

Leyden Select Board Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Working Session
November 28, 2022
9:00 am

Select Board Members Present: Katherine DiMatteo, Glenn Caffery, Bill Glabach

Others Present: Michele Giarusso, Liz Kidder, Brian Pelletier, Jenny Felske

Bill called the meeting to order at 9:06 am.

DISCUSSION

Fire Department Update on Safety Measures:

Brian: who will have the plates changed on the Tahoe? Glenn will answer that later.

Glenn asked about safety measures that were requested in October 24th meeting:
Replace air packs: Erica got quotes, Brian hasn't taken any action nor consulted with Stephen Foley. The trucks needed batteries so he couldn't do anything with the registration until the batteries were replaced. Glenn asked about the air packs, the money has been in the budget since July 1. Brian noted that pricing and availability is a problem at this time. Brian is in the busiest time of year in his full-time work. Brian is only in a few hours per week, and this delays the completion of purchasing. Glenn asked what is needed to help Brian get purchases made. Brian replied there are not air packs to purchase because of supply chain issues, second option is to lease. Current air packs are not certified. Glenn noted that SB does not support using air packs that are not certified as they are not safe. Brian is doing the best he can, there are other areas of the FD that are deficient – he stated if needed, put the job in the paper again. \$7,000 came out of funds available to repair the Tahoe so there is less money left to purchase air packs. Glenn responded that the select board will help find the funding that is needed if we know what the need is. Glenn continued, on October 24th we asked that some of these issues get resolved in two weeks and report back.

Brian-tanker truck has a valid road inspection now. Valid hose and ladder inspection are also needed but there is no company that is scheduled to do that. Glenn-FRCOG has a list of companies to contact and other towns have the company come to their fire stations. Fire chief district meetings are a source of information and also coordinated efforts to get critical services. Brian is not able to attend these meetings.

Glenn- it is my understanding the current brush truck is not reliable or certifiable, money has been set aside in a stabilization special fund that currently has \$45,000. Additional allocations will be made to that stabilization special fund for the Fire Department been set aside at Annual Town Meeting to purchase a new brush truck, yet you have been fixing this brush truck. Brian- I am fixing what can be fixed so a truck is available when needed. This brush truck can get road inspected when it gets a battery. Doesn't need another inspection. Brian noted that replacements like the battery go by years, not by usage. Glen asked Brian what he has done to purchase a new brush truck since July 1? Brian suggests looking into used vehicles and skid units. He asked what the town

purchasing process entails – he did not realize purchasing was part of his job. Until he knows about the purchasing process, he can't do anything more. He knows the budget. He is not going to shop if he doesn't know the process for purchasing. He would like to see a town policy and procedure for purchasing vehicles – new, used, surplus, etc. would help streamline the work. Also, how does the vehicle get from its location to here. Glenn- do you have any current quotes? Brian-no. Glenn-you have not reached out to the select board to ask for our help. Brian-not this select board. Glenn- we discussed a quick attack vehicle. I have not heard of a plan for this process. Brian-no, we do not have any people, you need people in the fire department. Glenn reminded Brian that we asked for a short term and long-term plan for the vehicles and equipment. Brian does not have a plan yet – the need that is most urgent is to get people to volunteer. Brian and Nick are calling people to join the fire department and fill in the applications. Some have taken first responder courses. These same people are not coming in to finish the application process.

Glenn-Uncertifiable equipment in the fire department that is in the way have been pointed out at previous meetings. Brian reminded the select board that some of the equipment is owned by the fire association, not the department. The association has to vote on the equipment and what to do with it. Brian has not done anything in the last month to get rid of the equipment, but it is organized and identified.

Tahoe can fit in the station once the other vehicle is fixed that is in the garage and then moved. There are other things that have to be done to get the Tahoe to get it fully transformed into an emergency vehicle. Brian is not sure if this is his responsibility or if he has authority to get those things done.

