TOWN OF LEYDEN
Meeting Minutes

Select Board Meeting Minutes

Where:	Leyden Town Office
When:	September 14, 2026

In Attendance

Members:	Erica Jensen, Jeff Baker, Katherine DiMatteo via remote access
Audience:	Michele Giarusso, Bill Brooks, Jim Palmeri, Gary Ponce, Liz Kidder via remote access

Time meeting called to order: 9:04am

Bi-Weekly warrants. Katherine and Erica discussed confusion over duplicate billing for seasonal lawn services with Snow and Sons. Michele retrieved the signed contracts and discovered that two separate contracts were signed for separate services. Erica asked that next year all services are on are one invoice. Erica signed the biweekly warrants, Katherine approved Michele signing for her and Jeff replied by email he approved.

Review of Minutes:

Motion: Katherine moved to accept the meeting minutes of 8/31/26 with amendments. **Second:** Jeff **Vote:** Roll Call :Katherine-yes ,Jeff-yes ,Erica-yes

Discussions:

1. **Highway Superintendent Updates**

Complete Streets:

Bill has reviewed the Complete Streets recommendations**.**

Erica discussed traffic safety improvements for the town, focusing on intersection markings, signage, and potential sidewalk installations. Bill expressed concerns about narrowing intersections due to space constraints and winter maintenance challenges, particularly for delivery trucks and snowplows. They agreed to prioritize pavement markings, signs, and crosswalks around the town center, library, and Town Hall area, with potential funding available through the Complete Streets program. The discussion highlighted the need to balance safety improvements with practical considerations for winter maintenance and truck access.

Continued discussion was on traffic safety concerns around West Leyden Road and North Mid County Road with Jim Palmeri, including issues with stop signs and visibility at intersections. Katherine mentioned as you travel west to east right before the town hall it is difficult to see if trucks or cars are coming up from the Highway and Fire Station. They explored potential solutions like yield signs, better visibility through brush removal, and custom signage, though concerns about an underground power line for the electric car charging station limited options for modifying the area near Linda Lutz residence. The discussion concluded with information that road line painting projects must be part of specific site improvements rather than standalone initiatives, with the town hall area identified as the most logical location for future road safety improvements.

Katherine discussed traffic safety improvements at dangerous intersections, in particular at the Mid-County/Greenfield Road, Bill agreed to implement stopgap measures like signage while waiting for LEAP technical assistance. All in agreement the Compete Streets Project should focus on the center of town first.
Action: Michele will apply to the LEAP program for technical assistance.

Bill explained that painting lines separating parking lots from roads and crosswalks for the church could potentially happen before winter. Katherine asked about alternatives to traditional fog lines, including reflector poles, she noted these would need to be considered in relation to snow removal and mowing schedules. Unlike painting the fog lines, this alternative would not have to be redone/replaced as often. Erica asked if the MLP hut could be included in the paving contract. MLP would pay for that portion. Erica noted that we must remember to include the cost of paving when we work on the budget this year.

Bill reported that he water problem at the Town Hall has been resolved by replacing the valve and pressure tank.

Quarterly Update:
Bill reported they are getting ready for winter snowplowing, road mowing and vegetation management is almost complete at least once, some places are being done twice and the mowing is being done further back from the road, with Bill noting they're working through the town roads systematically. A guard rail mower has been borrowed to see if it would be of good use for Leyden. Bill noted he is pleased with the job it can do. Erica asked about the town hall parking lot paving, she knows Chapter 90 isn't an option to pay and will need to be addressed during budget season with potential section-by-section implementation including the MLP hut driveway.

2. Colrain Ambulance Quarterly Update-Gary Ponce

Gary reported from 8/1/25-7/30/26 there were 36 calls from Leyden and 29 responses with 7 requests for mutual aid primarily involving Rescue Inc. One interceptor required transport to the hospital. The 29 responses averaged 21.27 minutes from time received to time on the scene. This means 2 people responded on the ambulance, others were basic response. 41% of Leyden’s calls are falls. The mutual aid calls were largely in response to injuries in accidents. This was a larger number than last year.

The refit of the ambulance will not be done until end of 2027. $200,000 for the refit compared to $525.000 for a new ambulance.

Erica asked Gary about his opinion on what should be done with West Leyden Road is under construction next year and closed for 4 months. Project will start in April, maybe close the road when school is out. Gary’s response is have Northfield cover, invite Matt to your meetings about the road closure. Also invite Rescue Inc., Shelburne Control and Greenfield. Question of how to pay for other services during this period. Colrain Ambulance would do a subcontract with the other services. Question raised: is this legal? Gary will start a discussion between the ambulance services.

