

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via Zoom
Tuesday December 19, 2023

Members Present: Michael-Ray Jeffreys, Lou Franco, Tom Alonzo, Renee Emkey, Caesar Nuzzolo (remote via Zoom)

Also Present: Heather Lemieux, Town Manager
Public Comment Participants are listed in the minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Jeffreys. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Chair Jeffreys noted that it was being recorded and broadcast live on Lunenburg Public Access Channel, Facebook Live, and would be uploaded to the Lunenburg Access YouTube channel.

BOARD COMMENTS

Selectman Tom Alonzo thanked the Council on Aging and Lunenburg Activity Center for hosting a 100th birthday celebration for Mario Patacchiola. He noted it was the town's third centenarian and expressed amazement at knowing all three residents who have reached 100 years old.

Selectman Lou Franco added that he attended the event as well and presented a letter from the Select Board to Mario.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Guy Gauvin of 389 Highland Street inquired about the process for the public hearing on propane tanks later in the agenda. Chairman Jeffreys clarified there would be a presentation followed by an opportunity for public comments.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM OTHER BOARDS

Chairman Michael-Ray Jeffreys reported receiving correspondence from John Reynolds, Chair of the Sewer Commissioners, expressing concerns about the Munis software conversion and its impact on billing and staff hours. Town Manager Heather Lemieux addressed ongoing issues with Munis, the town's accounting software for receivables, payables, and utility billing. The conversion impacted the Sewer Commission over billing inaccuracies, tied to resource constraints from Munis staff. The town's IT and business manager are actively seeking resolution, and the absence of a dedicated project manager. They have since appointed a regularly consulted technician. Future testing will involve pre-production environments to preempt issues. Selectman Tom Alonzo expressed concern about the length of time (6+ weeks) it has taken to resolve the billing issues, given their impact on town revenue. He suggested requesting a root cause analysis report from Munis and regular progress updates. Member Renee Emkey, who works with enterprise-level software, suggested implementing more thorough testing procedures for future upgrades, including test servers and bill generation tests. Town Manager Lemieux clarified that the real estate tax bills were not affected by these issues and reviewed them with the tax collector to ensure accuracy.

APPOINTMENTS

7:10 PM Public Hearing for the application for license(s) for keeping & storage of four (1000 gallon) propane tanks to be located at 647 Northfield Road and four (1000 gallon) propane tanks to be located at 677 Northfield Road by DiLeo Gas Co. on behalf of owner Stephen Violette

Chairman Michael-Ray Jeffreys opened the public hearing at 7:16 PM. Paul DiLeo of DiLeo Gas presented the application on behalf of owner Steven Violette. He explained the request was for four 1,000-gallon propane tanks at each of the two addresses to provide cleaner, more efficient heating for Dick's Market Garden greenhouses. DiLeo outlined safety measures including vehicle crash protection, underground gas lines, leak mitigation systems, and regular inspections. He noted the fire department had reviewed and approved the plans. The Select Board asked questions about:

- Efficiency compared to current oil heating (propane heaters will be 93% efficient)
- Distance to nearest residences (over 200 feet)
- Refill frequency (every 2 weeks in winter, not at all in summer)
- Safety regulations and blast radius
- Above-ground vs underground tanks

Guy Gauvin, an abutter, asked questions about:

- Above vs underground tank safety
- Potential for asphyxiation from leaks
- Visibility of tanks from his property

Steven Violette provided additional details on tank locations and existing visual barriers. He expressed willingness to add landscaping screening if neighbors had concerns. The Board discussed conditions around screening and neighbor communication. Chairman Jeffreys closed the public hearing at 8:09 PM.

Member Alonzo made Motion to approve the application for the licenses of four 1,000 gallon propane tanks at 647 Northfield Road and four 1,000 gallon propane tanks to be located at 677 Northfield Road as presented by DiLeo Gas on behalf of Steven Violette.

