

On January 12, 2009, the Alliance for a Livable Newport held an all member meeting at the Newport Public Library. The meeting was conducted by Bonnie Watson, President of ALN. Ms. Watson provided an overview of the structure and finances of ALN and then described ALN's activities during 2008. Having identified four strategic focus areas: public education, city environment and infrastructure, city government accountability, and public safety, ALN has undertaken numerous projects during the past 12 months.

- *Public education* – sponsored forum for candidates for school committee;
- *City environment and infrastructure* – continued a 2007 project entitled, “*What Will Newport’s Waterfront look like in 2030?*”; sponsored a symposium on the Aquidneck Island coyote population; sponsored a forum with the newly formed Aquidneck Island Watershed Council on issues related to protecting our water resources;
- *City government accountability* -- conducted second annual Newport City financial forum, entitled “The Fiscal Shell Game;” conducted three forums related to the November elections, one for candidates for Newport School Committee, one for the candidates for Newport City Council, and one detailing the twenty-three ballot issues reflecting the recommendations of Newport’s Charter Review Commission;
- *Public Safety* -- invited the Police Department and the City’s Noise Control Officers to a forum to address the enforcement of Newport’s noise control and public nuisance ordinances and to listen to residents’ concerns. Focus groups were formed to follow up with the city administration on these concerns.

Ms. Watson also introduced, Cris Cobaugh, the recently appointed Executive Director of ALN, who outlined her agenda as including a focus on information – updating ALN’s email list and website, communication – reaching out to the many constituencies of Newport, and participation – encouraging the involvement of all ALN members. Those present were then invited to discuss the question of what makes a community livable.

Several members of the audience participated, raising issues such as education, job opportunities, the environment, roads and other projects related to infrastructure. There was much discussion of the economic constraints faced at every level of government and the need for the city to avail itself of any opportunity to obtain stimulus monies through “shovel ready” projects. This led to comments regarding the challenges posed by the inefficiencies of government: the frustration of studies over action, of contending with bureaucracy, of achieving a critical mass to influence outcomes in City Hall, of boards and commissions working in isolation. The latter comment sparked an acknowledgement by Ms. Watson that it was also necessary for segments of the community to work together to dissolve the artificially drawn lines that exist among them, for example between ALN and the business community. She cited the issue of late night bar noise as one where the interests of residents and the majority of business owners might find consensus. As the meeting drew to a close, ALN founder, George Herchenroether, rose to comment that tonight represented a milestone for ALN, the culmination of the founders’ dream of having an executive director. He urged all present to lend financial support to ALN and to put pressure on the City of Newport to develop a

strategic plan for the future. State Representative Peter Martin added the suggestion that volunteering for boards and commissions was an effective way for ALN members to participate in local government. Members then enjoyed informal conversation and light refreshments.

Notable quotes from the evening:

“Newport needs more quality year-round jobs to sustain families.” *Louisa Boatwright*

“One of the things that detracts from the beauty of Newport is bad streets.” *Lynn Ceglie*

“A livable city is a place where people get together to get things done. One voice alone is never heard.” *Isabel Griffith*