

Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Regular Session
November 6, 2023
9:00 am

Select Board Members Present: Glenn Caffery, Katherine DiMatteo, Erica Jensen

Others Present: Michele Giarusso, Nannette Rolstad, Ginger Robinson, Janell Howard, John Higgins, Jordan Burns-PVRSD Finance Director, Patricia Kinsella-PVRSD Superintendent of Schools, Liz Kidder-remote

Glenn called the meeting to order at 9:01 am.

Discussion

Select Board Updates:

Hunt Hill Road Agreement and Conservation Restriction w/Penfield Trust

Glenn reported we are still waiting for our town counsel. Glenn spoke to Evan Abramson Chair of the Conservation Commission, and he agreed there absolutely needs to be a baseline report on the property. Evan recommended speaking to Franklin and Mount Grace Land Trusts to see if they have recommendations for who could do a baseline. Erica asked how much this would cost. Glenn will ask that of the land trusts when he calls them. The town may have to pay for the baseline report. Glenn also spoke to Jolene Glabach, and they are aware of what is transpiring and up to date. Bill Brooks does not think there is enough time to get work done before winter, so the work will begin next Spring.

Mass Trails Grant

Katherine reported that she has viewed several trail projects funded by Mass Trails grants, most recently one in Lenox that was ADA compliant. She noted that an Open Space Plan would be helpful in getting a grant for trails.

PVRSD FY 25 Budget Planning

Jordan presented a slide presentation and gave out handouts from the 10/26/23 meeting the district had with town officials. He explained the school district has a surplus in their E&D fund and will be giving a portion of this back to the towns that belong to the district as required by law. The district is also receiving an increase in revenues for FY24 that will reduce the town's assessments. Each town will be receiving a share of the percentage of apportionment they were required to pay in FY24. Warwick will be receiving a portion of the E& D money. The total amount of money that will be given back to the towns is \$740,214. Leyden's decrease in assessments will be \$20,424 for FY24. Leyden will also receive a check of around \$42,050.00 after the audit is complete. The total that will be given back to Leyden is around \$62,474. The E & D money will be sent to the town via a check which the town can do whatever it wants to with the money.

DESE is also allowing the district to pay off the loan that had been taken out for the school lunch deficit several years ago. DESE and the overseer are much more confident in the district's finances, they feel the finances have improved significantly and this administration understands the finances much better than in the past. The amount of the loan to be paid off is \$198,000. Some of the extra E&D money will go towards investments in the curriculum and employees, but employee investments will have to be negotiated.

In creating the FY25 budget and beyond the district is not anticipating any huge overall percentage increases so as not to create the impression that money will be given back now and then an increase asked for next year.

The district is also amid completing a master facilities feasibility study and presentations of the outcome is forthcoming.

Part of the presentation was about the work of the 5-town regionalization planning committee. The budgets from the committee were presented and commented on. Jordan and Priscilla share their perspective of this budget and its impact on Leyden, as well as PVRSD agreement and feasibility study.

Town Hall Winter Closure

Last year the decision was made to close the town hall during the months of January through March to save on utility bills. The exceptions were COA luncheons and rentals.

Motion: Katherine moved to close the town hall starting immediately until spring except for municipal events, COA meals, rentals, and special requests. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous vote.

Request for Preschool Playgroup led by PVRSD

Deb Wood approached the Recreation Committee about using the town hall for playgroup every Tuesday starting November 14, 8:30am-12n. Select Board members would rather the playgroup be in the town office building. Glenn will contact Deb to let her know that the Select Board would like to have the playgroup in the town office building. John Higgins said he has already set up to meet Deb. He will take her to the town office building and Michele can show her around the town office building.

Tax Collector Next Steps

The current Tax Collector has shared verbally she will be retiring. The Select Board has not received in writing the official retirement date. Glenn shared there is another employee that has been helping and may be willing to help short term until someone is hired. Erica feels we should advertise the position as soon as possible for someone with experience in tax collecting and VADAR. Glenn will follow up on the retirement letter and speak to the Treasurer.

Select Board Updates

Personnel Policy Manual Review

Katherine noted that she will make further edits based on the comments from the past reviews. She asked that everyone relook at the manual when she sends it as a new set of eyes will catch any further edits needed. After which we could send a finished Select Board version to town counsel for review.

Beavers

Glenn stated Bill Brooks is still concerned with the possibility of topping over of water on West Leyden Road. Erica stated ownership is clear, the problem is not on the town but on the property owner. Katherine replied if this is a public safety issue the town can act. LeBlanc's are waiting for someone to do the assessment of the issues. The landowners are responsible for what takes place after and in the future. If Bill is concerned, we should apply for the permit. Glenn suggested there are four private landowners but the need for an assessment is vital to see if they will take over control of maintaining the beavers.

MVP Grant

Erica called Andrew Smith Regional Coordinator for MVP. He suggested the FRCOG may be able to manage the grant. FRCOG is not sure they can take this on. There is nothing more Leyden can do; we have no alternative but to decline the grant. Andrew stated declining the grant will have no effect on Leyden receiving future grants.

Michele mentioned the fire alarm company came out last Friday to fix the alarm at the town hall. There was a bad sensor in the mechanical room.

Public Comment

Glenn recognized Nan Ralsted who reported on the work that the church had done to locate the leak in the water pipe from the Town Hall to the church. From their assessment the leak appears to be at the footing of the ramp. The church will get an estimate for the repair but would need permission to work on town property. Glenn updated Nan on the work that the town had done to locate the leak and to speak with well drillers. Michele will provide Nan with a copy of the drawings that were done when the ramp was built and the indicated location of the water pipe. Nan will return with an estimate for the repair.

Motion: Katherine moved to adjourn at 12:30 pm. Unanimous vote.

Respectively submitted,
Michele Giarusso