Erica and Gary discussed the challenges and timeline of establishing a regional ambulance service across 26 towns, emphasizing that it would likely take at least 3-10 years to implement properly. They addressed concerns about staffing, equipment, and governance, noting that formalizing current handshake agreements and securing funding would be crucial steps. The conversation also touched on the potential structure of the new service, whether it should remain a nonprofit or be set up as an enterprise fund, and the challenges of hiring a chief and managing budgets without town pension benefits. Gary emphasized the importance of building a positive culture and offering competitive benefits to retain public safety personnel, noting that while funding and benefits are well-considered, staffing remains a significant challenge. The group discussed the complexities of integrating various districts, including water districts like Shelburne, into a regionalized entity, highlighting the need for proper governance and cooperation. It was agreed that the study phase is ongoing, with plans to engage select boards and towns for feedback before moving forward, and the group acknowledged the progress made so far while recognizing the need for further development in governance and contracts.

Erica suggested that we have a warrant article at the Annual Town Meeting that asks the town if they are interested in regionalization of emergency services before there is a decision about an agreement.
Next contract from Colrain Ambulance will come after there is some clarity on regionalization.

3. Appointments

Motion: Katherine moved to appoint Ann Pratt as a poll worker for 2 years**. Second:** Jeff **Roll Call Vote:** Jeff-yes, Katherine-yes, Erica-yes.
Motion: Katherine moved to appoint Laure Van dan Broeck Raffensperger to the Cultural Council for 3 years**. Second:** Jeff **Roll Call Vote:** Jeff-yes, Katherine-yes, Erica-yes.

4. Digital Equity Update

Michele reported postcards should be mailed either last Friday or today. Katherine asked if the training could be virtual as well as in person. There have been 4 calls expressing interest in submitting an application.
Action: Michele will ask Donna at GCC.

5. Town Coordinator Updates

- Michele asked where the MIAA check for $814.69 should be deposited. This is for stolen property at the pavilion. Katherine thinks the Recreation Expense account. Board agreed.
- Letter from Jennifer Van Pelt-this letter was emailed to the board prior to the meeting to read. Since the Select Board has no jurisdiction over Assessor's decision before replying to Jennifer the board would like Michele to contact town counsel for advice on how to respond.
- Lotreck property- The property is a 7-acre lot in Chapter 61A land that was previously carved out from APR conservation land. Michele stated the new property owner has inquired about the progress of the right of first refusal. The board would like to know the back taxes owed that would need to be paid if the property is developed. ConCom had agreed to allow the sale on the contingency that a fund for the back taxes would be set up specifically for ConCom.

The Planning Board needs to address this issue since they were included in the original agreement, and the conservation committee should be informed that they cannot receive the back taxes, as this money goes to the town rather than ConCom. SB agreed that the property should be sold because the town does not have the $135,000 to purchase and if the town held the land, we would lose tax revenue. A vote will be taken when we hear from Planning Board and again from ConCom.

6. Select Board Updates

- Jeff attended the BESS meeting last week. It was a very good presentation. He reported that data centers are unlikely in the area due to zoning bylaws and water access concerns .Liz commented we have bylaws for this and solar arrays in Leyden now.
- Katherine attended last week's school committee meeting and was voted in as the negotiation representative for the 3 town's Select Boards. The Northfield rep did not show up so Brian Keir Bernardston Select Board nominated Katherine and she accepted. Her term is for 4 years.
- Katherine researched the cemetery issue, and it is not automatic that a town must take over a private cemetery. The town **may** take over an abandoned cemetery. Katherine noted that it is important that we know what the cost is for plots being sold at East Hill Cemetery, the one town owned cemetery. The town does have to provide a town cemetery and bury indigent residents. Plots can be sold to residents and non-residents. The board should have more information on this since there is not a quorum for the committee of this cemetery. Perhaps invite the one member to come to a SB meeting.
- Erica would like the FCTS business manager present at the forum on Thursday.

8. Public Comment

None

9. **Agenda Planning**

- Lotreck property
- Town Clerk 3-month review
- Digital Equity update

Next Meeting: September 21 at 5pm

Meeting Adjournment

Motion: Jeff moved to adjourn at 12:02pm. **Second:** Katherine **Vote: Roll Call Vote:** Jeff-yes, Katherine-yes, Erica-yes.

Submitted By: Michele Giarusso