

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via Zoom
Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Members Present: Chairperson Caesar Nuzzolo, Vice Chair Michael Ray Jeffreys, Clerk Amanda Moore, Member Tom Alonzo, Member Renee Emkey

Also Present: Jennifer Warren-Dyment, Town Manager

Public Comment Participants are listed in the minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Nuzzolo called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Nuzzolo informed attendees that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live and would be uploaded to YouTube after the meeting. He explained that the agenda listed topics that may be discussed, but not all items may be addressed and other items not listed could be brought up as permitted by open meeting law.

JOINT MEETING WITH SCHOOL COMMITTEE

School Committee Chair Brian Lehtinen called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Discussion on FY26 Budget

Chair Nuzzolo welcomed the School Committee members. He stated the purpose of the joint meeting was to discuss the FY26 budget and provide guidance to the Town Manager and Superintendent on how to move forward with the budget.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment opened with recognizing the gaps on both the school side, as well as the Town. She presented options for addressing the current budget gap. The options discussed included a multi-year override or utilizing one-time funds specifically free cash as a stopgap, however these funds should not be used in an operating budget, but as a one-time appropriation.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment does not recommend pursuing an override this year, pointing instead towards the following year as being more feasible. She factored in the current economic uncertainty, which makes an override less predictable in its outcome. She highlighted the need for better multi-year forecasting and planning, as the economic landscape is continually shifting. Town Manager Warren-Dyment also noted the upcoming superintendent transition as a reason for caution, as she believed that long-term decisions should be made by the new superintendent in collaboration with the current town administration. Moreover, she saw potential for efficiency gains through increased collaboration between town and school departments, which could help alleviate some financial pressures.

To navigate the current budgetary constraints, Town Manager Warren-Dyment proposed the use of one-time free cash funds this year. Alongside this approach, she suggested commitments to develop a robust 3–5-year financial forecast, pursue a multi-year joint override next year, engage in serious and transparent cost containment discussions across all departments, and understand that this use of free cash would be a one-time effort and not a recurring solution.

School Committee Member Anthony Sculimbrene expressed his support for the idea of pursuing a joint override next year rather than this year. He emphasized the need to rethink each component of the school district in face of ongoing economic challenges, noting that it was a mistake not to regionalize because the rules and funding mechanisms for towns that didn't regionalize got the short shrift in legislation. He suggested shaping the school district in a way that allows us to live within the means we have. There is not enough time now to do a thorough review of every line. He anticipates another 5 years of bad budgets, therefore doing the override now does not allow us to go to the taxpayers and in good faith say that everything that needs to be done has been done.

Conversely, School Committee Member Laura Brzozoski raised concerns about the risks of not pursuing an override this year. She worried that without additional funds, the town might fall further behind, and systemic financial changes might not be keeping pace with rising costs, leading to annual cuts.

Select Board Vice Chair Jeffreys inquired about the override amount needed to address the immediate needs. It was indicated that approximately \$2 million would be needed specifically for the schools, with additional town needs, bringing the total to around \$2.6 million for one year. Chair Nuzzolo asked if the Budget Task Force discussed an override for this year? Mr. Beardmore and Member Emkey said that an override was not discussed. What was recommended from the Budget Task Forces were recommendations to avoid stopgap measures.

School Committee Member Peter Beardmore said that the expectation of the Budget Task Force was to look into operating costs, revenues, what the gap was and how to close it. Using Free Cash comes with a lot of risks. Free cash is not going to continue as it has in the past. Planning needs to start now in order to recommend a new proposal a year from now. There is a lot of work to be done.

