

League hires new leader, hopes for new direction



Photo by contributed
Ellen Sturgis

FRAMINGHAM –

After facing a revolving door of top officials since last fall, leaders of the Framingham Civic League hope their new director can help the nearly century-old organization find its way.

"The real issue is being clear on our role in the community," said Ellen Sturgis, who started as the group's executive director in June. "I take pretty literally our founding documents of serving the underserved of Framingham."

Sturgis took the job after working for seven years as the director of operations for the Sudbury Valley Trustees. The League post is her first top leadership role for an organization, she said.

Sturgis began working with nonprofits because of her family's influence - her father worked as a community planner, she said. She holds an MBA in finance and has worked in for-profit companies, said she finds community programs more satisfying.

A Weston native, Sturgis lives in Stow and is a selectman in that town. She also served on the Nashoba Regional School Committee.

"Community work is important to me," said Sturgis.

Between October to June, the administrative leadership of the League was in flux while four officials served as executive director.

In October, five-year Executive Director Rebecca Justice left to take over as executive director of the American Red Cross for Greater Nashua & Souhegan Valley. She was replaced by Marco Maina two months later, but Maina's tenure ended in March when he reportedly decided he could not give the job full-time attention.

The League relied on a volunteer Rick MacWilliams to serve as interim executive director twice - after the departures of Justice and Maina.

Board member Doug Freeman, who has worked on the panel for roughly 10 years, said the group has been working to find a role for itself over the past several years. He also is chairman of the town's Flag Day committee.

Right now, the League coordinates its efforts with other local institutions as part of the Downtown Framingham Cultural Triangle, which includes the Danforth Museum of Art, the Memorial Building and the Framingham Public Library, he said.

The League also hosts ESL classes, theater productions and sports - Sturgis said a basketball program would be started in the fall.

League leaders, who oversee an auditorium, gym and meeting spaces, are trying to decide how to balance artistic and athletic programs held at the League's Concord Street building, said Freeman.

Sturgis, who views the League as "a very large community center," said part of her job will be deciding how the League should serve the town. She sees the Concord Street building as a good location for other nonprofits to hold their events. She said she is considering some corporate sponsorship for League events, as well.

"The main thing we don't want to do is replicate what the other groups are doing," she said.

She said leaders also want to increase the 11-member League Council to as many as 20 people - volunteers interested in serving may contact the League at 508-875-5218.

"We have a lot of work to do, but it's a very supportive community," said Sturgis.

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