

Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes  
Leyden Town Office Building  
Regular Session  
Monday, September 15, 2025  
5:00 pm

**Select Board Members Present:** Erica Jensen, Katherine DiMatteo; Jeffrey Baker via remote access  
**Others Present:** Michele Giarusso; Senator Jo Comerford, Liz Kidder, Pam Brown, Barbara Wallace, Corey Cusson, Lauren Bete, Rob Snedeker, Susan Bobe, Madison Schofield reporter from The Recorder via remote access.

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

**Accept Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** Katherine moved the 9/8/25 meeting minutes with minor amendments. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Senator Jo Comerford**

Senator Comerford focused on various advocacy efforts and funding challenges faced by rural communities, particularly in relation to municipal support and education funding. She acknowledged the hard work municipal officials have done in advocating for change in various municipal grants and programs. She discussed several legislative initiatives, including agricultural bills and immigration rights measures. She expressed support for a farm bill to provide economic sustainability for farmers, who have been negatively impacted by federal policies. The Senator also highlighted her work on immigrant rights protections in Massachusetts, including funding for legal defense and efforts to limit cooperation with ICE. She emphasized the need for reform in the Chapter 90 funding formula to ensure fair distribution based on road miles and called for a comprehensive review of the Chapter 70 formula to address disparities affecting communities with declining enrollment. She is pushing for a new Chapter 70 foundation budget review committee, and she continues pushing for rural schools funding increases.

Senator Comerford also highlighted the importance of the Mass Read and the Municipal Empowerment Act, noting the challenges posed by population loss in the region. She highlighted the establishment of a State Pilot Commission that will address inequities in how rural communities are valued for their ecosystem services. Additionally, she raised concerns about the financial stability of the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust (HCGIT), particularly regarding rising healthcare costs and the implications of GLP-1 drug expenses on the budget. Erica touched on the financial implications of the school district's runoff and the potential impact on next year's budget. Erica noted that while there were no immediate catastrophic illnesses affecting the runoff for Leyden, the situation could lead to significant financial challenges. She expressed concerns about the high costs of GLP-1 drugs, advocating for the introduction of generics to improve affordability for individuals and insurance companies.

Senator Comerford addressed the need for better transparency and communication within HCGIT, citing outdated governing laws and a lack of state oversight as complicating factors. She expressed support for various legislative initiatives, including immigration rights, legislation, and agricultural bills.

In addressing audience questions Liz Kidder discussed the need to regionalize ambulance services. The northern tier towns were looking to apply for an efficiency and regionalization grant, but those funds have been frozen. Senator Comerford emphasized the importance of writing to the governor and her office asking to secure financial support for regionalization efforts to ensure the service's sustainability in our towns. A question was asked about our local hospital closure and the Senator answered with the federal Medicaid cuts looming this will affect many people, community health centers, and hospitals. The impact is still unknown.

### Solicitation Policy

The group reviewed the R2 version of the solicitation policy Erica had previously sent by email. Katherine proposed adding that the Town Coordinator be notified after the police approve and then the town coordinator can notify all selectboard members.

**Motion:** Katherine moved to approve the solicitation policy with the addition just discussed. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

### Electrical Aggregation

The group discussed aggregation options, Katherine shared that aggregators offered a March 2026 meter read start at program rates, and the town needs to decide whether to proceed with this opportunity and finalize optional offerings.

The board discussed renewable energy credits and agreed to enter into a contract with First Point Power.

**Motion:** Katherine moved to enter into a contract with First Point Power at rates of 10% and 31% which offered better rates than their current provider. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

### Town Coordinator Updates

- Michele received in the mail today a renewal for a contract for 2 years to continue to be a member of the Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Services District.

**Motion:** Katherine moved to approve the contract for 2 years to as a member of the Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Services District. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Erica signed the contract.

- Michele presented a surplus equipment form for a hard drive and laptop that is over 10 years old from the previous tax collector, they zero value. They were stored in her closet and Susan is cleaning it out.. Both drives have been wiped clean by our IT person. Erica signed the form. Michele will dispose of equipment.
- June 2025 ambulance bill-town accountant gave to Michele to save for a special town meeting. The books are closed for FY25, and this cannot be paid now.
- Discussed what to order for pizza for orientation evening.
- Michele mentioned the MIIA insurance meeting is tomorrow with other towns via remote access.

### Select Board Updates

- Katherine reported she has completed the wage and compensation policy. She sent previously by email and would like approval.

**Motion:** Katherine moved to approve the wage and compensation policy. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Erica signed the contract.

- Jeff asked who decides to lower the flag to half-staff. Michele answered between she and the custodian they are the ones responsible.
- Jeff attended the PVRSD strategic planning meeting. They went through an exercise with the consultant on what they would like the school district to look like tin 3030. They hopefully will see the results at the next meeting. There are 6 meetings planned.
- Erica completed the walk through of the Penfield CR last week with Bob Penfield and members of our Conservation Commission. There were no violations.
- Erica received an email complaint about another property on Hunt Hill. The owner was there so she asked if she could go on the property and ask some questions. The owner said yes, and showed her and Evan around. Erica asked questions of the dug well, he said he dug it in the 1970s. Erica found out this is allowed. There is a porta potty that is there seasonally. Erica asked

if it is pumped and the owner said when needed. He will be removing soon. The owner put a pipe in a town culvert as a sort of extension to divert water away from his property. All observed to be ok.

- Erica also reported some Conservation Commission members want to attend their annual conference. Michele said they had reached out to her, she told them to let her know how many people wanted to attend with the information form of the meeting and she will pay out of “boards and committees” account. Erica also reported they would also like to apply for a grant to remove knotweed in town for around \$100,000.
- Health insurance costs for employees will continue to fluctuate and there is no action the town should take.

#### Agenda Planning

Next meeting September 22 in the morning

- Bill Brooks-highway update
- Town Clerk 6-month review
- Public Forum discussion

**Motion** to adjourn: Erica moved at 7:31 pm. Katherine seconded the motion, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted by: Michele Giarusso