



TOWN OF LEYDEN

Meeting Minutes

Select Board

Where
: Leyden Town Offices – 7 Brattleboro Road

When: March 30, 2026, at 9:00 AM

In Attendance

Members: Erica Jensen, Katherine DiMatteo, Jeff Baker

Audience: Michele Giarusso, Bill Brooks

Time meeting called to order: 9:00 AM

Select Board reviewed and signed the bi-weekly warrants.

Review of Minutes:

Motion: Katherine moved
the minutes of
3/16/26.

Second: Jeff

Vote: Unanimous

Motion: Jeff moved the
minutes of 3/23/26. Erica
2nd Unanimous vote

Discussion:

1. Tree Warden-Bill Brooks

Discussion: Erica brought up the discussion on the tree warden position and its compensation structure aligning with other elected officials' compensation. Bill clarified that current tree work during regular highway hours is handled as part of regular maintenance, while after-hours or weekend tree work comes from the tree warden account. Katherine suggested a stipend for the tree warden position will address concerns about escalating time-and-a-half compensation rates. Katherine proposed a \$500 annual stipend that would cover administrative duties while allowing the current compensation structure for actual physical work to remain unchanged. The group agreed this approach would create consistency with other elected official stipends without requiring immediate changes to the existing work compensation system. Bill agrees.

Motion: Katherine moved to establish a tree warden stipend of \$500 per year. **Second:** Jeff **Vote:** Unanimous.

Katherine questioned Eversource's tree removal activities on West Leyde Road. Bill explained that they are implementing a 3-phase power line project from Greenfield to Green River for grid redundancy. She noted that while Eversource has a pruning plan in place, some trees were unexpectedly cut down, particularly those near North County and Jeff Miller's house. Katherine

requested a detailed list of trees Eversource plans to remove versus prune, as she believes some trees could be adequately pruned rather than fully removed. Bill emphasized the importance of proper notification to landowners before tree removal. Katherine mentioned that Eversource has been more responsive to town oversight since the board started requiring annual vegetation plans. Bill has been in touch with Eversource's arborist.

2 . Vote on Right to Farm sign

Discussion:

Motion: Katherine moved to move the Right to Farm sign to the town common to replace the police sign that is there currently. **Second:** Jeff **Vote:** Unanimous

3 . Vote on School Budget

Discussion:

Erica explained our current levy limit is \$2.37ml and the FY 27 school budget is \$1.18ml. We are very close to the levy limit if everything asked for FY27 is approved. This does not leave any room for next year, so we need to really discuss a strategy for sustainability. Bernardston may be facing an override. The 3 towns are discussing a strategy for the school budget, so the school committee and superintendent understand the rising costs are unsustainable. Katherine feels the Select Board needs to send a message and the only way to discuss it on town meeting floor is not to support the school budget.

- Katherine is not recommending the school budget so there can be a discussion to inform the citizens of Leyden of the current state of the school budget for this coming year and future years.
- Jeff is not recommending the school budget as he would like to see further discussion on regionalization.
- Erica is not recommending the school budget for next year to engage further conversation on town meeting floor.

4. E&R Advisory Committee Update

Discussion: Katherine reported the Bernardston Finance Committee could not fit her into their agenda this evening. She spoke to Bernardston's Finance Committee chair, and she is aware of the MOU that is almost agreed upon by both towns. The Bernardston Select Board supports the MOU. Due to the increasing costs of everything, shared services, while they provide benefits to Bernardston and Leyden, are not cost savings. The E&R committee voted for the \$65,000 per year option that Leyden will pay Bernardston for fire services, this will increase Leyden's fire budget by approximately \$20,000.

Katherine also met with Bernardston's town clerks and will be meeting with ours today. Bernardston uses an automated system for dog licenses and other permits called LL database, which costs \$2,300 initially plus \$175 annually for maintenance. Bernardston's town clerk works 24 hours per week, and the assistant works 16 hours per week. While they were open to merging, Katherine noted that shared town clerk services are not common in Massachusetts and may have to face state approval.

5. Town Coordinator updates

Discussion:

- Michele reported that Jeff Miller is cleaning up the town common for the Easter Egg Hunt but he can't possibly rake the entire common.

- Request to move forward with Current Electric quotes for town offices and town hall, the money is there in the town buildings account, she would like to proceed with getting the work done.

Action: Erica would like to add 4 electrical quad outlets to the town hall. Michele will have Current Electric add those.

- LifePath grant had some documents missing when it was signed and sent back by the COA. Michele is handling the documents and will take over the grant.
- Michele discussed the town office ADA walkway plans are complete and quotes are being vetted through Building Needs members. The ADA grant is usually out in early May.
- Public records request-Michele has a request that she has discussed with town counsel. Donna advised to call the OIG and State Ethics . Michele has done so and is waiting for phone calls back
- Angelica is recommending to close out an old police detail that should be paid through the MLP retained earnings account.

6. Select board Updates

Discussion:

Michele mentioned the board should vote on a date to close the special and annual town meeting warrants.

Motion: Katherine moved to close the special and annual town meeting warrants on April 24th.

Second: Jeff. **Vote:** Unanimous

- Erica has been doing her own spreadsheet for the Fy27 budget, there is no fluff in it. OPEB actuarial is being done. Donna said past retirees will be eligible to be added
- BESS-planning board is responsible for allowing and enforcing zoning bylaws not BOH.
- Katherine mentioned there is a request to put a warrant article on our ATM warrant about MassCare. Do we want the person Louise to attend a meeting. Board was comfortable putting the warrant article on the ATM warrant without Louise presenting.

Motion: Katherine moved to add the MassCare article to the Annual Town Meeting warrant .

Second: Jeff **Vote:** Unanimous

7. Public Comment-None

8. Agenda Planning

- Colrain Ambulance- FY27 budget and contract
- MLP meeting-FY27 Budget
- Finalize Salary discussion
- Update 3 town meeting

Next Meeting: April 6, 2026, at 5:00 pm

Meeting Adjournment

Motion: Jeff moved to
adjourn at 11:50 am

Second: Katherine

Vote: Unanimous

Submitted By: Michele Giarusso