

Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Regular Session
January 29, 2024
5:30 pm

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

Others Present: Michele Giarusso, Paul Hake, Ginger Robinson, Nate Messer, Pam Brown, Beth Kuzdeba
Liz Kidder remote

Glenn called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Discussion

Salaries and stipends

Katherine inquired on the board's recommendation on salaries vs. stipends. Some towns have requirements before stipends can be paid out. She would like to discuss this further with the Finance Committee.

Erica stated she contacted Angelica about changing the names on the general ledger. Angelica told her the general ledger is taken from the budget spreadsheet. As they are doing the budget this year the name on the budget should be changed, and Angelica will change the ledger accordingly. Discussion around stipends and elected officials

Finance Committee

Ginger called the Finance Committee to order at 5:48pm.

The Finance Committee and Select Board discussed getting more involved with the school budget, facilities planning and further regionalization planning. Michele as the School Committee representative should not be the only one reporting back. Ginger does not think Leyden as a tiny town can afford another capital expenditure/debt exclusion to build a new school campus with the small number of children Leyden has. There are around 10-15 children who probably attend private /charter schools currently living in Leyden. Erica stated she would like to look at the figures further to see if Leyden has any alternatives to the small district we are in and was wondering if the six-town regionalization planning group can expand further on what they did, maybe even a larger district. Ginger stated it would be more palatable if we are one of many towns to build a school campus of the future for many more students including more towns. Maybe then Leyden's share would be more affordable.

Ginger would like a feasibility study for the future of Leyden's buildings. Do we need all these buildings, and can we repurpose one for housing? There is a lot of money for senior and regular housing right now and maybe we should be looking at tearing down the office building and building housing on the property. Katherine and Michele stated the property is part of Avery Field and it was given to the town in perpetuity to be used for recreation and to educate children. This has already been looked into many years ago, but we would have to look at the deed again.

The Finance Committee will be meeting regularly now and will send a representative to school meetings.

Public Comments

Liz stated that any kind of housing for the elderly should be coordinated with the Franklin Regional Housing Authority.

Nate asked about the runoff of driveways onto the main roads that is a hazard. He was wondering whose responsibility it was. Erica explained that this kind of driveway should never have happened. At the ATM there will be a warrant article for a curb cut policy that the highway and other departments will have to sign off on any new driveways to avoid this kind of driveway in the future.

Electricity Buying Cooperative

Michele spoke to Bob Dean at the FRCOG about the towns that are in the contract with Colonial Electric as an aggregate for many town's electricity needs. Bob stated we probably could strike a deal with Colonial if we called on our own. We do not need to be a part of a cooperative. Michele will call Colonial.

Town Coordinator Update

- The elevators in town hall have passed inspection each state inspection is \$650.
- Flags for Memorial Day how many boxes should she reorder? Decision to stay with the same two boxes.
- DOER grant and One Stop for Growth (Mass Works Small Bridge Program) -Michele has been looking for other grants that she may apply for to build a new culvert/bridge at the West Leyden Road "bog". She attended a webinar put on by the FRCOG and DOER on replacing culverts. DOER can only give up to \$400,000 for construction. We do not qualify for the small bridge program because it is for replacement of a small bridge. The "bog" project is estimated to cost close to \$1ml for design and construction. She will apply for the MVP grant again but that may only cover design for this year. There is not a lot of grants that will pay for this large project.
- Complete streets training-Michele will be on vacation next week and there is a training course in West Springfield on February 6. Beth Giannini said that a Select Board member could attend. Katherine volunteered to attend the training.
- Signature for increase in property insurance-Katherine wants further clarification on the insurance.
- Signature on Cyber security contract through the FRCOG. Michele sent an explanation of this contract by email before the meeting.

Motion: Katherine moved to sign the contract for the Cyber Security contract. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Fire Chief

Erica had a conversation with town counsel about Nik's email. Donna stated if Nik signed a resignation letter there is no further action. Erica will volunteer to have a meeting with Nik.

Motion: Katherine moved that Erica speak with Nik to address his email on the advice of legal counsel. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Erica spoke with the Academy of Fire Services (DFS) in regard to Firefighter1 training for volunteer fire fighters vs. a career firefighter. This is an extensive commitment. Erica spoke to Carey about completing Basic 6 training, ICS 100, 300 and 700. All courses are online in addition to the inspection courses. Carey is only EMFR certified currently. Carey thinks these courses are manageable. He has the backing of local fire chiefs, and she feels comfortable recommending him as chief. Glenn mentioned Carey himself said he is reaching out to area fire chiefs to get hands on training. Basic 6 courses are local, and the other online courses should be completed in 1 month.

Erica shared that Donna reviewed the contract and made some recommended changes. Erica suggested reviewing Carey's progress within 3 months. Glenn will change the contract with the required recommendations.

Motion: Katherine moved to appoint Carey Barton as Fire Chief upon his acceptance of the contract. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Select Board updates

Liz shared an outline of The Efficiency and Regionalization grant (E&R) for Fire services. It will have to be uploaded in the portal by Michele. The grant will be for \$45,000.

Liz had emailed the grant information prior to the meeting.

Motion: Erica moved to send the application for the E&R grant for \$45,000. Katherine seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Discussion on setting Town Caucus date as asked by Paul McLatchy, Town Clerk by email.

Motion: Erica moved Town Caucus be on March 19, 2024, at 6pm. Katherine seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Motion: Katherine moved to adjourn at 9:30pm. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Respectively submitted,
Michele Giarusso