



TOWN OF LEYDEN

Meeting Minutes

Select Board

Where : Leyden Town Offices – 7 Brattleboro Road

When: February 2, 2026 at 9:00 AM

In Attendance

Members: Erica Jensen, Katherine DiMatteo, Jeff Baker-via remote access

Audience: Michele Giarusso, Bill Brooks, Liz Kidder

Time meeting called to order: 5:00 PM

Review of Minutes:

Motion: Katherine moved
the minutes of
01/12/26 be approved
with amendments

Second: Jeff

Roll Call Vote: Jeff-
yes, Katherine-yes, Jeff-
yes

Discussions:

1- Bill Brooks, FY 27 Capital Budget and Highway Buildings

Discussion:

- Erica and Bill discussed winter maintenance challenges and potential improvements to highway facilities. They reviewed several capital projects, including ventilation and furnace upgrades, estimated at around \$25K and \$20K respectively, which Erica hopes to fund using free cash. They also discussed repairs to the salt shed, estimated at \$8K, which could potentially be funded through Chapter 90 money. Bill would like the floor to be repaved with a pitch to wick the water away. He mentioned the paving of this floor and paving around the town buildings including the broadband hut. He will get estimates on the paving. Bill agreed to pursue estimates for electrical work and door modifications at the old police station, (highway office) with Erica asking if they could be funded through this year's highway expense account. Bill stated the highway crew could do some of the door modifications. The electric panel needs to be moved to the opposite wall closest to the salt shed so they can attach a pump to the panel to wash away the brine in the salt shed. Bill briefly touched on the container building project, the survey is complete and paperwork will be filled out to go before the ZBA. Erica mentioned the need for a feasibility assessment once the Municipal Modernization Act is passed including discussions about utilizing additional space between the highway and fire buildings and the feasibility of roof modifications, which would require further study and an architect. Bill addressed ongoing challenges with radio antenna placement, he now knows what all the antennas are for on the roofs, he has contacted a person who can move the antenna, but he does not work in winter months, noting limited contractors for low-band radio work in this area.

- Katherine thanked Bill for helping with the Life Path Grant to continue the walking path at Avery Field.
- The group also discussed Chapter 90 funding for engineering work related to the West Leyden Road project and the multiple permits and hours it is taking the engineering firm to receive the permits.
- Jeff inquired about lighting conditions in the highway office, which Bill confirmed was adequate.
- Bill addressed winter salt and aggregate supplies, noting that regular salt performed unexpectedly well this season, though they may need to find a new blend due to increased demand.

2. School FY 27 Budget Update

Discussion: Erica reported she attended the school budget subcommittee meeting last week and discussed concerns about a 10.7% budget increase. This is way too high for the towns to pass. We do not have the town assessments yet, but Bernardston town officials expressed opposition due to rising assessments and economic difficulties. The subcommittee noted that the district had not fully considered rural aid or school choice increases in their budget calculations. The discussion also covered facility maintenance and staffing decisions, with concerns raised about the district's approach to budget reductions and whether all possible cost-saving measures were being considered. Erica does not feel the school committee is listening to the towns to decrease the budget and assessments.

3. Bernardston School Facilities Meeting Update

Discussion: Katherine reported she and Erica attended the facilities meeting at Bernardston Elementary School. It was an interesting meeting, and she observed that Bernardston officials are used to working with Gretchen, the PVRSD Facilities Director. Katherine feels Bernardston officials are aware of the building needs and Brian Keir has a handle on the boiler situation. They have a way to fix it. Bernardston feels it is safe to operate. They may be looking into more heat pumps and solar for the building.

4. Six Town Vote for Special Election for a Regional Agreement

Discussion: There is no action to be taken at this time. It is in the legislature's hands.

5. RAVE Discussion and Vote to Renew

Discussion: Erica reported the RAVE announcement worked as it should this past weekend we should renew for 6 months.

Motion: Katherine moved to approve renewing RAVE for 6 months for the amount of \$1425.00. **Motion 2nd: Jeff Roll Call Vote:** Jeff-yes, Katherine-yes, Erica-yes.

6. Town Coordinator Updates

- Erica signed a letter to HCGIT to terminate group health insurance as voted at a previous meeting.
- Orion replied that the Kibilio board of directors has approved a \$6,000 PILOT payment to the town. They questioned whether we wanted a lump sum payment of \$6,000 or \$5,000 for taxes and \$1,000 to go to public safety services. Michele emailed the question to the assistant assessor and tax collector.

- Michele received another Colrain ambulance bill and emailed Gary Ponce to take care of it.
- Information only, the balance from the Franklin Regional Housing Authority septic program. There is \$99, 905.22 and one application in the works.
- February 18th there is going to be a family workshop here hosted by the PVRSD family coordinator.
- Pam Brown's request to use the town hall on March 7th to invite various government officials to Leyden. A donation was offered. Michele will ensure that the heat is turned on to sufficiently warm the space.
- Rebecca Bald's inquiry into the status of their property.
Action: Select Board asked Michele to follow up with the Assistant Assessor on next steps.

6. Select Board Updates

Discussion:

- Katherine reported Pam Brown wrote and submitted a Lifepath grant for \$3,000 to finish the walking path at Avery Field and a \$3,000 grant to upgrade mics and speakers for the town hall.
 Mass in Motion has \$4,000 and if these grants are not received maybe Mass in Motion can partially fund one of these. To complete the walking path, it is estimated to cost \$7-8,000.
- Erica reported she attended the digital equity webinar. It was at a high level with state officials in attendance. We will need to convert all our pdfs to webpages on our website. Municipalities will have to show they are working towards ADA by April 2027. Hopefully the FRCOG will receive a grant to help the towns.
- Erica reported we have received CAF II funds of \$27,628 for broadband. This is good news and hopefully we will receive the rest owed to us.
- Katherine reported she attended the rural and small-town housing webinar to build housing stock. Leyden does not meet eligibility criteria.
- Katherine reported the E&R committee met but did not have a quorum. There are follow-ups she will do, one of them is to attend the Bernardston Select Board meeting to discuss fire and town clerk possibilities in moving forward to share.

7. Public Comments

Liz Kidder would like the Select Board to write a letter of support to Woodland's Partnership to support their grant program.

8. Agenda Planning

- Update on the school budget hearing
- Update on the aggregation public hearing
- Discussion on FY27 wages and Select Board budgets and schedule spring reviews.

Miscellaneous: List any topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair prior to the 48-hour posting requirement for the meeting.

1- None

Next Meeting: February 9, 2026, at 5:30am

Meeting Adjournment

Motion: Katherine moved
to adjourn at 11:18 am

Second: Jeff

Roll Call Vote: Jeff-yes,
Erica-yes, Katherine-
yes

Submitted By: Michele Giarusso