

Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Regular Session
Monday, July 28, 2025
5:00 pm

Select Board Members Present: Erica Jensen, Jeffrey Baker, Katherine DiMatteo remote via access.
Others Present: Michele Giarusso, Representative Natalie Blais, Liz Kidder, Susan Bobe, Madison Schofield via remote access.

Erica called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Accept meeting minutes

Motion: Jeff moved the minutes of 7/14/25 with minor amendments by Katherine and Erica. Katherine seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Representative Natalie Blais

Introductions were made and Rep. Blais presented a handout on the legislation. She is working on -40 bills in all during the current two-year session, including 20 Home Rule petitions. She discussed the recently passed budget and upcoming Senate consideration of the Chapter 90 bill, which provides \$200 million for local road projects with an additional \$100 million based on mileage.

Hot topics for her are:

- The Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust (HCGIT) recent announcement of another possible 20% increase in October or they may dissolve
- School Budgets-Rural School Aid Commission to look at the funding of schools
- PILOT money-Payment in lieu of taxes for western MA
- Environmental Bond Bill-Liz questioned Natalie on chapter land and the right of first refusal going to the state is not good for rural and small communities. Natalie suggested Liz write a letter explaining this.
- Housing
- Unpaved roads and culverts-Chapter 90 bill if passed will now include maintenance of unpaved roads and replacement of culverts. The House has passed just waiting for the Senate to pass.

The discussion highlighted challenges faced by rural communities, particularly regarding healthcare costs, school funding, and the impact of state revenue disparities between rural and urban areas in terms of state revenue and support, and mentioned ongoing legislative efforts to address these issues.

- Erica touched on concerns about school budgets in rural communities.
- Katherine asked about eliminating Fence Viewers from the state law that towns are required to have these appointments, the law is archaic. A bill to eliminate archaic sections has been introduced in the Senate.
- Susan Bobe was concerned about the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust's (HCGIT) possible increase of another 20% in October and the financial strain it will take on small towns. She also questioned the sustainability of small towns paying these costs.

Appointments

Motion: Katherine moved to appoint John Richardson as Deputy EMD for 1 year, Madelaine Gens to the COA for 3 years and Jeff Miller as the REPC representative for 1 year. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Town Coordinator Updates

- Michele reported she has received a public record request for the fire department emails and she will have to contact Montague Webworks to receive them, they may charge us to retrieve them.
- The Deerfield River Scenic Water Committee would like to attend a Select Board meeting to present their plan.
- Devorah Vester would like to attend a Select Board meeting regarding members of committees receiving a town email.

Select Board Updates

- Katherine reported that Jack Golden has agreed to moderate the public forum on Thursday.
- Katherine and Lisa Lamont walked the Leyden Glen Reservoir with the Mayor of Greenfield to discuss Leyden residents having access to walk the paths. They suggested better signage to the mayor. The mayor was concerned to see bittersweet growing all around the reservoir. The mayor has not gotten back to Katherine on the access yet.
- Katherine met the FRCOG bus that was travelling around Franklin County with prospective interns at Baystate Franklin Medical Center. There were about 10 interns, and it was nice to see so many interested in coming to this area.
- Katherine apologized for not getting the Conservation commission permission to put down gravel to create a walking path at Avery Field. It was an oversight. Erica stated the RDA is filled out and Michele will be putting a notice in the newspaper.
- The 3-town committee will be meeting with the 6 town Planning Committee in August.
- Katherine questioned the hiring of the new PVRSDK Finance Director with no experience. She also is wondering if we should send a thank you letter to Jordan Burns. All agreed a letter should be sent.
- Jeff reported he attended the PVRTA meeting where they mentioned ICE coming to the area.
- Erica reported the Building Needs Committee is meeting on August 6 and she will be away.
- Erica will attend the Conservation Committee meeting on August 18th for the town's RDA application. We may have to plant some native plants along the pathway at Avery Field to prevent erosion.
- The Keets Brooks dam repair is ongoing, and the Conservation Commission is on top of it.
- Evan Abramson is willing to walk the Penfield property for the annual walk. Katherine said she would contact the forester again to schedule the walk.
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Agenda Planning

- Deerfield River Scenic River Committee plan presentation
- Devorah Vester
- Post review of the public forum

Motion to adjourn: Katherine moved at 6:30 pm. Jeff seconded the motion, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by: Michele Giarusso