School Committee member Carol Archambault indicated that she does not believe the override this year would pass. There is lack of understanding as to budgets and spending in a school district vs. a regional school district. She questioned if the override requested extra money, and could the Town legally set it aside for use on educational purposes. Town Manager Warren-Dyment responded with a multi-year override, you set the override amount that sets the levy limit and the Town does not need to appropriate to that level. Member Alonzo said that in 2014, the approach was to go to levy limit and place the funds in the stabilization fund for the first part of the override, building up money, and then the 2nd half, fund out of the stabilization fund. However, this did not pass in 2014. School Committee Member Laura Brzozoski mentioned the Finance Committee said that this is going to be the year that we figure out who we are and what

we value. Vice Chair Jeffreys agreed that all support education. The question is what people can afford as 30% of the community are retirees and are already struggling with today's costs. He stated the entire focus has been on the school funding and not focusing on other departments or prioritizing their needs. Additionally, if there is no override on the ballot, we are going to have to lay off a number of teachers and have cuts. The voters can decide. Vice Chair Jeffreys continued to say that he disagrees with taking money out of Free Cash because that's borrowing from deferred maintenance and just kicking the can further down.

Select Board Clerk Moore asked about the one-time funding. Town Manager Warren-Dyment described our current free cash, its purpose, and what our target is. If this is approved at Town Meeting, next year we would start free cash at \$383,162.

After a lengthy discussion, the general consensus among both boards was to refrain from pursuing an override this year. Instead, they agreed on using one-time funds to bridge the financial gap, while focusing on developing a strategic, comprehensive override proposal for the next year. This proposal would aim to address both town and school needs, ensuring the stability of services and operations.

The School Committee adjourned their meeting at 7:12 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

BOARD COMMENTS

Member Alonzo thanked those who came out to the town caucus and volunteered for positions. He expressed concern that out of 26 open spots, about 13 were unfilled.

Chair Nuzzolo confirmed there is still a remaining vacancy on the School Committee that was not filled at the caucus. He noted candidates can pull papers from the Town Clerk's office and collect 50 signatures to be placed on the ballot.

It was mentioned that only one of four openings on the Sewer Commission was filled, potentially leading to quorum issues if more people do not step forward.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COMMUNICATIONS FROM OTHER BOARDS

None.

SCHEDULED MEETINGS AND HEARINGS

7:15 PM G.W. Shaw & Sons proposed route changes

DPW Director, Bill Bernard, and Ben Shaw from G.W. Shaw, discussed proposed changes to the trash collection routes. The main proposal is to reduce the number of trucks used on Mondays from two to one. This alteration is projected to enhance operational efficiency, lower the

likelihood of vehicular conflicts, and decrease safety hazards associated with garbage collection activities.

Mr. Bernard highlighted that Mondays have a significantly heavier load compared to other weekdays, being the busiest day with drivers working until almost 4 PM, whereas on other days, they typically finish by around 12:30 PM or even earlier. He noted there are 48% more trash pickups and about 34% more recyclables handled on Mondays as opposed to Wednesdays. As a result, drivers frequently require two trucks to manage the Monday load, a necessity not observed on other weekdays.

To achieve a more balanced workload across the week, it is proposed that certain routes traditionally serviced on Monday be moved to Wednesday. Roads identified for this shift are Highland St, Chestnut St, Main St, Memorial Dr, sections of Townsend Harbor Rd, Woodland Dr, Hemlock Dr, Pine Acres Rd, Birch Island Way, Hilltop Ln, and Hickory Ln. For Thursdays route, a minor change is suggested wherein Longwood Dr and a short section of Burrage down to Longwood move to Friday routes.

The plan includes sending letters directly to homes that will be affected, attaching notices to garbage barrels, and providing updates via the town's Facebook page and official website.

These adjustments are scheduled to begin during the week of April 7th.

The proposal received unanimous support from the Select Board, who commended the plan and the comprehensive strategy for communicating these changes to town residents.

7:30 PM Presentation by Christopher Reilly, Land Use Director, on Town Meeting Warrant Articles (Accessory Dwelling Units and Floodplain Map Update)

Land Use Director, Christopher Reilly, provided a presentation on two zoning warrant articles for the upcoming Town Meeting. The first article focused on the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) bylaw update, which aims to align with the state mandate, per chapter 40A, stating that ADUs are protected use in a single-family residential districts.

