

**Leyden Select Board Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Regular Session
December 19, 2022
6:00 pm**

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

Others Present: David Pomerantz, Ken Medvetz, John Lepore, Erica Jensen, Gilda Galvis, Beth Kudzeba, Liz Kidder, Michele Higgins, John Higgins, Sara Steinberg, Andrea Zimmerman, Robbie Milner, Mary Glabach, Ginger Robinson, Kathleen Fritz, Evan Abramson, Donald Sadowsky, Karen O’Neil, Michael Morgan

Bill called the meeting to order at 6:17pm. Selectboard read correspondence file and reviewed FY 23 warrants. Announcement from chair that the meeting was being recorded.

Motion: December 5, 2022, meeting minutes moved by Katherine as drafted. Glenn seconded the motion. Glenn requested change from “contacted” to “will contact” in regard to notifying the Fire Chief about surplus property disposal policy. Approved unanimously as amended.

Motion: December 12, 2022, meeting minutes moved by Glenn as drafted. Katherine seconded. Approved unanimously.

Motion: Glenn moved we accept the 10-mile bridge grant for \$225,000. Katherine seconded. Approved unanimously. Bill Glabach signed the contract.

Motion: Katherine moved that we accept the MOU with FRCOG for Mass in Motion Grant. Glenn seconded. Approved unanimously. Bill Signed MOU.

DISCUSSION

Energy Conservation in town buildings

Michele presented two electric bills for town buildings from November – one for the highway, fire and town hall and it is up \$400/month from last year and we are expecting additional increase from Eversource. Town office building has also increased by less than \$100. With these increases, we will possibly be over budget for the year. Bill Brooks reported he is conserving as much as possible in the Highway Department building. Building needs study committee will be addressing this issue of energy efficiency in the buildings but not immediately. Glenn noted that we need a short-term plan until we have longer term solutions. Glenn asked about oil – Michele noted that has also increased. Katherine asked how often the town hall is used. There are COA meetings, knitting club, lunches. Bill asked about a timed thermostat – we don’t have one now. The heat has been set at 58 degrees. We monitor the utility bills for Green Community potential grant already so can track what is happening. Katherine suggested that we notify the committees/councils to meet at the town offices throughout the winter months, and also note in Leyden Life report. Agreed by all.

Joint Leyden-Bernardston MVP action plan grant

John Lepore is from Bernardston, David Pomerantz from Leyden – They are asking for both towns to work together to ask for funding for the MVP action plan grant. Leyden has already identified critical potential hazards – flooding and forest fires will be the priority. They will be filling out an Expression of Interest (EOI) if approved by this Select Board. Bernardston’s Select Board was approached and supportive. John presented conditions related to flooding that are not addressed by FEMA. The first step in the process would be to assess waterways in the towns and do mapping. Landowner outreach will be conducted. Stakeholder meetings will take place in year one of the grant. Areas of concern are to be prioritized from those hearings. Nature-based solutions are to be identified. Monitoring the success of solutions will depend on citizen observation. Emergency Management needs communication about identified places for flooding. Digital format to be part of the project.

Wildfire management – Bernardston has identified slopes, invasives, dying trees forming vertical avenues for fires. How to get fire fighters there and where is the access to water. Identity in year one, then come up with strategies for fire management. Mapping and smart devices. Leyden’s co-EMD Director comment from Dave – it is important to have these risks identified so we can plan for equipment and training.

Erica asked if the grant was 100% funded. MVP grants are a 25% match but could be met by in-kind volunteer services such as citizens who monitor their land. Hydrologists would be covered by the grant. Other FEMA grants may be available in the future. Stakeholder meetings will also be built into grant. Could also be an educational opportunity for schools and student participation.

Glenn asked about how this request works/relates to the West Leyden Road bog project which has already been prioritized for a MVP grant. Dave noted that we can submit as many grant applications as we can manage. Michele has started expression of interest for the bog – she is guessing \$2M project over 2 years but is just working with the engineer to receive estimates. Can not anticipate if Leyden could receive money from MVP grants for two projects it all depends on how much money the state has each year. Michele asked John what the co grant might cost. John-it has not been scoped out yet.

Bill asked about expanding the partner towns to Colrain. Not out of the question. We would have to approach MEMA to see if there is interest in planning with the towns and presenting scenarios that would look on the towns as a region. The Select Board all agreed to have John and David proceed on the EOI.

Public Safety Advisory Committee

Liz reviewed the memo that was sent in advance about purchasing air packs and other equipment for fire and emergency medical. Important to have the ability to respond to a mutual aid call and have equipment that would support other fire departments. Funds like this do qualify for ARPA.

Katherine reviewed the amounts allocated at the town meeting for Fire/EMS equipment and also the regular line item for the Fire Department. Based on the full request presented, there is about \$8-9,000 above the allocated amount and taking from the regular department line item is not advisable.

Glenn noted that we have asked for critical needs from all departments and committees but have not heard from the fire department. Do we stand behind our support for solving critical needs.

