

Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Regular Session
Monday, October 27, 2025
5:00 pm

Select Board Members Present: Erica Jensen, Jeffrey Baker, Katherine DiMatteo via remote access

Others Present: Michele Giarusso

Erica called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.
Warrants were reviewed and approved.

Accept Meeting Minutes

Motion: Jeff moved the 10/20/25 meeting minutes as written. Erica seconded the motion. Motion was unanimously approved.

Katherine joined the meeting.

Motion: Katherine moved the 10/6/25 meeting minutes with amendments. Jeff seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Erica-yes, Jeff-yes, Katherine -yes.

Flag policy

Katherine would like the flag policy updated to say who will raise and lower the flag, when the flag is lowered to half-staff and where the town flags are located. Members agreed that town employees, such as the custodian and the recreation committee chair, can handle flag operations, with the recreation committee taking down the flag at Avery Field for the winter. The policy was updated to specify that the flag should be lowered to half-staff only when the federal or state government issues a declaration applicable to municipal buildings. Erica will update the policy and bring it back to the next meeting for approval.

School Forum planning for 6 town planning board Presentation

The forum will be held at the town office rather than town hall. Michele will put a message on the large outdoor sign and Katherine will send a reminder to Leyden Life to send an email to clarify this change. Michele mentioned Alan and Greg will present a shorter version of the usual presentation, allowing time for questions. The group decided not to provide food at the event.

Budget Process Discussion

Katherine initiated a discussion about the town's budget process, emphasizing the need to prioritize funding in light of potential increases in insurance costs and the school budget. She suggested starting early conversations about potential cuts and salary adjustments in response to a 2.8% COLA. Erica agreed and highlighted the need to trim committee budgets and stipends, as well as consider adjustments to other budgets depending on revenues. Both Katherine and Erica discussed the possibility of reviewing and potentially reducing funds allocated for capital improvement projects, particularly in the highway budget, which has historically been the town's highest.

Erica and Katherine discussed the timeline for receiving key budget information, including property tax revenue projections and the police budget. Erica noted that while they typically receive the school budget by the end of March, the police budget was delayed until June last year. Katherine mentioned that the PVRSD district agreement requires the process to be completed by mid-February. Erica expressed hope that this year's police budget would be finalized earlier, as she had pushed for an earlier submission to the advisory board.

Michele shared that she spoke to the accountant about receiving our Free Cash certification by the end of November or early December, allowing time to incorporate the numbers into the budget before the spring.

They reviewed various warrant articles and funds, including the audit fund (\$3K), land acquisition (\$2,500), and the assessor's reval accounts.

Erica discussed the town's broadband debt, emphasizing the need to pay it off in a timely manner to avoid accruing additional fees.

Town Coordinator Update

- Michele received the Complete Streets grant contract for the amount she asked for \$21,898.

Motion: Erica moved to accept the MassDOT Complete Streets Contract for \$21,898. Jeff seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Katherine-yes, Jeff-yes, Erica-yes.

- Letter to Adam Cormier- Katherine revised the letter is it okay to send out. Members agreed. Katherine will rewrite a similar letter to Miles and Bruce Dobias about the discontinued road.
- Increases in two quotes that the board should be aware of-update in wifi and additional switches for the IT network has increased as well as the PMs for the generators.
- The new MassDot grants have been announced. Michele will take the training in November and see if Bill Brooks will do with her as there is money now for unpaved roads that we could possibly apply for.
- Chapter 70 hearings in Greenfield November 6-Michele plans on attending. Jo and Natalie have prepared a video on the subject and sending it around to the municipalities.
- Conservation Commission fees and account-members are still looking for the money to be set aside this year for fees collected. Michele involved the treasurer and town accountant to decide the best way to proceed. Michele thinking they should have a revolving account. Waiting for the accountant to reply to her. Erica agreed that if they are charging for their services it needs to be publicly posted on the website so everyone is aware.
- Health insurance-there was a meeting with the L.t Governor, DLS, Jo and Natalie this afternoon. They are proposing the increases in the health insurance that was not budgeted for by the towns can be amortized 5 years if towns would like.
There is another meeting with GIC on Thursday, we will know more. The date we must decide by is Dec. 1 for GIC and this is a hard deadline.

Select Board Updates

- Katherine will attend the three-town meeting on Thursday, November 6th.
- Pilot- Erica asked if Orion had replied to Michele. Michele replied no to both email and voice message. She will try again.
- Erica will speak to Liz Kidder as chair of the Police Advisory Committee to see if Bernardston will be ok with us paying the increase in health insurance of \$3520.00 for the police at a Special town meeting in Juen instead of prorating monthly.
- Erica would like Michele to see if the FRCOG can put on their radar to update our Hazard Mitigation Plan for 2027. Michele stated we will have to put on our DLTA form when it comes out in January.
- Jeff will attend the Strategic Planning Committee meeting at PVRSD tomorrow evening.

Other items Not Anticipated

- Alice Wozniak informed the board she would be ready for a tax classification hearing either Nov. 17 or 24th. Erica discussed the need for accurate tax rate information before proceeding with budget planning.
- Katherine asked about abandoned roads, does the assessors reassess the owners because their parcel of land increases. Alice replied she needs the minutes of the town meeting where this was passed and if she is informed, she will have the maps reconfigured.

Agenda Planning

November 3 at 5pm

- Review of audit-led by auditors.
- Approve updated flag policy
- Update on health insurance

Motion to adjourn: Kathrine moved at 6:27 pm. Jeff seconded the motion.

| Respectfully submitted by: Michele Giarusso