

Leyden Select Board Meeting Minutes
Leyden Town Office Building
Regular Session
Monday, November 24, 2025
9:00 am

Select Board Members Present: Erica Jensen, Katherine DiMatteo

Others Present: Michele Giarusso, Bob DePalma, Pam Brown

Erica called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

Warrants

The board reviewed and signed the warrants.

Katherine had a question about the refund for the rental of the town hall. It was short \$25 from the deposit. Michele discussed it was her mistake as she went by an email from the party who stated a \$150 refund was due. An actual check of \$175 was deposited. Michele will let the party know she owes them \$25 and will submit it through the next warrant.

Accept Meeting Minutes

Motion: Katherine moved the 11/17/25 meeting minutes as written. Erica seconded the motion. Motion was unanimously approved.

Tax Classification

Bob DePalma reported property valuations went up between 8-10% with total valuations rising to \$131 million, up 9.5% from the previous year, and a 25% rise in location factors. He revealed the tentative tax rate will be around \$14.68 per thousand, down from \$15.28, and the town was operating \$450,000 below its levy limit.

Erica had questions for Bob regarding the town's budget and revenue figures, focusing on the amount to be raised through property taxes. They clarified that the total estimated revenue, including property taxes and other sources, is \$2.965 million. After accounting for various offsets such as cherry sheet contributions, and enterprise funds, Erica expressed confusion about some figures, particularly the enterprise funds and retained earnings, and questioned how certain numbers were calculated to arrive at the projected tax rate.

Motion: Katherine moved a single tax rate, for residential as well as commercial, industrial and personal property tax. Erica seconded the motion. Motion was unanimously approved.

Building Needs Committee Meeting Update

Erica reported on updates from building needs. They are prioritizing projects, and Erica is organizing a spreadsheet with the addition of fiscal year columns for budgeting purposes. She mentioned that high-value projects like rebuilding the DPW would be put on hold due to lack of funds. Dave Vreeland is working on a design with elevations for the ADA project, aiming to complete it in one phase rather than in stages, with an expected project cost from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

MLP Advisory Board Meeting Update

The CAF II project's status remains uncertain, and there are ongoing issues with the security alarm at the hut. Jack will be switching alarm system providers from Alarm Works to Hackworth Securities, with a \$3,700 panel upgrade required. Erica told Jack to discuss the discontinuing of the current alarm system with Michele before moving anything.

Erica discussed using town funds to offset MLP debt, clarifying that the MLP is part of the town and not a separate entity.

Erica asked Michele what the status of the Digital Equity grant, the one through the library and GCC. Michele stated she has not seen the grant, nor has the board signed a contract. She will follow up with Karin Parks for the status.

Town Coordinator Update

- Erica agreed to sign a letter of intent to GIC, which was previously voted on at a prior meeting.
- Michele would like to start applying for the MassDOT bridge program grant for the West Leyden Road construction of a bridge.

Motion: Katherine moved the approval for Michele to apply to the MassDOT bridge grant program for the construction of the West Leyden Road bridge project.

- Michele clarified with the board the FRCOG email asking to prioritize the projects we asked for help with this year. The group discussed regionalizing emergency services is still a priority and the FRCOG is already moving forward with helping several towns. The other items in the email are in progress. Erica would like to add that we need to update the hazard mitigation plan, and flood maps. She asked Michele to schedule a meeting with the planning board and conservation Commission to discuss the FEMA flood maps for December 15 or 22.

Select Board Updates

- Katherine mentioned the Franklin Regional Planning Board has been changed to the Franklin Regional Planning Advisory Board. The next meeting is December 4th. She is our appointed representative, but we should have an alternate. No one from the planning board wanted to be the alternative so she will post this in the next Leyden Life with the other vacancies. .
- Katherine attended the COA meeting. She was there to clarify the kitchen usage. Beth will meet with them about food preparation for their upcoming event in December.

Public Comment

Pam Brown reported that the Neighbors Helping Neighbors group had a meeting last Friday afternoon. She reported on the progress of the food pantry initiative, noting that \$1,800 in gift cards have been distributed to 12 people, with plans to continue through the holiday season. She highlighted the interest of 20 people who have shown interest in supporting a food pantry, including the COA's sponsorship and the library's willingness to participate. The group discussed logistics, such as using the town hall for non-perishable food distribution, with volunteers present. Concerns were raised about space, refrigeration, and volunteer availability, but Pam assured that the town hall is where the group thought best to have. The initiative aims to provide food once or twice a month, with further coordination needed on volunteer schedules and distribution times. Pam also mentioned she is working on the possibility the Western MA Food Bank can provide some of the food in addition to accepting donations of food.

Motion to adjourn: Katherine moved at 10:24 am. Erica seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted by: Michele Giarusso