

**Town of Leyden Public Safety Advisory Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting December 9, 2021**

A duly posted meeting of the Leyden Public Safety Advisory Committee was held in the Leyden Municipal Office Building on December 9, 2021 at 7:00 pm.

**Present:** Katherine DiMatteo, Town Moderator, Erica Jensen, Selectboard  
**Committee members:** Jack Golden, Barbara Wallace, Elizabeth Kidder, Anders Ferguson, Michael Morgan, Marcia Miller, Emily Yazwinski, Candace Hope, Alternate  
**Audience:** Ginger Robinson, Beth Kuzdeba, Michelle Giarusso, Brian Pelletier  
**Absent:**

The meeting was called to order by Katherine DiMatteo, Town Moderator, who described the purpose of the meeting to organize a long-range planning group to advise the Selectboard regarding the public safety services in Leyden. Introductions were made by all those who had been appointed by the Moderator to serve on this committee.

Ms. DiMatteo asked for nominations for a Chair and a note taker. Barbara Wallace moved to nominate Elizabeth (Liz) Kidder to serve as chair; Emily Yazwinski seconded that nomination. No other nominations were made. Elizabeth Kidder was unanimously elected Chair.

Candace Hope volunteered to be the note-taker and Anders Ferguson volunteered to be the note taker in her absence.

7:30pm Review of town ORG chart provided by Liz (preliminary working draft) "Public Safety is a team sport"

- Emily notes Selectboard is responsible for hiring/appointing department members; town needs more transparency in this process
- Erica clarified the former chief was operating in a "grey" area in terms of hiring staff
- Emily asked if this committee could have a copy of the job descriptions being written by the select board
- Suggestion to add Animal Control to ORG chart
  - Currently under the office of police, town is exploring a regional solution with Turners Falls

Jack Question: What are our legal obligations? What is the town required to provide in terms of police / fire / etc?

- Kathy said we need to have a constable; Town of Guilford only has a constable, use state police
- Emily has done some research on other town websites and noticed that emergency management is often police or fire chief
- Liz spoke to Tracy Rogers. Discussed Emergency Preparedness at FRCOG: Nobody is currently participating in the regional training program from Leyden.

7:45pm

- Beth: We need to find out what has been established with the state police (Erica says this has been done)
- Beth: Board of Health will do trainings that are involved with Emergency Management
- Erica: There are lots of grants available for Emergency Management
- Jack: Would it be helpful to go over the list and catalog what we have now? What are the areas that need to be addressed?
  
- We also need to come back to the mission statement:
  - Jack suggested: Our mission is to make sure the people of Leyden have adequate police, fire, and emergency coverage to make sure everyone is safe.
  - Barbara asked about areas of town where communication doesn't work well; Brian explained the new radios they're using have helped with this but topography can create blank spots

7:50pm: Marsha suggested we stick to the agenda rather than continue to speak about small parts of the problem

- Erica clarified that the committee is able to determine its mission; it does not need to be approved by the select board
- Mike: to delineate and coordinate, to determine how the resources are needed and distributed to the community (how to get the two closer together)
- Emily: It would be beneficial to list the departments within public service
- Liz: to create an organizational structure that will allow the police, fire, emergency medical and emergency management services to be managed effectively. The selectboard has to ensure that all public safety departments are fully staffed, trained, respected, and that they operate in full compliance with all Massachusetts laws, regulations and procedures.
- Kathy thinks Jack's statement is a good, broad statement. Mike's is "how to", and Liz described the process & outcome
- Mike; mission statements should be broad.
- Anders asked about the current budget for all the pieces that our mission covers: Animal control, rabies, speeding. What are our real needs (not assumed needs), but real needs based on data. What dollars can we use most efficiently? Finance committee makes recommendations to the town, the town decides.

8:00pm: Conversation moved to budget discussion, Liz distributed a budget of the public safety departments that she obtained from the finance committee.

- Town of Leyden Selectboard had a chat with Bernardston, they understand regionalization is the next step. Hours required for Bridge Academy are a challenge.

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the following mission for the Leyden Public Safety Advisory Committee: Our mission is to make sure the people of Leyden have adequate police, fire, and emergency coverage to make sure everyone is safe.

**Vote: Mission Statement** approved unanimously at 8:05pm

**Goals and next steps:**

- Goals will be developed for each department; *start with police because it's the most urgent*
- Liz provided the interim agreement between Leverett and Wendell (regarding police services) along with a news article. She believes this will be most applicable to Leyden, and we can have a substation here.
- Population of Blandford & Chester is each about 1200 people. The two towns split the bill for shared services. Blandford officers transitioned to Chester Police Force.
- Erica: Chatted with Donna MacNicol, Town Counsel, there is a foundation in MA giving grants for regionalization.
- Bernardston would be OK with a substation here in Leyden, but would want to maintain operations in Bernardston. Open to keeping Leyden officers.

8:10pm

- Liz shared a spreadsheet of police department stats (compiled from 2011-2020)
- Colrain is not ready to discuss regionalization with Leyden right now.