Glenn- Communication has been difficult with the fire department. People have tried to get a hold of the fire department by phone number and email. Glenn has had to intervene. The expectation is the Fire department should respond back to people within 3 days. Is that reasonable? Brian-yes, within 3-5 days. Brian- same problem with communication is time for Brian to do town fire department work in between his full-time job. He answers official communication only when he is at the fire department office. Glenn noted problems that have come to the town office about lack of response from Brian/fire department. Inspections are on Tuesdays and Fridays and that is stated on the fire department answering machine. Brian has to fit the fire department and inspections into his life.

Katherine noted that the problem seems that the solution is to get someone to work part or full time to assist Brian and get the priority list done. Brian noted he needs answers to his questions about policies about procurement, leasing, etc.

Brian estimates a gap of \$9,000 between what we have in budget and purchase of air packs. To get something quickly, we will have to lease it – then we could put an order in for new air packs. Glenn asked what the cost of the lease option? Brian needs to know how the process works before he can contact the leasing companies. Michele noted that there is a \$10,000 limit even for a lease and three quotes are needed.

Katherine asked Brian to write down what is reasonable for him to do in his role as fire chief so that we can compare it to the full set of responsibilities, identifying gaps, and trying to plan for the future as well as having reasonable expectations now.

Brian noted that mutual aid is the security blanket for the town regardless of our equipment and numbers of available volunteers. Glenn asked Brian to describe how mutual aid works. Glenn asked Brian his top priorities for the next two weeks. Brian replied I do not have any answers.

Bill noted that what has been lacking has been oversight. These are annual occurrences for inspections. There are not records of past actions, purchases, and inventory. Liz noted that the public safety clerk that she has advocated for would solve much of these problems. Also, having shared chiefs has been an action taken by some towns. The FRCOG report done years ago suggested this.

Glenn was looking for leadership from Brian today and did not see that. Katherine suggested that if we don't have confidence in Brian as a leader, we should seek a replacement. Glenn noted that we should start a formal process. Katherine and Glenn had a difference of opinion if the process entailed executive session. Glenn noted current policy and procedure states two weeks' notice for a hearing to do an evaluation. Katherine doubted that we had been clear enough with Brian about our expectations and the consequences of not meeting our expectations. Agreement between Glenn and Katherine that communication is a big failure and has led to many of the other shortfalls. The select board will consult with legal counsel to confirm the next steps. Katherine will contact Brian and let him know that we will be scheduling an official hearing of his job performance.

Discussion of possible solutions to having adequate volunteers to respond to fires and emergencies. Bill suggested that we formally discuss with Bernardston the possibility of shared fire and emergency service. Stephen Foley as part of the grant is looking into all possibilities and relationships for the best, sustainable way forward.

EMPG grant approval

Liz Kidder presented for the Emergency Management Co-directors. November 30th is the deadline for a MEMA grant that Leyden can apply for. EMD discussed at their meeting what could be requested of highest priority. A proposal for equipment – two laptops and a big screen TV – was written into the grant and sent to the select board for discussion. These items could be used by the town for other reasons such as virtual meetings. The purchase of computers would be through the State procurement system – business quality equipment. Grant requires in-kind contribution and what qualifies have been identified: fire department communication equipment, EMD stipend, emergency services training. Bill mentioned that there is a large screen TV in the Highway Department that had previously been purchased through emergency management funds. Liz noted that this is helpful for secondary communication in an emergency.

Motion: Glenn moved that Leyden apply for the grant as presented in writing by Emergency Management Co-directors with an in-kind match of \$2500.00. Katherine seconded. Approved unanimously.

Other Business: Michele reported that there are water pressure problems at the town hall and there was water on the floor in the boiler room. The condensate pump failed. Michele had a spare in her home that Glenn attached for the 4 days. Michele will order a new one for the town office. Jeff Miller has been called to replace the water filter at the town hall.

6 town meeting for schools: Glenn and Katherine will go. We will have to call a Leyden Select Board meeting to order when we attend.

Personnel Polices: Continued work.

Motion: Katherine moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:50pm. Glenn seconded. Approved unanimously.

Respectively submitted,
Michele Giarusso
Municipal Assistant