

Joint Leyden Select Board and Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Regular Session
Monday, July 14, 2025
5:00 pm

Select Board Members Present: Erica Jensen, Katherine DiMatteo, Jeffrey Baker

Others Present: Michele Giarusso, Liz Kidder, Paul Hake, Pam Brown, Carolyn Asbury, Ginger Robinson, Nate Messer, Elizabeth Tubergan, Ayden Grout, Susan Bobe, Alice Wozniak, Angelica Desroches by phone

Erica called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

Accept meeting minutes

Motion: Katherine moved the minutes of 7/07/25 with minor amendments. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Signed Documents

Motion: Katherine moved to accept and sign the Colrain Ambulance contract for \$12,500 yearly, the contract is for one year with an option for automatic renewal. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Erica signed the letter of support for the Town of Oakham asking the MA Energy Facility Siting Board to reconsider their location for a large battery storage facility along the Ware River. The town voted against this, but the state is overriding their decision.

Select Board Updates

- Board of Health meeting- Erica reported the Bent Birch Retreat Center lawyer and manager attended the BOH meeting. Articles of incorporation have been filed, and they are exempt from Planning Board bylaws but not BOH rules and regulations. The retreat does not plan on cooking meals, they are an educational center and will not be doing short-term rentals or weddings.
- Building Needs Committee meeting- Erica reported this committee is waiting for Energy Resources to get back to them with more energy saving measures they may recommend and can install. The exhaust for the highway and fire departments is not covered by Green Communities, and we may have to run the exhaust pipe out of the garage doors. Eversource is supposed to install another streetlight, meanwhile, John Richardson has a solar flood light he will loan to the town to see if this will work for us on the lower parking lot.
- Statutory Private Way issue- Erica, Bill and Michele spoke with Donna today. She suggested writing a letter to Bob Penfield reminding him of the agreed upon plan in our November 12, 2024, letter. Donna suggested inviting him to a future Select Board meeting. Any maintenance on the road must have written permission from the Select Board, if the Glabach's want to do work on the road they have to receive permission from the Select Board also.
- Building permits- currently all building permits are signed off by multiple departments, but Jim Hawkins gets the final say. We need a policy for building inspections because there is a delay with different departments signing off. Katherine thinks having something in writing on who signs off on the permits would be helpful.
- Katherine reported the 3-town committee work on the PVRSD district agreement is complete and has been sent to the school committee with a letter asking for a meeting with the towns to discuss. The E&R advisory meeting is tomorrow.

End of Year Transfers

Ginger Robinson called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:38pm. The transfer sheet was distributed for Finance Committee and Select Board to review. The sheet is attached to these minutes. Pam Brown questioned whether some of the budgets were budgeted sufficiently. Erica replied there were some unexpected expenses this year, especially for town counsel services. Katherine added the Pioneer Valley Regional School District Agreement review added to the increase for this line item.

Motion: Nate Messer moved the transfers as recommended and printed by the Town Accountant. Carolyn Asbury seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Motion: Katherine moved to approve the transfers as recommended for the Select Board. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Motion: Nate moved to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting at 6:34pm. Pam seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Financial Team Meeting

- Susan reported current outstanding real estate taxes is \$42,000 after the first round of demands were sent out in June. Before the demands were sent the amount was \$100,000. She will be sending the second demand and then the names will be posted on the website and outside the town office building.
- 2024 outstanding excise tax amount is \$5067. There is around \$5,000 in abatements that will be going out. AP Jones gets the outstanding excise tax rather quickly now and processes them. Alice would like to clean up old excise tax bills prior to 4 years old. Susan and Alice will work together to get this completed.
- Update on the 2019 auction property that the owner has overpaid on and is seeking a refund. Unfortunately, because the rebate is over 3 years old by state statute there is no mechanism to refund the money beyond 3 years. Alice tried going into DLS Gateway software system to populate the information and she cannot. It specifically asks for the tax year, and the software will not allow you to populate more than 3 years. There is no pot of money the town can take the rebate from according to DLS. Susan has been in contact with the owner and will write a letter explaining the situation. He can call DLS.
- Assessor's data quality review from DLS- representative from DLS reviewed 30 properties in Leyden. All the property data was in good condition and there are no concerns.
- 2024 audit-the auditors have emailed Angelica looking for information to begin the audit at the end of July. She will be closing out the 2025 books soon.
- Katherine asked Alice how the Select Board should go about appointing an Assessor. Alice replied there should be a job description and then advertise. Discussion on having an advisory board of assessing with Alice being the lead Assessor.
- Erica reported she has discussed a PILOT with Bent Birch Retreat once they become a nonprofit.

