



TOWN OF LEYDEN

Meeting Minutes

Select Board

Where
: Leyden Town Offices – 7 Brattleboro Road

When: March 9, 2026 at 9:00 AM

In Attendance

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

Audience: Michele Giarusso, Richard Martin- FCTS, Donna Dusell-GCC

Time meeting called to order: 9:02 AM

Review of Minutes: Passed over until next meeting

Motion:

Second:

Vote:

Discussions:

1. Town Coordinator Update

- Snow and Sons contract renewal for town offices

Motion: Erica moved the Snow and Sons contract renewal for the town offices to be approved for \$116 bi-weekly . **Second:** Katherine **Roll Call Vote:** Jeff-yes, Katherine-yes, Erica-yes

- Eco One Stop grant-Vote to approve Michele to apply

Motion: Katherine moved to have Michele apply to the One Stop grant program to apply through DER for \$650,000 for the West Leyden Road bog project to supplement the MassDOT grant. **Second:** Jeff **Roll Call Vote:** Jeff-yes, Katherine-yes, Erica-yes

- Complete Streets grant-Michele has reached out to residents who are willing to be interviewed by FRCOG staff and participate in committee work. Katherine suggested that Jeff may want to reach out to other people in town to see if they are interested in participating.

2 . Franklin County Tech School FY27 budgets and Update on New Building

Discussion: Richard Martin, Superintendent of Schools gave a presentation and overview of the FY27 budget highlighting significant increases in insurance costs driving budget adjustments. The district had to reduce instructional services by 6.0 FTE positions and decrease the capital stabilization fund to \$50,000 to offset these costs. Rick explained that while Smith Tech offers agricultural programs not currently available at Franklin County Tech, a \$2.5 million grant application aims to close this gap, and the district has secured \$11.5 million in competitive grants since 2014 for new programs like aviation maintenance. The district is actively seeking new insurance providers to address rising costs, with potential changes expected in the first quarter of the next fiscal year.

Leyden's share of the FY27 will be approximately \$158,433. The budget has not been voted on yet, so this amount is not official. This equates to \$13,203 per pupil.

Rick also gave an overview of the proposed new campus, including details about the building, MSBA reimbursement rates, and annual debt service estimates of \$93,000-98,000 over 30 years for Leyden is projected. This represents 1.15% of the cost of the project. Rick provided details on the building

specifications, including a minimum of 211,000 square feet to meet OSHA standards, and confirmed that the next public hearing would be held on May 12th at GCC. He explained significant electrical and mechanical system issues requiring potential upgrades costing \$32 million. The discussion covered the decision to build a new L-shaped building for 600 students instead of renovating the current facility, which would cost more at \$203-209 million. The new building would receive 66.5% reimbursement from MSBA, with total costs around \$120 million across 19 member towns, and a special vote is planned for October to approve the project.

The conversation also addressed how Franklin County Tech's costs compare to other vocational schools, with Rick noting they are slightly below average despite being above elementary schools due to their lab and workshop requirements

3. Donna Dusell -Cyber Senior Coordinator at GCC

Discussion: Donna provided an overview of the Cyber Seniors program, explaining its evolution from a small GCC initiative in 2022 to a larger program involving 50 iPads distributed to senior citizens in Greenfield from October 2023 to May 2024. She described the current grant, where six towns, including Leyden, collaborate to provide tech support and workshops, with each town receiving 100 hours of support and 12 workshops annually. Donna noted that Leyden has completed two workshops and is underspending its grant allocation.

Erica and Katherine discussed organizing 10 remaining workshops by June 30th, with a focus on computer and digital literacy topics like AI and organizing digital life. Donna offered evening workshops at GCC using their computer lab if needed. The discussion continued with plans to coordinate with Karin at the library and promote through various channels including the GCC website. The discussion clarified that while the current grant for workshops ends in June, a separate Digital Equity grant for distributing devices continues beyond that date, allowing for both equipment distribution and post-June training sessions. Erica will work on technology equipment selection for seniors; she has investigated tablets versus iPads and data plans. Equipment distribution criteria still must be thought through. The group agreed to schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss their grant planning,

4 .Select Board Updates

- Katherine attended the planning board regional meeting, and they mentioned DOER is going to have a new consolidated position for managing energy project permits, which will be discussed further in May.
- Katherine shared updates about an upcoming three-town meeting on April 19th regarding the school budget and the regional agreement since there has been no reply from the school committee on the agreement.
- Katherine mentioned Warwick's proposed legislation to reduce school tuition costs to \$5,000 that was in the newspaper we should watch and a new MassDOT pilot program where 3 towns are participating in a pilot ~~of~~ program for engineering and design of culverts/road projects.
- Jeff asked if there is a plan to increase parking around the town hall. Katherine explained the Complete Streets plan could include parking but the area around the town hall is limited.
- Erica mentioned battery energy storage (BES) regulations and planning board responsibilities, including the need for a floodplain administrator role. The conversation ended with discussions about Memorial Day preparations, including the need to replace old flags and the proper disposal method for damaged plastic flags.

5. Public Comments

Discussion: Liz reported positive progress with Bernardston and Leyden's fire departments regarding a potential interim agreement. The department rejected the idea of a shared chief position but agreed to

an IMA starting July 1st, with Leyden keeping all equipment and vehicles initially. The financial impact would be minimal, with Leyden's current fire budget of \$62K potentially increasing to around \$70-75K, and the arrangement would provide Bernardston Fire with additional funding and training opportunities while reducing stress for their department. Liz plans to develop a working draft of an interim agreement within the next few days, with input from both fire departments, select boards, and potentially the Finance Committee. We will need to have another lawyer look over the agreement when the draft is complete. The next step is for someone from each Select Board, fire department and finance committee to meet and form an advisory committee to hash out the IMA.

Action: Michele will email the same lawyer that read over the police IMA for Leyden to see if he can read over the fire agreement when a draft is complete.

6. Agenda Planning

Digital equity grant and work on annual review forms

Next Meeting: March 16, 2026, at 5:00 pm

Meeting Adjournment

Motion: Katherine moved
to adjourn at 11:55 am

Second: Jeff

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

Submitted By: Michele Giarusso