Member Franco seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote (5-0-0):

Member Nuzzolo: Aye; Member Emkey: Aye; Member Alonzo: Aye; Member Franco: Aye; Chairman Jeffreys: Aye.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager Heather Lemieux provided updates on several pertinent matters affecting the community:

- The ongoing Master Plan survey: Residents are encouraged to participate by filling out the survey available on the Town website. It will remain open as long as there is sufficient response.
- Holiday office closures: Town offices, including the Lunenburg Adult Activity Center, will be closed on December 25th and 26th in observance of Christmas.
- Board and committee vacancies: Architectural Preservation District Commission, Cemetery Commission, Agricultural Commission, Green Communities Committee, Open Space Committee. Interested individuals can apply via the town website or by contacting the Town Manager's office.

- Open town employment positions: Openings include a Services and Outreach Librarian, Facilities Superintendent, Finance Director, Heavy Equipment Operator, Land Use Director, Principal Assessor, and a Staff Librarian for Young Adults. Details are available on the town website.
- Police Chief Gammel's appointment: Chief Gammel has been honored as the President of the Central Mass Chiefs of Police Association, covering chiefs in parts of Worcester, Middlesex, Norfolk, and abutting counties.
- Storm damage from recent heavy rains: Recent weather caused a tree to crush a trailer at Fairlane Home Park and tore off a section of siding at the Public Safety Building. No injuries were reported, and town staff worked to mitigate damage and address infrastructure impacts.
- Potential changes to ARPA fund obligation deadlines: A new rule proposes redefining "obligation," necessitating service contracts by December 2024. Opposition to this definition was submitted due to its potential impact on town finances.
- Additional \$240,503 in Fair Share Amendment infrastructure funding: This is in addition to the Chapter 90 funding, which totals \$418,064, aimed at improving local infrastructure.
- Approval of tax rate and mailing of tax bills: The tax collector is finalizing steps, with mailings scheduled for December 22nd. A different company will handle the printing and mailing to avoid past issues.
- MassDOT plans for safety improvements on Mass Ave: Low-cost, short-term measures will be addressed, though longer-term plans depend on budget considerations.
- Installation of the new "Welcome to Lunenburg" sign: Situated on Lancaster Ave near Stillman's Farm following collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
- Ongoing Public Safety Building carport project: The bid is due soon to advance the project.

Town Manager Lemieux also expressed gratitude for the dedication and service of all town employees, who consistently go above and beyond in their roles.

OLD BUSINESS

Discuss/vote on New Permit Fee Schedule for the Building Department (Building, Electrical, Plumbing, Gas)

Chairman Michael-Ray Jeffreys noted one resident had expressed interest in commenting but ultimately declined to attend. No other public comments were received.

Member Alonzo moved to approve the building department permit fees as presented on December 5th by the building inspector and his team, the plumbing inspector and the electrical inspector, effective January 1, 2024. Member Franco seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote (5-0-0: Member Caesar Nuzzolo: Aye; Member Emkey: Aye; Member Alonzo: Aye; Member Franco: Aye; Chair Jeffreys: Aye.

Annual License Renewals (cont.)

Chair Jeffreys listed the businesses having submitted applications for common victualler licenses.

- Smokestack Roasters, LLC as Smokestack Roasters at 39 Mass Ave

- Victory Distributors LLC, doing business as Hannaford Supermarket and Pharmacy #8388, at 333 Mass Ave
- AAG LLC, doing business as Kindred Spirits at 324 Mass Ave
- La Balena LLC, doing business as The Reboot at 50 Mass Ave
- Red Pepper Inc, doing business as Xtapa Cantina at 308 Mass Ave
- Lunenburg Liquor Inc, doing business as Lunenburg Liquor Mart at 88 Mass Ave
- Lakefront Beverage LLC, doing business as On the Rocks at 96 Lakefront Ave

A motion was made to approve the common victualler licenses, excluding La Balena LLC, as they required special conditions due to outstanding sewer payments.

