

## **Cancellation of West Windsor Candidates' Forum Organized by West Windsor Forward**

The League of Women Voters of Greater Princeton Area supported West Windsor Forward in their efforts to provide a non-partisan candidates' forum for the West Windsor mayoral and council races this fall. Two fifteen-year-olds reached out to us with a proposal based both on forums sponsored by the League and also on forums such as those run by Rider University with panels of questioners, and that would initially have ended with an informal "meet and greet" session for forum attendees and candidates, and possibly even community organizations. As someone who has set up League forums for more than three decades, and moderated many of them as well, I was intrigued to see how the multiple formats would work together, and also what these 15-year-olds could do besides writing an excellent and impressive proposal.

The two continued to be impressive, recruiting a varied and capable panel of questioners. I and another member of our local League's leadership committee met with the two students in-person initially, and then via zoom and email throughout much of their project. We did succeed in obtaining a generous agreement from the Mercer County Community College to allow the use of the Kelsey Theatre for the forum.

Unfortunately, this project has now fallen through: The competing campaigns, the Marathe team and West Windsor Together team, each eventually proposed one or more alternative formats. West Windsor Forward, even with welcome support from panelist Micah Rasmussen from Rider College, could not persuade the two campaigns to agree on a common format. As Rasmussen says:

*We aren't going to fix our democracy until we are ready to find common ground on something as basic as a debate format.*

This is a sad end to an excellent beginning. West Windsor voters will once again be facing a local election without a local forum to clarify and expand on the positions of the various candidates and how they intend to implement them. We nonetheless wish voters as clear and informed a vote as they can get from other sources, and we wish West Windsor Forward greater success in the future as they work inform their neighbors and to become one of the major non-profit civic organizations in their community.

Deborah Macmillan  
President, League of Women Voters of Greater Princeton Area  
609-443-5879  
September 18, 2025