Erica noted that there are 4 people in the fire department technically. It is easy to replace face masks on the air packs but not so for the other parts of the equipment. Gives Leyden legitimacy with the other towns if we purchase the necessary equipment. Air packs are the most important. Could hold off on the EMS gear bags. Recommending Scott as the vendor – already approved municipal vendor and is the company used by Bernardston and Colrain. Leyden's packs are 17 years old and not certified, new ones will be good for 15 years with re-certification availability.

Bill is supportive of having equipment for what we need but concerned about our ghost fire department. Glenn noted that it is a good investment and a responsibility for the town to make. Bill asked about contracting for fire services as we do police. Erica responded that we will likely regionalize but would need a sub-station here. Katherine noted that in conversations with USDA Rural Administration and our neighboring towns, the topic of regionalization was certainly discussed and that sub-stations were a necessary part of any plan. Liz noted that regionalization would take 4 or 5 years.

John Higgins noted that the town already supported this at the town meeting by appropriating the money. Taking some from ARPA makes sense. Glenn asked about the Mass in Motion grant. Beth responded that money is for specific needs and can't be taken from there.

Motion: Glenn made a motion to purchase the air packs using the money in the Fire/EMS Equipment and Development Fund and use ARPA money. Hold off on EMS gear bags for now. Katherine seconded. Approved unanimously.

Liz asked about how to pay for the bills coming in that are covered by the grant. Michele responded that Liz needs to confirm with her that those bills are legitimate and then Michele will include for Select Board to approve when they review the warrant.

EMS Personnel

Liz asked for clarification on appointing first responders. There is not an EMS coordinator, who is getting called out and are they on our insurance? Michele responded that there have not been any appointments this year for EMS, and no one is on insurance. She has given applications for employment as well as other vital forms to be filled out. She has done CORI checks on some, but the applications never went any further in the process by the Fire Chief. Erica noted that Cindy McGoldrick and Tina Riddell were appointed by the previous board as first responders. Michele noted that they were not reappointed this year. We are paying them when they respond but they were never

specifically named as appointments under EMS.

Motion: Katherine moved that we appoint Cindy and Tina as First Responder/EMS Responders. Glenn seconded. Erica noted that she is interested and qualified. John Higgins noted that a letter of interest should be filled out. Michele noted that certificates are not on file. Katherine withdrew her motion. Glenn agreed.

Motion: Katherine moved that we request letters of interest from Cindy, Tina, and Erica and to request their certificates. Glenn seconded and approved unanimously.

Conservation Committee

Members of committee attending: Evan Abramson, Don Sadowsky, Karen O'Neil, Michael Morgan

Evan presented a request for another member because the committee has not been able to have a full member meeting this year. This delays discussions and decisions. Michele will check the Town Meeting minutes. She thinks she read there were only 5 members for the committee, no alternate members. There will have to be an article on a Town Meeting for a vote. The Committee requested that such an article be added to either the Special or the Annual Town Meeting.

Evan requested that the committee have Michele look for grants to find solutions to the invasive species problem. Bill responded that there is a need and encourages us to go for a grant. Has the committee seen any possible grants available for this? Evan noted that MVP is the best source but doesn't want to compete with other priorities. Don added that the need is also an assessment of the problem. Evan noted that mapping and removal in one or two years and at the same time. There has been a trial on North County Road done and will be ongoing and we are not using glyphosate. Glenn noted that the request heard earlier for an MVP grant for flooding and fire also mentioned invasives so this might be a way to combine requests. Michele will contact John and Dave and present this possibility. Evan asked if the committee could make a request for funds for such a project as part of the town's annual budget. Michele responded that it is possible, need to get three quotes so that a reasonable request can be sent to the Finance Committee for the budget. Evan said that they need to map first but that could be part of the MVP grant already being considered.

Review response to Council on Aging letter

Glenn reported that the Select Board contacted Town Counsel to get advise on the best course of responding. A letter to the Council on Aging has been drafted based on the advice, asking for specific information and evidence about the claims made in their complaint. The draft letter was circulated. The matter will be discussed in executive session with one member of the council and the individual who is named in the complaint. Members of the council raised objections to the way this is being handled and noted that there is a history with this person that has come to a head. The complaint is being taken seriously by the Select Board, but protection of individual rights are also being taken into consideration. Michele Higgins indicated that the council would provide what has been requested for evidence. Bill noted that the code of conduct should be invoked at a meeting when someone is not following the code. Difficult after the fact.

Motion: Katherine made a motion to sign the draft letter as presented. Glenn seconded. Approved unanimously.

Municipal Assistant Updates

Michele reported that she is wrapping up East Hill Grant, and letter of interest for MVP grant for this year. Construction will resume in the spring.

One of the reasons the town office is cold is because there are holes in the foundation and there is no insulation. The Building Needs Study committee says this should be taken care of immediately. Suggestions have been made for contractors to give us bids. Bill noted that this section of the building was done in the 1950s and maintenance and repair have not been consistent or thorough. Could possibly be covered by what was allocated in the budget – the balance is currently \$8,000 for building repairs/maintenance. Recommendations will come to the Select Board for decision.

Motion: Glenn moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:25pm. Katherine seconded. Approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted
Michele Giarusso
Municipal Assistant