



TOWN OF LEYDEN

Meeting Minutes

Select Board Meeting Minutes

Where : Leyden Town Office

When: September 28, 2026

In Attendance

Members: Erica Jensen, Jeff Baker,

Audience: Michele Giarusso, Senator Jo Comerford, Liz Kidder , Jason Tuell, Robbie Milner, Jeff Neipp, Peter Tusinski

Time meeting called to order: 9:00 am

The board signed the bi-weekly warrants

Review of Minutes:

Motion: Jeff moved to accept the minutes of 9/21/26. **Second:** Erica **Vote:** Unanimous

Discussions:

1. Senator Jo Comerford

Senator Comerford thanked the community for hosting her and discussed state grant funding, including a successful advocacy effort that secured an additional \$91,000 for Leyden. She has read the concerns the board submitted to her by email earlier.

Her discussion covered several state initiatives including the State on Land and Watershed Pilot Commission, where the senator requested the Select Board submit testimony, and updates on the Foundation Budget Review Commission work regarding target local contributions. She provided an update on the newly established chapter 70 commission, explaining that appointments are nearly complete, and the commission is expected to begin work by November after the federal midterms. She emphasized the need for state support and resources to help communities navigate difficult conversations about school funding. She emphasized the need for the Select Board and School Committee to immediately send the commission a list of issues to consider, as the agenda is not yet determined.

She also discussed concerns about Verizon's plans to discontinue traditional copper landlines, noting that elderly residents and those without alternative service options face significant challenges, Jo recommended we write to Senator Markey's office about Verizon.

Regarding EMS services, Jo understands the concerns about the sustainability of current ambulance coverage in Franklin County, particularly for smaller towns with limited budgets and aging volunteer providers. She proposed the \$100,000 earmark for the FRCOG to conduct the study for the towns reviewing to regionalize ambulance services. She expressed support for state-level advocacy to address these issues and mentioned that Leyden should participate in future discussions with Senator Mark as he is chair of the public health committee.

Regarding universal healthcare, the senator acknowledged that while some reforms have been implemented, universal healthcare remains unaddressed at the state level, though she supports exploring a public option through a commission.

On school regionalization, she acknowledged the financial burden on small districts like Leyden. Erica commented on Leyden, which currently spends 50% of its budget on around 53 students and emphasized the need for the state to provide multiple options for districts with declining enrollment and the need for the state to support consolidation with money to help make the changes.

In closing the senator highlighted budget constraints due to federal cuts of \$3.7 billion to MA. The next budget season will be challenging for everyone.

2. Public Comment

Jeff Neipp discussed his concerns about the delivery of mail-in ballots for the primary and now the October 6 votes. The late delivery and return dates are too close. He is also concerned that the envelopes for the Oct. 6 vote look like envelopes for the November midterm elections and people will be confused. He stated the delivery of mail is very bad and would like the Select Board to write a letter about local deliver to the Bernardston postal service office.

Jeff and Peter Tusinski also raised issues about telecommunications pole installations, claiming that more poles are being installed than originally planned, there were not pole hearings for all the poles and expressing concerns about safety and the impact on scenic roads. They wanted to know what is being done about the double poles. Erica stated the board will listen to their concerns but cannot debate with them, they can ask the town coordinator for when the pole hearings took place. Michele answered work is not complete and the MLP manager is taking care of the fiber transfer; he has been in communication with the Select Board. Jeff asked who would pay for the transfer of fiber. The board confirmed that Eversource will cover costs for pole licensing and fiber transfers.

Jeff expressed strong opposition to a planned road project in West Leyden, questioning the necessity of the work given that water has never previously flooded the road and arguing that residents deserve a public hearing before any road closure occurs. Michele confirmed there will be informational meetings for all residents in the future. She mentioned this ongoing road work on West Leyden Road originated from complaints about an undersized culvert that consistently gets blocked and by beaver dams. The highway department has been addressing the issue regularly, and the town is seeking a grant to fund the necessary repairs, which will not impact local taxes. Jason Tuell, a retired National Weather Service director, provided climate data showing increased rainfall patterns in the region over the past 50 years, explaining why the culvert upgrade is necessary to address future vulnerability. Michele reiterated she has been in touch with MassDOT traffic safety for help in the planning for any road closures and information sessions with include various stakeholders including fire, police, EMS, Shelburne Control, bus carriers and delivery services to discuss the impact of the road closure,

Liz Kidder mentioned this Wednesday she will be giving the new Woodlands Partnership Program Director a tour of Leyden. He will also attend the EMS meeting in Buckland to understand current public safety and tourism dynamics.

3. Town Coordinator Updates

Michele shared some administrative updates; she applied to the LEAP program for Mid County Road intersections and has sent paperwork to the FRCOG for the bid process for West Leyden Road.

The DLS conference was very informative and one of the topics was the USPS service cuts to overnight delivery, there are only 4 distribution centers in all New England, Boston, Brockton Manchester, NH and Providence, RI. For communities outside of the 50-mile radius from these distribution centers delivery of mail will be much slower. Some communities could experience 7- 10-day delays, just be aware there is nothing anyone can do. She will let departments know of this change.

4. Select Board Updates

There were no updates. The board reviewed calendar items, including a possible joint Finance Committee meeting planned for the next few months.

5. Agenda Planning

No specific items, the board can provide updates on meetings

Next Meeting: October 5, at 5pm

Meeting Adjournment

Motion: Erica moved to adjourn at 11:02am. **Second:** Jeff **Vote: Unanimous**

Submitted By: Michele Giarusso