Member Alonzo made Motion to approve the common victualler licenses as presented by the chair with the exception to remove La Balena LLC from this list. Seconded by Member Franco.

The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote (5-0-0): Member Nuzzolo: Aye; Member Emkey: Aye; Member Alonzo: Aye; Member Franco: Aye; Chair Jeffreys: Aye

Miscellaneous Licenses

The miscellaneous licenses included entertainment, jukebox, and automatic amusement licenses. Chair Jeffreys confirmed all necessary fees and documents were submitted, and the applications were in good order.

Member Alonzo made Motion to approve the miscellaneous license renewals as read.

Seconded by Member Franco. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote (5-0-0):

Member Nuzzolo: Aye; Member Emkey: Aye; Member Alonzo: Aye; Member Franco: Aye; Chair Jeffreys: Aye.

Alcohol Licenses

The meeting moved on to the renewal of alcohol licenses. Applications for renewal included:

- Victory Distributors LLC, doing business as Hannaford Supermarkets and Pharmacy at 333 Mass Ave, Lunenburg for a package store all alcohol license
- AAG LLC, doing business as Kindred Spirits at 324 Electric Avenue, for restaurant all alcohol
- Red Pepper Inc, doing business as Ixtapa Cantina at 308 Massachusetts Avenue, for restaurant all alcohol
- Lunenburg Liquor Inc, doing business as Lunenburg Liquor Mart at 88 Mass Ave, for package store all alcohol
- Lakefront Beverage LLC, doing business as On the Rocks at 96 Lakefront Ave for restaurant all alcohol
- Smokestack Roasters LLC, doing business as Smokestack Roasters at 39 Mass Ave for restaurant wine and malt

Member Alonzo made Motion to approve the alcohol license renewals as read by the chair.

Seconded by Member Emkey. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote (5-0-0):

Member Nuzzolo: Aye; Member Emkey: Aye; Member Alonzo: Aye; Member Franco: Aye; Chair Jeffreys: Aye.

La Balena, LLC (The Reboot)

Chair Jeffreys turned the board's attention to La Balena LLC, doing business as The Reboot. A special condition was required due to their outstanding sewer payments. A prior agreement

entailed installment payments to settle the arrears, with full settlement anticipated by May 28, 2024. The board emphasized the importance of meeting these commitments to maintain their licenses.

Chair Jeffreys made Motion to approve the weekday entertainment license, Sunday entertainment license, common victualler license, and restaurant all alcohol license for La Balena LLC, doing business as The Reboot located at 50 Massachusetts Avenue, with the condition that the owners of La Balena meet with the select board on May 21st at 7:10 PM and under the condition that there's satisfactory compliance with a payment arrangement with the Sewer Commission. Seconded by Member Franco. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote (5-0-0): Member Nuzzolo: Aye; Member Emkey: Aye; Member Alonzo: Aye; Member Franco: Aye; Chair Jeffreys: Aye

CURRENT BUSINESS

Review and discuss bylaws that pertain to the Select Board

Chair Jeffreys noted this was a placeholder for future discussion, likely at the third meeting in January. He encouraged board members to review the bylaws and prepare any proposed changes.

Approval of September 5, 2023 Minutes

Member Franco moved to approve the minutes for the September 5, 2023 meeting as presented. Member Emkey seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote (5-0-0): Member Nuzzolo: Aye; Member Emkey: Aye; Member Alonzo: Aye; Member Franco: Aye; Chair Jeffreys: Aye

FY 24 2nd Quarter Water Commitment in the amount of \$10,537.75 Chair Jeffreys moved to commit the second quarter water invoicing for FY24 for \$10,537.75. Member Alonzo seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote (5-0-0): Member Nuzzolo: Aye; Member Emkey: Aye; Member Alonzo: Aye; Member Franco: Aye; Chair Jeffreys: Aye

Warrants/Action Items

The Board reviewed and signed several payroll and accounts payable warrants as follows: a payroll warrant for \$1,087,184.10, an accounts payable warrant for \$866,458.61, another accounts payable warrant for \$658,548.56, and additional payroll adjustments of -\$3,970.94 and -\$2,788.31.

