauley requested members continue to send reports of activities for her to include on the Activities Chart. N. Porter reported on the Mississippi River Network’s Ten Days of Engagement which will feature presentations by Tim Wagner, retiring Izaak Walton League Coordinator for Iowa and Minnesota, in Dubuque on 6-14-2021 and Clinton on 6-15-2021. C. Mahlum-Jenkins reported that the La Crosse LWV Chapter is preparing an evening presentation about PFAS contamination.

**Visioning Our Future UMRR Work**

**A Brief Retrospective, how did we get here?** S. Wilson said the kernel of the idea began when Bonnie Cox, from the Jo Davies League of Women Voters gave a presentation at the Dubuque LWV Chapter explaining what an Inter-League Organization was. Several weekly meetings in Galena with Illinois and Iowa representatives began planning to form the Upper Mississippi Inter-League organization developing a video to be used in presentations to other local chapters in the four states. Members from the Lake Michigan ILO were helpful in advising about organizational procedures, bylaws, and national requirements. The first organizational meeting was held in Dubuque, Iowa at the Grand River Center on October 24, 2015. Members from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa were represented. Bylaws were approved and Board members elected.

**What is our core identity (niche)?** Members are generally from urban areas and the UMRR-ILO promotes understanding of issues affecting both rural and urban areas. The LWV has members willing to speak up and organize and work across political and geographic boundaries. The UMRR-ILO niche is water quality, soil health and climate change (rather than other issues such as voting rights).

**Who is our target audience?** We aim to inform members of the League of Women Voters at all levels of the organization (ex. Articles in the state and local Voter Newsletters). Members of local and state chapters can monitor and partner with local and state entities such as City Councils and Board of Supervisors, Soil and Water Districts, and other non-partisan advocacy groups with similar goals.

**What separates us from what others are doing?** The LWV is non-partisan. Membership is generally female. Local chapters can bring small, actionable issues into the awareness of the public and begin to influence a wider perspective.

**Who can we partner with?** The following is not an exhaustive list. Fishers and Farmers, Soil and Water Districts, Izaak Walton League, Sierra Club, Association of Counties, science teachers, AAUW, church groups, United Nations representatives, Women, Food, and Agriculture Network.

**How can we expand our communication effort?** There are currently over 700 people in four states on the email list. We can submit written reports for state LWV annual meetings. We can submit reports to our state and local Voter newsletters. UMRR-ILO informational programs are recorded and available for local LWV chapters to use as programs. Other advocacy groups are usually looking for speakers for their programs. We can research and provide material for members to use in these presentations to other groups. It is useful to spend considerable advance publicity efforts prior to bi-monthly UMRR-ILO programs to increase attendance. Local chapters can send their member email address to Gretchen Sabel, our Communications Director, and tell local LWV members that the UMRR-ILO newsletter is a benefit of joining League.

**What Upper Mississippi River issues are most pressing? (Programming ideas?)** How the drought is affecting the Mississippi. Iowa State University has a grant to study chemicals in the environment. Develop a registry of websites that are relevant and informative. The Nature Conservancy has soil health as one priority.

**How do we move forward post-pandemic?** We would like more participation in our Board meetings.There will be some combination of in-person and virtual options for attendance at each meeting. The August 2, 2021 Board meeting will be virtual in the morning and virtual with the speaker about Sustainable Dubuque in the afternoon. The October 4, 2021 will have an in-person Board meeting in La Crosse in the morning and a virtual meeting in the evening with the panel on PFAS in the environment.

**What should be our goals for the coming 12 months?** We should continue to work on MRRRI. We can plan to participate in the national LWV convention in 2022. We can plan our six UMRR-ILO for 2022. Our bank balance is in good shape because we had few expenses during the pandemic so now we can use these funds to promote our goals.

Meeting adjourned: 12:00 pm.

Submitted by Tamara Prenosil (from zoom recording of meeting)