Mr. Reilly explained how this is more permissive than our previous regulation and falls under the Dover Amendment which prevents us from doing a lot to regulate it. Vice Chair Jeffreys inquired about the language that referenced locations to not be within 0.5 miles of an MBTA Commuter station. If there are no properties within that range, he mentioned the possibility of omitting that language. Vice Chair Jeffreys also inquired about the statute for a time limit and did not see a time limit or if this would be perpetual. Mr. Reilly mentioned it is meant to be perpetual. Vice Chair Jeffreys indicated that he believes from previous confirmation from Representative Scarsdale and Representative Kushmerek that there was an 8 year time limit but wants to look into that further.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment also mentioned if the Article does not pass at Town Meeting the statute would still apply. Planning Board Chair Matthew Brenner reiterated that Lunenburg had

one of the most permissive ADU bylaws in the region, however this is not a big shift from business as usual in town now.

Mr. Reilly also presented the second article, which involves updating the floodplain bylaw. This update is significant as it involves revising our Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for the first time since 1982. The major watersheds are being updated throughout the State. The benefit to the residents is the Town's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program

This process involves updating the map along with the model bylaw with things we didn't have before, such as a variance process, definitions, and more stringent use regulations. This is highly beneficial to those in the floodplain area.

Member Emkey inquired about the availability of the updated map. Mr. Reilly noted that it would be available at Town Meeting for the presentation. Vice Chair Jeffreys asked how those impacted or newly impacted would learn about this update. Mr. Reilly said that any residents affected by this change would be contacted directly by the Planning Board by mail.

7:50 PM Presentation by Anita Scheipers, Chair, Parks Commission on Town Meeting Warrant Article (Marshall Park)

Chair Scheipers and Clerk Menard presented an update on the Marshall Park improvements and updated designs, emphasizing the need to revise the previous project scope due to budget constraints. The project has been reduced in scope to acknowledge reality and cost. Originally, the project was envisioned in four phases, but after a reassessment by the Parks Commission and their design firm, RDLA, the plan was condensed into two main phases, with an additional small phase, 2B. The Skate Park Commission is anticipating that their construction will be completed over summer.

Phase 1, estimated at \$5.8 million, includes constructing new parking facilities off Mass Ave to accommodate 94 vehicles, a significant improvement over the current dirt lot with approximately 45 undefined spaces and no designated ADA spots. The phase also encompasses an accessible playground, sports courts, and a skate park, which the Skate Park Organization plans to construct by summer 2025. The sports courts will feature a basketball court and three pickleball courts, and work in Phase 1 will align with finished elevations from the skate park project. Phase 2A focuses on redeveloping the men's baseball field and enhancing the women's softball field, along with providing additional parking off Chestnut Street to alleviate parking issues voiced by local residents. Phase 2B plans for constructing bathroom and concession facilities, key amenities for visitors and event goers at the park. A map was provided to show the updated design.

The entire project, encompassing all phases, is projected to cost \$13.9 million. The Parks Commission plans to seek debt exclusion borrowing beyond the levy limit to fund the project. If the full funding is not supported by the town, the Commission has prepared a fallback option to move forward only with Phase 1, including the building component from Phase 2B, amounting to \$5.8 million. This contingency plan ensures at least part of the park is fully upgraded.

The construction timeline, if approved, spans from March 2026 to May 2027, with Phase 1 designed to commence promptly despite ongoing utilization of the ball fields, ensuring minimal disruption to existing park activities. Public information sessions are planned for April to engage the community and provide detailed insights into the scope and benefits of the proposed enhancements.

Chair Scheipers noted that while they were previously successful in securing grants, adjustments are necessary due to the new project scope. The state advised they were strong contenders, encouraging re-application for grants fitting the updated plan. Additionally, a professional grant writer will be engaged to explore potential funding avenues.

Member Emkey questioned if this would impact the eligibility of grants. Clerk Menard explained that she is unsure if we would receive the same amount of grant funding, but would qualify for at least some.

Vote Required Re: Early In-Person Voting

Representatives, Ruth Anderson and Karen Kemp, from the Board of Registrars recommended not implementing in-person early voting for local elections, citing the cost and low turnout for previous attempts.