Chair Jeffreys noted three action items:

1. **Request for a January update on ARPA fund distribution status:** Chair Jeffreys stated that they would focus on receiving an update regarding the status of ARPA fund distribution. The aim is to gain clarity on distributed funds and understand what remains outstanding. The update is targeted for an upcoming meeting in January.
2. **Develop a formal policy on tax classification information requirements from the Board of Assessors:** Member Alonzo emphasized the necessity of having a formal policy to ensure the Board of Assessors provides comprehensive tax classification information. This policy should include the requirement of receiving all tax bills for the entire town, alongside a summary of updates reflecting changes from fiscal year to fiscal year. The goal is to standardize the information provided for decision-making purposes.

3. **Schedule a 30-minute discussion with Mr. Burden at the next meeting to address his multiple requests:** Chair Jeffreys highlighted that there have been numerous requests from Mr. Burden, communicated via emails, particularly concerning how to perform an audit of the police department. Although typically outside the purview of the Select Board to entertain such an audit request by a single resident, the Board decided to allocate time at the subsequent meeting for a dedicated discussion. This session serves to consolidate the responses to his inquiries and provide a unified stance from the Board.

Committee Reports:

- **School Committee:** Member Emkey reported that the School Committee meeting was upcoming and that she would provide updates at future sessions.
- **Stormwater Task Force:** Member Emkey informed the Board that the Stormwater Task Force was set to meet on December 28th. The focus would likely be on addressing town-wide stormwater concerns, given recent intense rainfall and resultant flooding issues highlighted by DPW Director's presentations. The discussion encompassed extensive needs for drainage improvements, highlighting broader challenges with old infrastructure tackling modern stormwater management needs.
- **Capital Planning Committee:** Member Alonzo mentioned that the Capital Planning Committee had met to prioritize projects and was pushing to finalize its list before the end of the year. The discussions underscored the necessity of addressing infrastructure resilience, especially water and drainage systems, given increased incidences of severe weather events.
- **Board of Assessors:** Although absent from the last report, Member Alonzo mentioned the need for developing the formal policy discussed previously.
- **Master Plan Steering Committee:** Member Franco noted the ongoing survey efforts aimed at garnering resident feedback and scheduled the next significant public meeting to take place in February, intended as a dual session to accommodate varying schedules of town residents.
- **Finance Committee Appointing Committee:** Chair Jeffreys provided an update regarding the recent appointment of Tiffany to the Finance Committee, noting her strong background in budget management and enthusiasm about contributing to the town's fiscal oversight.
- **Water District:** Chair Jeffreys also provided insights into the Water District's ongoing public outreach efforts. This included the selection of Capital Strategic Solutions to enhance community understanding regarding water systems and the planned measures to address increasing concerns over PFAS in drinking water. This strategic partnership aims to educate, inform, and involve community participation through workshops, digital engagement, and proactive communication channels.

Upcoming Meeting/Events Schedule The next Select Board meeting will be on January 9, 2024, followed by meetings on January 16th and 23rd.

Public Comment

Member Alonzo reminded residents of the upcoming Water District special meeting on January 10th at 6 PM.

**Member Franco moved to adjourn. Member Emkey seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote (5-0-0): Member Nuzzolo: Aye; Member Emkey: Aye; Member Alonzo: Aye; Member Franco: Aye; Chair Jeffreys: Aye
The meeting adjourned at 8:49 PM.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Annie Aubrey
Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

These Minutes were reviewed and approved by the Select Board on:
Tuesday December 10, 2024

Member Tom Alonzo made Motion to Approve minutes from December 19, 2023. Seconded by Member Renee Emkey. All, aye. Passed unanimously (5-0-0).