Public Comments

- Liz Kidder stated she called The Recorder reporter and copied the editor to redact the misinformation that was reported about Leyden's zoning bylaw allowing 4 individual ADUs on one property. Hopefully something will be in the newspaper before Wednesday.
- Town Counsel has some questions on the wording of some of the articles the Planning Board placed on the Special Town Meeting warrant. Liz spoke to Nicole at the State Attorney General's office, and she recommended the articles be written in this manner.
- The Planning Board has written up amendments to some articles they will read at the meeting. Katherine stated as past moderator she would not allow prewritten amendments. They must be amended on town meeting floor. It is up to the current moderator whether he will allow it or not.

- Elizabeth Tubergan and Ayden Grout had an ethical question about the Fire Chief over a building permit of theirs. Erica stated they cannot speak about a town employee without them being present. And in some instances, in an executive session. Elizabeth continued that Jim Hawkins the Building Inspector signed off on their permit because the Fire Chief did not. They feel this is systemic abuse of a position in this town, the fire chief has signed off on other permits in the town. As an abutter the Fire Chief should have recused himself and they feel very unsafe as this town official can abuse their power. They may file a complaint with state ethics. The Planning Board public hearing was not moderated well by the chair and Elizabeth and Ayden are sick of getting bullied by their neighbors. Erica reported she spoke with Jim Hawkins, and he will sign off on building permits for the fire department now on their property.
- Pam Brown asked about the Leyden Glen Reservoir access issue status. She wanted to report that in the open space survey people identified walking as a recreation activity. If the Select Board will be meeting with the Mayor of Greenfield she was also wondering if it could be asked that Leyden residents receive a discount on the Green River Swimming and Recreation area.

Agenda Planning

- No meeting July 21, next meeting July 28 in the evening.

Motion to adjourn: Katherine moved at 7:09 pm. Jeff seconded the motion, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by: Michele Giarusso

FY2025 End of Year Transfers

To			From		
Account Number	Account Name	Amount	Account Number	Account Name	Amount
01-122-5340	Website/Internet Access	160.00	01-122-5111	Administrative Asst Hourly	160.00
01-122-5380	Computer Account	4,164.55	01-122-5111	Administrative Asst Hourly	4,164.55
01-122-5420	Selectboard Equip/Supplies	0.09	01-122-5111	Administrative Asst Hourly	0.09
01-123-5300	Town Coordinator Exp	425.96	01-122-5111	Administrative Asst Hourly	425.96
01-141-5120	Asst Assessor Hourly	51.45	01-141-5300	Assessors Exp	51.45
01-151-5300	Town Counsel Fee and Exp	7,442.00	01-146-5580	Tax Lien Exp	2,442.00
			01-132-5780	Reserve Fund	5,000.00
01-161-5100	Town Clerk Hourly	1,521.06	01-122-5111	Administrative Asst Hourly	1,521.06
01-175-5300	Planning Board Exp	217.42	01-122-5111	Administrative Asst Hourly	217.42
01-192-5210	Utilities	3,650.21	01-192-5111	Custodian Hourly	3,650.21
01-192-5240	Building Repairs/Maint	4,365.66	01-192-5111	Custodian Hourly	1,415.64
			01-192-5291	East Hill Cemetery	900.00
			01-192-5430	Elevator Repair/Maint	1,052.00
			01-192-5460	Grounds Maint Exp	998.02
01-423-5300	Winter Maint	14,384.07	01-421-5430	Highway Maint	11,340.80
			01-421-5240	Highway Machinery	3,043.27
01-544-5770	Veteran Services	250.93	01-122-5111	Administrative Asst Hourly	250.93
01-545-5770	Veterans 115 Benefits	2,555.59	01-145-5580	Treasurers Tax Taking Expense	2,555.59
01-910-5300	General Insurances	1,545.99	01-145-5580	Treasurers Tax Taking Expense	1,545.99
01-610-5300	Library Operating Expense	6,500.00	01-610-5320	Library Material	6,500.00
		47,234.98			47,234.98