Despite opting out, alternative voting methods remain available. Mail-in ballots can be requested and obtained from the Town Clerk's. Absentee voting is available during town hall hours, or use the secure ballot drop box outside of Town Hall.

Motion: Member Alonzo moved to opt out of in-person early voting for the local annual town elections. The motion was seconded by Clerk Moore. The Motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

APPOINTMENTS, RATIFICATIONS, AND RESIGNATIONS

Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Tiffaney Tavares as Assistant to the Sewer Business Manager

Town Manager Warren-Dyment recommended appointing Tiffany Tavares as Assistant Sewer Business Manager. She noted Tavares' accounting and organizational skills would translate well to the role.

Member Alonzo moved to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Tiffany Tavares as Assistant to the Sewer Business Manager. Vice Chair Jeffreys seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Acknowledge the resignation of John "Jack" Rabbit from the Board of Assessors, effective May 16, 2025

The Board acknowledged and thanked Mr. Rabbit for his service on the Board of Assessors.

Acknowledge the resignation of Joseph Russo, Library Page

The Board acknowledged Joseph Russo's resignation as Library Page.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Project Updates

Library Teen Room Project

The library teen room project is nearly complete, with painters scheduled to begin work tomorrow. The project is expected to be fully concluded by next week.

Roof Replacement and Chimney Restoration

The roof replacement and chimney restoration are progressing at Town Hall. The second chimney will be completed by early next week, after which the chimney work will move to the Ritter Memorial building. Concurrently, roofing work in Town Hall will commence, focusing on assessing the lower roof condition once existing shingles are removed. The crews will then move on to slate tile replacements and gutter and trim repairs at the Ritter building.

Municipal Building Cleaning Service

The deadline for municipal building cleaning service bids is tomorrow. We had a robust turnout on the attendance during the building tours.

Adult Activity Center Kitchen Renovation

This renovation project is ongoing, and new equipment, including a stove, warming oven, stainless steel sink, and counters, has been ordered and received. Work is underway to install a grease trap, which the center had previously been operating without.

Town-Wide Keying and Security Project

Funded by the FY '25 capital plan, a vendor has been obtained off of the statewide bid list vendor. An executed contract is in the process. All exterior locks on town buildings, including Town Hall, Ritter Memorial, the Public Safety Complex, the Adult Activity Center, Library, DPW, Beach House, and Teen Center, will be replaced.

Recruitment

Police Chief Screening Committee

The screening committee is meeting tomorrow to interview three candidates for the Police Chief position, with the Town Manager observing but not participating in the interviews.

Board and Committee Vacancies

The Town is advertising for several open positions across departments, including Seasonal Lifeguards, Beach Director, Library Page, Seasonal Cemetery Laborer, and an Administrative Assistant for the Conservation Department. The Planning Department Administrative Assistant is currently assisting the Conservation Department to provide coverage.

General Updates

On March 17th, the Town Manager is hosting a St. Patrick's Day luncheon for staff at the Senior Center which is a good opportunity for team building.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion on FY2025 Budget, FY2026 Budget, Capital Plan, and Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Budget Overview and Challenges

Town Manager Warren-Dyment presented the FY26 Preliminary Budget. Total revenues are \$48,594,145 Net State Aid is \$9,803,971. Local receipts are budgeted conservatively, with some adjustments based on trends..

The Town Manager highlighted key budget challenges and changes consisting of the cost of health insurance increasing, removal of pave management, Worcester County Retirement costs are increasing, unsettled Collective Bargaining Agreements, and the reorganization of the Land Use Department for efficiency. Unemployment remains level funded.

Discussion occurred about hiring a Grant and Contract Manager, The Town Manager explained why the Town is not going to pursue a Grant Writer, but rather a Grant and Contract Manager.

Member Alonzo expressed that a Grant Writer should be hired before a Grant and Contract Manager. Vice Chair Jeffreys agrees and that there was a budget for a Grant Writer. Member Emkey questioned why this service wasn't fulfilled within the year especially when it was budgeted. Vice Chair Jeffreys recommends a policy on the utilization of grants. The Town Manager will continue working on this.

