

Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes  
Leyden Town Office Building  
Regular Session  
Tuesday, October 15, 2024  
5:30 pm

**Select Board Members Present:** Katherine DiMatteo, Jeffrey Baker

**Others Present:** Michele Giarusso, Janell Howard, Beth Kuzdeba

Katherine called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

The Select Board signed the 10-17-24 warrants

Approve minutes:

**Motion:** Jeff moved, and Katherine seconded to approve the 10-7-24 meeting minutes, unanimously approved.

Public Comment:

- Beth Kuzdeba read a letter to the Select Board (attached as addendum) and shared comments on the Planning Board hearing.

Dedication for FY24 Annual Town Report:

- Liz Kidder sent an email suggesting that the volunteers of the Fire Department be selected for the dedication for all the work they have been doing to rebuild the Fire Department.

**Motion:** Jeff moved, and Katherine second to make the dedication to the volunteer firefighters, unanimously approved.

**ACTION:** Katherine will contact Liz and see if she will write the dedication for the Annual Town Report to the volunteer firefighters.

Town Coordinator Report:

- Michele had a discussion with Angelica about having all the grants approved through the Select Board for accounting purposes and reporting.
- The soil boring testing estimate has increased to \$154,998 for the design and plan for the West Leyden Road Bog. The increase will have to come out of the Fair Share money received for roads. Michele talked to Bill, and he is okay with it as well.
- Michele is working with the Cultural Council for the \$5,700 Mass Cultural Council grant.
- The petition for a pole hearing from Verizon is to put up a new pole at the bottom of Mid County Road. Bill told Michele there are some other potential pole installations on South County Road. Discussion on the opportunity to have one pole hearing for both installation sites.
- Email from Department Environmental Protection (DEP) Leyden Wildlife management about the permanent solution statement for the site of the plane crash last winter.
- The Town clerk talked to Anna (the town clerk applicant) and she said she is retracting her application for the Town Clerk, she has obtained a full time position somewhere else and is no longer interested in the town clerk position.

- The lights on the common are not working – Michele emailed the people who installed them through a grant, and they said to see if the town has the remote control for the lights.

**Motion:** Jeff moved, and Katherine seconded to approve FY25 Fire Fighter grant for \$10,500 for three pairs of complete turn out gear, unanimously approved.

**Motion:** Katherine moved, and Jeff seconded that we approve the contract with Gill Engineering for the Bog culvert engineering project, unanimously approved.

**ACTION:** Michele will talk to Bill to see if he can find the remote to the common lights.

**ACTION:** Michele will research a veteran grant that might cover getting new solar lights.

Administrative Assistant Report:

- Jack Golden is still waiting to hear from Whip City what to do with the wire. For now, the spools are behind the internet hut.
- The Annual Town Report is almost ready, as soon as the last financial reports are put in the report it will be ready for a final edit.
- Janell attended the Council on Aging meeting and shared with the committee the orientation meeting information that the Select Board presented at the orientation meeting in September. The information was received well. Janell is working with the other committees to attend one of their meetings as well.
- Bill will be able to attend the Select Board meeting on November 4th.

Select Board Updates:

Katherine-

- Hunt Hill - There are three signs that say private road, private driveway, and no trespassing. None of them are on private property, they are all on the town road. Bill is going to go back and put up the “Road not maintained by the town” sign again that has been removed. The owners will be notified that the signs need to be immediately taken down.
- Personnel Policy needs to be put back on the agenda for discussion. The Highway department had concerns with some of the policies in the personnel policy.
  - Carry over vacation days.
  - The way the holidays are set up when the holiday falls on a day off.
  - The sick time and what it can be used for.
  - On overtime and the way it is calculated.
  - Should the town have a minimum number of hours for emergency calls.
  - Possibility of the town paying for a percentage of health insurance during retirement.
- Three-Town district meetings are moving very slowly as different people come to different meetings causing the same issues to be revisited that have already been voted on or agreed on.
- The Planning Board won’t be ready with the bylaw change until January so they would like the Special Town Meeting later.

Jeff-

- Discussion on the next steps with Colonial.
- Discussion on some items on the E&R grant.
- Discussion on how to find a town clerk.

**ACTION:** Katherine will draft up the letter to send to the residents who may have put up the signs to have the signs removed immediately and then inform the other residents of Hunt Hill of the action that the SB has taken.

**ACTION:** Janell will look up small towns personnel policies (Bernardston, Shelburne, Northfield) especially some tiny towns in regard to benefits, vacation, holidays, sick leave, carry over vacation days, and if they pay for insurance after retirement.

**ACTION:** Michele will look up when the town signed up for the Franklin County Retirement System and look into the retirement law.

Unlicensed dogs:

- Kyle Dragon wants to know if the town wants to enforce the late fee for those who aren't licensing their dog.

**Motion:** Jeff moved, and Katherine seconded to have the Animal Control Officer pursue unlicensed dogs in Leyden, unanimously approved.

Agenda for 10/21/24 SB meeting

- Discussion of the DLS Financial Policy Recommendations
- Updates, minutes, etc.

**Motion:** Jeff moved, and Katherine seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Howard

## Addendum

In regards to the Planning Board meeting of 10/9/24.

Katherine Dimatteo attended this Planning Board meeting as a Selectboard member . She did not attend the walk through.

The Movement Retreat purchased 63 N County rd in May of 2022 from Odessey/The Greenfield Center. The Movement Retreat continuously refers to Jennifer Paris' special permit and how they thought they could operate under that, but they did not purchase this property from her.

From May 2022 until April 2024 almost 2 years, they held events, overnights, a large festival, served food (was anyone ServSafe certified?) without obtaining inspections or any permits , even though the Leyden BOH represented by the FRCOG health agents/inspectors made numerous requests through 2023 and into 2024 to meet them at their property. The requests were ignored... and the Movement Retreat has given no excuse whatsoever, other than they thought they could operate under Jennifer Paris' permit because her sp permit is how they want to operate. That is no excuse for not replying to the health agents. Remember, they did not purchase from Jennifer, she was 2 owners before. Why did they think they could take a special permit from the ownership history of the property and apply it to them.

Katherine made a statement after mine at the PB meeting, to the effect that she and the town through her, wholeheartedly give their trust and sense of community to this organization. They deserve it. My question was and is... What have they done to deserve it? Nothing....

Before BOH could issue a cease and desist order, the retreat voluntarily offered to do that...but only after 2 years of ownership.

There was absolutely no evidence for Katherine to offer the trust of the town. None of the violations have been attended to, construction has not started yet...in other words...no proof from them that they will follow through and do things correctly.

It is never a bad idea to ask an organization to prove how trustworthy they are, especially when you are a town leader.....they may actually develop a little more respect for the town and its residents. Katherine, words matter especially when they come from an elected town official.

Thank you. Elizabeth Kuzdeba