Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes

Leyden Town Office Building

Regular Session

Monday, July 7, 2025

11:00 am

**Select Board Members Present:** Katherine DiMatteo, Erica Jensen, Jeffrey Baker

**Others Present:** Michele Giarusso, Liz Kidder, Gary Ponce, Lisa Lamont

Erica called the meeting to order at 11:01 am.

The Select Board signed the biweekly financial warrants.

Accept meeting minutes

**Motion:** Katherine moved the minutes of 6/30/25 with minor amendments. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Colrain Ambulance Quarterly Update

* Gary Ponce reported the yearly statistics for Leyden. There were 33 calls for the year, one call had only basic life support personnel and needed a paramedic level. Gary had estimated maybe 28 for the year.
* Rescue Inc. from Brattleboro has been responding to Leyden on a regular basis through mutual aid and Gary is reaching out to them to have a contact/conversation with them.
* Most of our calls have been for falls and Gary would like to start a falls risk assessment program so people can help themselves. There may be funding for this training. Other ambulance services in our area have started such a program. Particularly Shelburne Fire has a good program and may be willing to train.
* Gary stays in touch with our Fire Chief; the department is still in the growing phase.
* Bernardston police are great to work with and well trained. It is too bad the CSO/PD grant program is coming to an end. They have been so vital in a mental health situation. There have not been any calls in Leyden requiring this service though.
* Community awareness-Gary would like more of a presence in our community when there are community events. Gary was told about the Sept. 28 running event the Rec/Library was sponsoring. Michele will reach out to Karin Parks and Steve Richter to put Gary on their list to invite Colrain Ambulance to the event.
* Regionalization efforts-a group of ambulance services-Charlemont, Shelburne and Colrain are awaiting the opportunity to apply for a regionalization of services grant. They have letters of support from all the towns they serve. The group has concluded it makes sense to look at various models to regionalize to provide the most efficient, responsive, reliable and what makes sense for the town’s model.
* Colrain Ambulance will be taking an ambulance out of service to put the “box” portion on a new chassis. This costs about $300,000 and will take 1 year to build.
* New contract-Gary provided a copy of the new contract for 1 year with a once per year assessment payment. He based the contract and pricing on 35 calls per year based on 2 years of actual calls. This is for a 1 year contract, and he questioned whether the board would like an automatic renewal. Gary will send the contract via email so the board can read it over and make any recommendations before signing. The current contract expires on August 7.
* Katherine asked Gary if he had heard about the need for another dispatch service in Franklin County. Gary had not and he stated the state police do a great job with Shelburne Control. Gary said you only need one dispatch.
* Katherine also asked if nuclear power plants were built would this change anything in public safety. The governor has proposed building nuclear power plants in Massachusetts again. Gary said he hadn’t even thought about it.

Lisa Lamont-Leyden Glen Reservoir

* Lisa expressed concern that she was told by a Greenfield DPW worker in the Leyden Glen that people are not supposed to be down there and the “City of Greenfield may have to crack down” on accessing the area. Lisa walks her dog down there to access other walking trails. Lisa feels more signage should be put up about no swimming, no fishing etc.
* The Select Board stated there are other ways to access the walking trails other than the Greenfield Road entrance. Katherine will reach out to the Mayor of Greenfield to see if a meeting can be set up with the DPW superintendent to discuss the access issue. Lisa stated she may also reach out to the Greenfield DPW superintendent.

Town Coordinator Updates

* Michele reported Roselli and Clark Auditors can begin the FY2024 audit at the end of July beginning of August. The contract needs to be voted and signed.

**Motion:** Katherine moved to have Roselli and Clark auditors conduct the FY2024 audit for $20,000. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Katherine stated she read over the entire contract, and it was interesting what the scope of the audit entails.

* Michele asked the board if they wanted her to change the Minuteman Pest Control company to come quarterly instead of monthly. We have had this service for about 2 years and there has not been any pest activity for a few months now. The insulation that was blown in also covered the holes and the cellulose will keep pests away, she was told. The board agreed to decrease the service to quarterly.
* General liability insurance bill has been received for FY26. The total amount is around $56,000 but there will be credits that can be deducted.
* The mailing for the E&R grant for the public forum will be going out next week after the check is received from the Treasurer.
* Yearly building inspections-the Building Inspector was here and recommended an emergency exit light be installed over the committee room door and another panic bar at the town hall kitchen door.
* An email was received by the Town of Oakham, MA advocacy group asking for Leyden to submit a letter of support to the MA Energy Facility Siting Board against a large battery storage facility being built. The town voted against the project which runs along the Ware River, but the state is overriding the town’s decision. The board thought it would be a good idea to support them with a letter as this shouldn’t be happening to a small town whose citizens voted against something in their town. Michele disclosed she was sending a personal letter as she grew up near there and knows the environmental impact this project has and feels if citizens voted against something it should not be overridden by the state.

Select Board Updates

* Fence Viewers-a job description was sent by email by Katherine. Although she simplified it from the state law, she expressed having fence viewers does not address the issue our highway crew has when mowing along the sides of the roads. Where it states in the job description “people” she thinks it also should say “town”. As Katherine was reviewing this position again, she thinks the board should speak to Natalie Blais and Jo Comerford about removing this from state law that towns are required to have. This law was put into effect in the early 1800s or so when people had animals and it no longer is necessary for towns to have.
* Keets Brook dam issue-Erica reported the Perry heirs built a dam below the Keets Brook Bridge prior to the Wetland’s Protection Act. The structure has been damaged by storms over the years, and the dam is sentimental to the family, so they hired a company to repair the cement structure. The company chopped away at the old concrete and poured new concrete footings, then the family reset vertical posts in the water and put up a board. The Conservation Commission is now involved in handling the situation after consulting with DEP and the Select Board does not have to be involved. Katherine reported she received a call from Rob Snedeker who was the contractor.
* 3-Town Meeting-Thursday, July 10-Katherine will attend this meeting and would like the Select Board’s input on what they feel should be the next steps with the School Committee regarding the regional agreement. Erica feels the 3-town committee should stick with what they discussed and worked on.
* Bernardston Elementary School Sign-Katherine thinks if there is going to be a renaming of the school it should have a totally different name and not include the names of the towns. This is not a priority issue.
* September 28th-Jeff reported that the Recreation Committee and Library are having several different walk/runs including the walk around the block in honor of Irene Baker.

Agenda Planning

* End of year transfers-joint meeting with the Finance Committee
* Financial team update
* Updates from Building Needs, MLP and BOH Committee meetings

**Motion** to adjourn: Katherine moved at 1:31 pm. Jeff seconded the motion, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by: Michele Giarusso