

Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Regular Session
December 18, 2023
9:00 am

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

Others Present: Michele Giarusso, Michael Cane- Eversource Community Relations Specialist, Barry Croke Eversource Vegetation Manager, Janell Howard, Bill Brooks, Emily Yazwinski, Jack Golden, Beth Kuzdeba, Liz Kidder-remote, Christine Brodeur-remote, Beth Giannini FRCOG Transportation Program Manager-remote.

Glenn called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

Highway Department Quarterly Update

Barry Croke from Eversource explained the vegetation plan he sent in advance of the meeting is from 3 years ago. The work was never finished by Eversource. He feels he should start fresh with a new list. The original list probably contained close to 1500 trees at one time and is down to around 33 trees. So, 75% of the trees have been cut down. The new plan will be on trees that are an immediate threat to the power lines. Scheduled Maintenance Trimming (SMT) are mostly lines that come up from Greenfield via Greenfield Road. There are a few that continue into Guilford, VT. SMT usually requires notification to residents. Reliability Tree Work (RTW) is the backbone of the power lines and not on a regular schedule. Enhanced Tree Removal (ETR) is when the power company comes to Leyden every 4-5 years and does a major assessment to trim trees. Glenn explained to Barry that the Select Board receives most of the complaints from residents from trees and tree limbs coming down during storms. Barry replied, residents can call Eversource any time and report trees or tree limbs need trimming. Eversource will create a ticket and when Eversource is out trimming they will decide if the tree needs trimming or not. The resident will receive the ticket number. The 300 or so trees that still have blue marks on them and have not been cut may not ever be cut.

There is one substation circuit that services the entire town of Leyden coming up from Greenfield. These are the most important trees Eversource keeps a watch on. Trees that threaten their lines. The substation in Greenfield is due for an upgrade. Katherine asked how long it will take to upgrade a new plan and will the Select Board receive detailed reports. She would like to receive a yearly report. Katherine continued, how does Leyden's shade tree act and Eversource overlap? Katherine also asked about a map that is supposed to accompany the list. Erica asked if there is a hazard on a scenic road will Eversource cut the tree in questions without a hearing and how is it that Eversource goes on private property and cuts trees without notification first. Isn't the planning board and tree warden supposed to be notified first? Barry replied he did not think they were supposed to go on private property without notifying first.

Barry stated he hoped to have the new list by the second week in January.

Bill Brooks-he wants to know how the beaver dam issue was left with the residents whose property the dam is on. Mike from Beaver Solution was not planning on doing anything further until spring once the bog froze. Bill is asking about getting an emergency permit from the FRCOG if needed due to today's massive rain event and now everything is thawed again. The residents know it is their responsibility to pay for the pipe. Katherine spoke to them initially and Michele followed up with them. There are grants available to residents to help with the costs. Erica asked if this has to happen this week what is the plan? Bill replied we would have to receive an emergency order/permit from the FRCOG and call Mike from Beaver Solutions. Bill will call Mike from Beaver Solutions and ask if there is a window of time due to the thaw. If a public safety issue is a town may have to split the cost with the property owners.

Motion: Katherine moved if there is an emergency public health and safety hazard Bill Brooks has permission to contact Beaver Solutions to control the water. If Beaver Solutions thinks this needs to happen quickly Bill will receive permission from the landowners and ask them to split the cost with the town. However, if the landowners refuse, the town will pay if the road is at imminent risk. This is a one-time payment, and the property owners are responsible for the yearly ongoing maintenance cost to control the dam(s) and beavers. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Maintenance of culverts and bridges-Bill reported the FRCOG completed a plan for us a couple of years ago on all the culverts in town. Annually he replaces on average about 6 culverts per year. The state inspects all our bridges annually and sends a report. The town owns all its bridges and is responsible for replacing them. Erica stated she has been reading the reports the state sends and some are critical. Bill stated he keeps an eye on them and reads the reports. He replaces culverts out of his yearly budget, but bridges are costly, grants help a great deal with the replacement. Katherine reported we are getting an extra \$93,567 from the MA Fair Share Act.

Complete Streets Discussion

Katherine as a follow up to last week's discussion she contacted Beth Giannini from the FRCOG to attend today's meeting. Beth is the FRCOG Transportation Manager. Liz and Katherine met with Beth to discuss healthy living and walking as part of the Mass in Motion grant and the Complete Streets topic came up. Complete Streets is a program funded by MA Transportation funds. When we think of our roadways, we should be thinking about everyone who uses them and how can our roads be safer for everyone. Katherine introduced Beth who was attending remotely.