Other discussions surrounded various aspects of the budget, including the use of free cash and stabilization funds, a potential override for next year, concerns about cutting out the pavement management plan, IT consulting services, and staffing needs and potential cuts.

The Town Manager and Select Board reviewed the Annual Town Meeting draft warrant. No final decisions were reached, but the board agreed to continue budget discussions at future meetings to refine strategies for both immediate fiscal issues and long-term financial stability.

CURRENT BUSINESS

Review List of Upcoming Vacancies for Appointed Boards, Committees, and Commissions for FY26

The Board acknowledged receipt of the list of upcoming vacancies but deferred detailed review to a future meeting.

MINUTES/WARRANTS/ACTION ITEMS

Member Emkey made Motion to approve Minutes for January 15, 2025, February 4, 2025, February 11, 2025, February 18, 2025, and March 4, 2025. Motion was seconded by Clerk Moore. Motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Notice of Right of First Refusal for 100 Townsend Harbor Road:

The Board reviewed recommendations from various committees regarding the Town's right of first refusal on 100 Townsend Harbor Road. While some Committee's expressed interest, it was determined the Town does not have \$400,000 available to purchase the property.

Member Alonzo moved that the Board waive its right of first refusal on 100 Townsend Harbor Road. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Jeffreys. The motion passed 4-0-1, with Vice Chair Jeffreys abstaining.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Economic Development Committee: Clerk Moore mentioned that the Committee has not met and did not have an update.

Master Planning Steering Committee: Member Moore said that the Town Manager has been working diligently and will have updates to come.

Superintendent Screening Committee: Chair Nuzzolo provided an update that the Committee met Monday night and have orientation with their representative from Massachusetts Association of School Committees who is helping them in the hiring process. They are in the process of drafting interview questions.

UPCOMING MEETING/EVENTS SCHEDULE

Chair Nuzzolo announced the Board is meeting on March 19, 2025

TOWN MANAGER COMMENT

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Glenn McLeod of 436 Reservoir Road took the floor to express a series of comments and considerations to the board. First, he emphasized his appreciation for the board's attention to the pressing need for another shift in the fire department. Mr. McLeod acknowledged the difficult budgetary constraints the town faces but underscored the critical importance of addressing staffing shortages in emergency services, highlighting the growing risks and service demands that require a more robust department.

Mr. McLeod also voiced significant concerns regarding any potential plans to negotiate a change in the health insurance cost splits for town employees. He noted that altering the current split could effectively serve as a pay cut for employees, such changes being particularly tough given the economic climate and the rising costs of healthcare that employees are already bearing. Stressing the delicate nature of employee compensation and morale, Mr. McLeod recommended that the board avoid making any alterations to the insurance contributions, citing them as a crucial benefit and a sensitive area of employee agreements.

Further, Mr. McLeod expressed his reservations about the board's decision to waive the right of first refusal on the 100 Townsend Harbor Road property. He argued that the town should

thoroughly utilize the full 120-day period allotted for such decisions, allowing more time for community input and exploration of potential benefits and uses for the property. Mr. McLeod observed that the community has, historically, invested in this property through tax credits and felt that the residents deserved ample opportunity to weigh in or perhaps suggest alternative partners or approaches before a decision to pass on the purchase was finalized.

BOARD COMMENTS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION & ADJOURNMENT

Chair Nuzzolo made Motion to Enter into Executive Session and not to re-enter into Open session pursuant to MGL c. 30 §21 (a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Town, and the Chair of the Board so declares. Vice Chair Jeffreys seconded. Motion passed (5-0-0).

Executive Session began at 11:15 PM.

The Board adjourned the meeting concluding the Executive Session.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Belliveau,
Assistant Town Manager/HR Director

These Minutes were reviewed and approved by the Select Board on:
Tuesday May 6, 2025

Member Alonzo made the Motion to Approve the minutes from March 11, 2025. Seconded by Vice Chair Jeffreys. Call for the Vote: Four Aye. One Abstention (Member Moore). Motion Passed (4-0-1).