8:15pm Brian Pelletier, Leyden Fire Dept. person in charge to give an overview of the Fire Department:

- Department has five guys who all have full time jobs. It's a volunteer call status. It's an ongoing juggling act. Brain is self-employed, thus most available.
- Insurance policy creates staffing limitations or challenges
- Roles on a call: Command, safety, communications
- Colrain fire department has a different insurance provider/status
- Erica said as people are trained they can get onto the insurance policy
- Jack: One of the legal ramifications is the insurance regulations

8:25pm

- Barbara asked if there's any interest in merging police and fire with **B**ernardston
- Erica says she thinks everyone will have to regionalize, it's not just Workmans comp insurance that is a concern to towns.
- Brian says the idea has been kicked around, but the people who are older are more set in their ways (the upper echelon of the departments). Who gives up their position of power? Buckland and Shelburne have one full-time chief. Down south you have five counties with one central office, individual departments are run by captains or deputy chiefs. All paperwork goes to a central office.
- Brief discussion about a conversation with Greenfield a few years ago; insurance was also an issue. Greenfield was not agreeable to a substation.
- Erica asked about historical cooperation between departments in town: Brian said departments have always butted heads, but they need to coordinate & work together.
- Emily noted the Highway Department needs to be added to the Organization chart
  - Told a story about HWY dept not acknowledging a moment of distress where a car with passengers were off the road, last night, Beth asked if she reported the incident to the Selectboard.

8:35PM

- Liz asked Brian about EMT
- Brian noted Greenfield and Turners are getting ambulances (they also have huge budgets). We have people taking the first responder class, but they need to be hired by the fire department to be under the insurance umbrella. First responders arrive on scene, can provide first aid and then EMTs can transport to the hospital. If we have 14 people taking the class, how many can we hire?
- **Erica**; there are not resources in this town to fund transport.
- Liz asked Brian if he has a recommendation for the fire department.
- Brian: It comes down to insurance, how our hands are tied. EMS needs to fall under an umbrella. We have one EMT in the department
- Jack asked if Brian could develop an outline of what his department needs, he said yes. (Staffing, equipment, etc.) Breakdown: Necessary, like to have, dream list.
- Anders suggested: what's possible now VS what's possible in three years
- Towns who have regionalized fire: all they've done is regionalized the chief. We've already established mutual aid agreements.
- Brian mentioned the TRI-STATE MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT was written with very little legal council
- Erica said there are none amongst individual fire departments
  - Bernardston chief would become the chief of Leyden
- Michelle said FRCOG did a study of fire departments about regionalization (we should review this)

8:50pm

- Anders: Question for Erica: Is there management who oversees the communication within / between departments
- Erica: It depends on who you ask. She wants greater transparency and communication.; she-wants the heads of every department to come to every selectboard meeting.
- Anders: Our job will be to recommend something like that.
- Brian: Bill Glabach is the Selectboard liaison for the fire department.
- Singular liaisons for departments silos information. If the EMD isn't talking to anyone, you have no idea what's going on.
- Erica;" I cannot get the information I need to make an informed decision".

9:00pm

- Liz has another ORG chart that's a suggestion for incident command in the case of a MEMA emergency
- MEMA talks to Emergency Management Director (it's been the police chief, but it is a separate position. Former chief is still acting EMD)
- When there's an emergency, this person brings all departments together.
- Tracy Rogers said there's no training requirements for EMD, but they're supposed to coordinate all departments in case of an emergency
- Liz has job description of EMD for neighboring towns, Shutesbury and Northfield
- We can develop the structure but getting everyone to work together as a team is something we need to be thinking about as we work on this.
- Emily: EMD is an annually appointed position. Is it possible to unappoint a position through a vote of the Selectboard.
- LIZ read some of the requirements from the FRCOG job description as minimum requirements for EMD

### **NEXT STEPS:**

- Everyone is going to review the materials Liz has provided (to be distributed via email).
  - Brian is going to develop a practical layout for fire department, will send to group (timeline for this TBD)
  - Brian will coordinate with Anne Zavaruha (EMS Oversight Committee)
  - Liz will send out sample EMD job descriptions
  - Liz suggests we focus on the Police Department to start, it is the most urgent.
  - Liz also suggests Donna comes to the next meeting so everyone can ask questions. She has experience working with towns (this needs to be approved by Jeff / Selectboard Chair)
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- Ginger Question: Can we pay Donna to advise, pay for it from the Police Dept budget?
    - Donna is in the process of finalizing the Leverett / Wendell agreement.

9:10pm

- Emily asked for clarification: is Selectboard open to a regionalization solution? Erica: Yes.
- **COMMITTEE TO HOLD THESE DATES FOR MEETING WITH DONNA: December 21st, December 28th, January 5th, 6pm ET.**
- Group discussed meeting every other week; first and third week of the month.
- All communication needs to CC [Publicsafety@townofleyden.com](mailto:Publicsafety@townofleyden.com) so all communication is part of the public record.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. Vote: unanimous.

Meeting adjourned approximately 9:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by:

Candace Hope

#### **List of documents:**

Summary Public Safety Budget Town of Leyden  
Public Safety Organizational Chart  
Public Safety Organizational Chart- MEMA Incident  
Police Dept. Stats 2011-2020  
Fire Department Stats 2012-2020  
Summary of points made in the Blandford/Chester IMA