

Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Regular Session
February 26, 2024
5:30 pm

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

Others Present: Michele Giarusso, Ginger Robinson, Liz Kidder, Jim Brodeur, Emily Yazwinski, Beth Kuzdeba, Sarah Bartholomew, Alice Wozniak, Susan Bobe, Dae Curtis, Carey Barton

Glenn called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

Discussion

Meeting Minutes

Motion: Erica moved to accept the meeting minutes of January 1 as written. Katherine seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Motion: Katherine moved to accept the meeting minutes of February 12 as written. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Motion: Katherine moved to accept the meeting minutes of February 20 as written. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Stratton Property Discussion

Susan updated the board on the completed title search on what is known as the Marcella Stratton property. Seven heirs to the land were found. Marcella had turned over the land to a person with the last name Benson. When Benson passed away there were seven heirs to the property. Our tax title attorney Iris Leahy composed a letter to all the surviving heirs. The heirs spoke to the state representative who is interested in purchasing the property. Susan is waiting for a return call from the state. Leyden has a \$60,000 lien to the property. Alice can do a reassessment of the property and send it to Mr. Benson. The heirs can then work with the town to forgive the debt owed, then Leyden can turn over the land to the state if everything is satisfied. The land is not worth much, it is landlocked and there are protected wetlands all around the property, so the value is low. Susan stated it was nice the state paid for the title search and maybe this can get off the list of liens the town has.

Open Space

Jim Brodeur called the Planning Board meeting to order at 6:03pm. Glenn stated that very often the Select Board will be discussing an issue and discussion of the open space plan comes up. Glenn shared there are several areas that we should be discussing under the open space plan.

Sarah Bartholomew feels there are four categories that we should be considering, not a lengthy list.

The categories would be:

- Recreation-all the potential areas for recreation considering all age groups.
- Housing- for seniors and micro, consider using existing buildings if possible.
- Agriculture, climate resiliency, protecting and restoring natural resources.
- Economic development

Everyone felt other committees should be involved in this process.

Jim stated the Planning Board is currently working on housing and it doesn't make sense to work on housing by another committee. Katherine thinks all this should be connected in the vision of the future of the town. The new housing bill the governor is proposing will require accessory dwellings. Liz stated the Planning Board is looking at accessory dwelling units (ADU).

Katherine suggested boards and committees brainstorm to come up with ideas and information for what each committee is charged to focus on. The FRCOG needs to be involved. The Select Board will write up what the make up of an Open Space Committee looks like.

Glenn suggested there are possibly 10 committees in town that could have a representative on the Open Space Committee. This could be a good community building process.

Katherine suggested sending a memo to all the committees asking for representatives to serve on the committee. Beth suggested an ongoing action plan. The last plan had a seven-year plan, and nothing ever came from what the committee worked on.

Motion: Emily moved to adjourn the Planning Board meeting at 7:02pm. Liz seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Public Comment-None

Municipal Empowerment Act

Katherine thought the board may be interested in supporting some of the items in the bill. Erica relooked at when the legislature is debating the bill, and it is tomorrow so too late to send a letter.

Consider writing a letter to the PVRSD administration on the District Agreement (DA) Timeline

Katherine offered to compose a letter to send on behalf of the Select Board that the DA timeline is not enough time for the towns to approve at this year's ton meetings.

Next Steps for Fire Truck Procurement

Erica stated she and Liz sent a letter to Jo Comerford and Natalie Blais as a follow-up to the conversation when they both were in Leyden last week. Both Legislators are working with DLS to move through the procurement process in hopefully a quicker way. Erica is very encouraged by their persistence and quick response answering the letter.

Town Coordinator Updates

Michele shared that Minuteman Pest Control came and did an initial assessment of the town office and town hall for management of mice. They would put bait boxes in each building and recommend monthly inspections. For the town office it would be an initial cost of \$300 then \$115/mo. For the town hall the initial cost is \$195 then \$85 monthly.

Motion: Erica moved to hire Minuteman Pest Control for the initial costs of each building and quarterly inspections. Katherine seconded the motion. Unanimous.

There will be a joint three town meeting of the Select Boards and Finance Committees on March 7. Jane Dutcher would like to know any agenda items you may want to put on the agenda as well as the number of people who will attend the meeting.

Michele has been attending webinars for the upcoming MVP grant and spoke one on one with Andrew Smith the Regional Coordinator. The grant will be released mid-March and due at the beginning of May, Andrew is projecting. He emphasized to Michele to make sure there is a lot of mention of restoration of wetlands and not make the ask only about replacing a culvert.

Select Board Updates

Glenn shared his conversation with Stan Garland, Chair, of the Bernardston Select Board. Stan's opinion is the administrative costs are too high, the administration does not involve the towns. Stan likes the idea of a six-town regional school district, as it would consolidate administrative costs. Stan also feels the towns have been locked out of the process for the new District Agreement, the School Committee does not understand the DA is the towns to vote on and the towns are in control of the agreement not the School Committee. He feels Leyden got kicked in the teeth so to speak when the School Committee closed our school. He also feels the Facility planning committee was stacked by school faculty, parents, and staff. In general, he agrees with the FY 25 budget voted on by the School Committee.

Glenn reported on the Bernardston Select Board meeting attended last week. John Lepore led the conversation with the Bernardston Select Board on applying for a joint MVP grant. John Lepore wrote to Andrew Smith with some questions and Andrew was very clear the town is the project manager. The town will have to pay for a project manager if they cannot manage internally, not the grant. Andrew also notified John that Leyden did not have fire management in their planning grant as a top priority. Glenn shared with the Bernardston Select Board of Leyden's ongoing concern in endorsing this grant. Glenn feels Dave doesn't want to push this grant forward for Leyden. Dave still needs to fill out paperwork with Leyden Select Board to go forward to write the grant.

Katherine drafted the first draft of the Select board's annual report. She will send around by email for further input.

Agenda Planning

Glenn drafted a list of items to discuss with Donna MacNicol in case she can attend a meeting in the next 2 weeks. He will attach supporting documents for Donna to review.

Katherine asked if the warrant articles were included in this list.

Glenn also wants to ask Donna about contacting a state agency about investigations. Glenn would like to have an Executive Session at the next meeting whether Donna attends or not.

Motion: Katherine moved to adjourn at 8:26pm. Erica seconded the motion. Unanimous.

Respectively submitted,
Michele Giarusso