



TOWN OF LEYDEN

Meeting Minutes

Select Board

Where : Leyden Town Offices – 7 Brattleboro Road

When: February 9, 2026 at 5:00 PM

In Attendance

Members: Erica Jensen, Katherine DiMatteo, Jeff Baker

Audience: Michele Giarusso

Time meeting called to order: 5:01 PM

Review of Minutes:

Motion: Katherine moved **Second:** Jeff **Vote:** Unanimous
the minutes of 02/2/26
be approved with
minor amendments

Discussions:

1. Vote on Life Path Grants and Digital Equity Grants through the FRCOG (DLS IT program)

Discussion:

Motion: Katherine moved the Life Path and Digital Equity grants for the town hall audio equipment and Avery Field walking path be approved to apply for. **Second**-Jeff. **Vote**:- Unanimous.

Motion: Katherine moved the Digital Equity grant (through DLS IT grant) and have the FRCOG apply for on Leyden’s behalf be approved. . **Second:** Jeff **Vote:** Unanimous

2. School Budget Hearing

Discussion: Katherine attended the public hearing on the FY 27 budget. Very few community members were in attendance. Patricia and Taffy did a presentation that was seen twice before, they did not go through the cuts that were made from the 3.0 budget to the 4.0 budget version presented. Katherine expressed concerns about the accuracy and clarity of financial data, particularly regarding revenue categorization and enrollment projections. She discussed the need for further review of budget presentations and highlighted the importance of questioning data manipulation. Katherine also noted that Patricia made a mention of the six-town regionalization which was totally off topic. When Katherine asked what the school committee policy was on increases in wages Patricia used Leyden’s policies as an example which did not answer Katherine’s question on what the school committee policy is. Katherine’s concerns aggravated the superintendent to the point that the superintendent approached Katherine at the end of the meeting and stated the superintendent can say anything during a school committee meeting. The meeting was posted as a public hearing and not a regular school committee meeting.

3. Update on Electrical Aggregation Information Session

Discussion: Erica reported a decent number of people attended and Colonial Power representatives answered questions of those in attendance.

4. Discussion on FY27 Budget- wages and schedule spring reviews

Discussion: The Select Board discussed wages and stipends for various town positions, including the tree warden role which is an elected position and currently the stipend is based on highway workers' salary which is not something that can be continued. Erica shared this with Bill. They agreed to explore options for COLA adjustments; it will probably be in the 2.5%-3.0% range. Erica discussed the challenges of funding health insurance increases, explaining that a 4-5% increase is not feasible within the current budget. She expressed opposition to incorporating the increase in salaries and suggested one-time compensation or a larger town contribution instead.

Katherine discussed spring employee reviews, emphasizing the need to start scheduling them in March and April for employees including Jeff, Susan, Angelica, Carey, Bill and Michele. They agreed to review job descriptions and consider updating the evaluation questions, with Katherine offering to bring the existing questions to a future meeting. Michele is waiting for directions from Ginger regarding budget-related forms and deadlines.

5. Strategic Planning Committee PVRSD update

Discussion: Jeff reported that the PVRSD Strategic Planning Committee, led by Arnold and Patricia, is developing a 5-year plan for Pioneer, there are no specifics yet as the members completed a survey and they have not met to see the results of that survey. The committee was asked questions on where do they see Pioneer in 5 years and what can be done to make Pioneer a better place in 5 years. The consultant took all the information and is expected to present their findings to the school committee for approval. Katherine asked if the plan will be comprehensive, highlighting the need for a more analytical approach that addresses student-teacher ratios, enrollment trends, and program strengths and weaknesses.

6. Town Coordinator Updates

- Michele has been reading all her emails from her vacation and answering questions on the permitting for the West Leyden Road "bog" project. The permitting hopefully will be completed by the end of spring.
- Michele completed the MassDOT grant application for the West Leyden Road construction project before the deadline and asked for \$1ml. She received confirmation it was received.

Action: Select Board would like Michele to email town counsel about VT ACT 73 to see if it will impact tuition of students to other states.

7. Select Board Updates

Discussion: Katherine attended the Attorney General's and the Office of Disability webinar. There was a lot of information that we should work on. She discussed the importance of integrating ADA compliance into various aspects of town operations, including signage, parking, and digital accessibility. She emphasized the need for staff training, coordination

with other departments to ensure compliance, and identifying who will manage planning and implementing improvements. Katherine also highlighted the importance of considering a broad definition of disability and shared examples of accessibility challenges faced by residents with visual impairments or dementia. Michele will see what FRCOG can help with in these areas. It was recommended that towns create a budget for reasonable accommodations and potential expenses, such as sign interpreters and hearing aid equipment for annual town meetings, public information sessions, etc. The group agreed to consider adding funds for accessibility in the upcoming budget. They also discussed the importance of planning ahead and not waiting for requests they cannot fulfill.

8. Public Comments-none

8. Agenda Planning

- No meeting Feb. 16-Holiday
- Feb. 23 -Richard Martin -FCTS FY 27 Budget update and construction project update
- MLP update
- Start discussing/working on Digital Equity grant

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 23, 2026, at 9:00 am

Meeting Adjournment

Motion: Katherine moved
to adjourn at 7:01 pm

Second: Jeff

Vote: Unanimous

Submitted By: Michele Giarusso