Beth reported that each municipality can apply for \$500,000 over a four-year period. You can apply all at once or in increments. The next step the town will need to take to get involved is:

1. Training- an employee from the town has to go to training. It cannot be a volunteer. Most towns have their administrators or highway superintendent attend.
2. Policy-the Select Board will have to pass a policy on guidance for roadway planning to incorporate everyone in town, walkers, bikers, vehicles. MA DOT will score the policy. You could also copy another town's policy that MADOT has already approved. This is what is called Tier 1.
3. Tier 2 is the town comes up with a prioritization improvement plan for 5 years. You can do this as small or as large as you see fit. You can also apply to MADOT for technical assistance to help with this plan. The FRCOG is approved by MADOT to help with this.
4. Once your improvement plan is approved you can apply for funding to implement these priorities in the order you have prioritized.

There are dates for applying/complying. Tier 1 is rolling dates; Tier 2 dates are April 1 and December 1. The funding can come in anytime.

A question-and-answer period followed with Beth Giannini. She answered questions from the audience and some that was previously submitted to her:

1. Beth thought that dirt roads currently were not qualified. Beth will check with MADOT if dirt roads can qualify for this program.
2. The grant does not pay for the town to survey right of ways.
3. We must submit a letter on intent which informs MADOT we are going to pass a policy.
4. The projects are overseen by the town administrator/highway department and or a committee.

Other concerns/discussions were line of sight on dirt roads and speed limits. Jim Palmeri controlling the speed limit in the town center is a challenge. Speed is mainly perception. Signs are the best but do not overdo it. Mirrors on dirt roads for sight issues could be considered. Painting lines on paved roads is costly as well as the ongoing maintenance of them.

Katherine stated the town is concerned about our roadways and the letter of intent shows the town the select board is concerned about public safety. She asked if Michele and Bill were ok working on this. The process for prioritization and having the residents be involved in the plan will be important for residents to participate.

Motion: Katherine moved to write a letter of intent for the Complete Streets Program. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Board of Health New Training Program

Beth Kuzdeba reported that MADPH is standardizing all Boards of Health in MA. There are new requirements of 35 hours total for training. The training is conducted through Boston University and is remote. Beth feels training should be reimbursed for all members. Training needs to be completed by the end of March. She and Marcia have started. Realistically all 3 members may not have time to do it by the end of March. Within the budget currently there is no money for paying people to go to the training courses. This would have to be added to the budget for next year. For this year money would have to be allocated at a Special Town Meeting. The FRCOG is a training hub for Franklin County and one of several in the state. Erica feels there should be a training line item for this, the stipend the Board of health receives if for other duties they provide.

Motion: Katherine moved to have a warrant article for a Special Town Meeting for funds to pay Board of Health members to attend required training. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous vote.

Public Safety

The Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) members and Leyden Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) think it makes sense to appoint two members from the former PSAC to the LEMC. Liz and Anders Ferguson would like to be appointed. One will be a member and the other an alternate. The PSAC is now dissolved.

Motion: Erica moved to appoint Liz Kidder as a member and Anders Ferguson as alternate member to the LEMC. Katherine seconded the motion. Unanimous vote.

MIIA Grant and ARPA Funds

Michele previously sent an email from MIIA insurance company stating they would like to award us the \$10,000 grant she applied for but only if the work is going to be completed by June.

Motion: Erica moved to approve spending approximately \$4400 from ARPA funds to supplement the \$10,000 grant from MIIA to insulate the Fire station walls. Katherine seconded the motion. Unanimous vote.

Tax Collector

After learning from town counsel and DLS their advice on the treasurer working as the tax collector for 3 months Susan wants to know if she can start in the position. Select Board recommends going with the advice of DLS. The Select Board would like Michele to find out from DLS what the next steps the town should take after the 3 month period.

Green Communities

Motion: Katherine moved to accept the Energy Reduction plan for the Green Communities grant. Erica seconded the motion. Glenn would like to see minor corrections made to change Municipal Assistant to Town Coordinator, to add the second EVIP station to town hall, we have 2 streetlights not 3 and the fire department did not replace any trucks. Katherine and Erica accept the changes. Unanimous vote.

Select Board Updates

Katherine went to the PVRSD facilities presentation last Friday. Jane from Bernardston Finance Committee was there as the only other town representative. Katherine left two 3 ring facility binders to

read over. Glenn attended another public presentation of the report and brought two 3 ring binders to read over that are the consultant's report and recommendations. The presentations are available on YouTube to listen to, and Glenn will send a link. Michele, as a member of the school committee, has also heard the presentation. It is not clear whether there will be time for the Select Board, Finance Committee and School Committee to discuss whether Leyden agrees/accepts the recommendation.

The Town Clerk emailed us about attending upcoming election training. He should attend these, and he will be reimbursed. All in agreement.

Agenda Planning

It was decided the next meeting will be Wednesday, December 27 at 9am due to the Christmas holiday.

Administrative Assistant to attend to give her position updates.

Community 911 update

Update Flag policy

Motion: Katherine moved to adjourn at 12:24 pm. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous vote.

Respectively submitted,
Michele Giarusso