

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via Zoom
Tuesday, September 9, 2025

Members Present: Clerk Renee Emkey, Member Brian Lehtinen, and Member Glenn McLeod

Members Absent: Chair Caesar Nuzzolo, Vice-Chair Amanda Moore

Also Present: Jennifer Warren-Dyment, Town Manager

Public Comment Participants are listed in the minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Clerk Renee Emkey called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the pledge of allegiance. Clerk Emkey advised those present that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live over the Lunenburg Public Access Channel, on Facebook Live, and would be uploaded to the Lunenburg Access YouTube Channel following the meeting. She 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.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Clerk Emkey to Enter into Executive Session pursuant to MGL c. 30 §21 (a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel...or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel (Executive Assistant to the Town Manager and Select Board). Seconded by Member Brian Lehtinen. Roll Call Vote: Member Glenn McLeod – Aye, Member Lehtinen –Aye, Clerk Emkey – Aye. Motion passed unanimously (3-0-0).

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk Emkey reported no announcements.

Member McLeod deferred his announcement to Committee Reports.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public

No members of the public were present in the room, and no public comment was received via Zoom at this time.

Board

Member McLeod encouraged residents to view the September 3 School Committee meeting, noting it contained significant information pertinent to ongoing community discussions, including the revelation of an approximately \$582,000 budget surplus.

IV. APPOINTMENTS, RATIFICATIONS, AND RESIGNATIONS

- **Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Melissa Richard as Executive Assistant to the Town Manager and Select Board**
- **Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Susan Begley as Payroll and Benefits Coordinator**
- **Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Jane Paszko as Videographer**

Town Manager Warren-Dyment presented three Town Manager appointments for ratification.

Melissa Richard was appointed as Executive Assistant to the Town Manager and Select Board. Ms. Richard joins from the City of Fitchburg, where she served as Administrative Assistant for Community Development and Planning. Town Manager Warren-Dyment noted that references praised her customer service skills and welcoming personality.

Susan Begley was appointed as Payroll and Benefits Administrator. While Ms. Begley does not have municipal experience, she brings over 20 years of experience in finance, office management, and payroll and benefits administration. Town Manager Warren-Dyment noted that Ms. Begley would overlap with the current incumbent, Nancy O'Rourke, to ensure a smooth transition.

Jane Pascoe was appointed as Videographer. Ms. Pascoe holds a degree in Communications and Media from Fitchburg State University and has substantial experience in public access.

Member Lehtinen moved to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Melissa Richard as Executive Assistant to the Town Manager and Select Board, pending legal review; the Town Manager's appointment of Susan Begley as Payroll and Benefits Coordinator; and the Town Manager's appointment of Jane Pascoe as Videographer. Seconded by Member McLeod seconded the motion. Call For Vote: Three – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (3-0-0).

VI. TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager Warren-Dyment presented two significant updates.

Flat Hill Road Project: Termination of Contract with Canamach Corporation

Town Manager Warren-Dyment reported that on September 3, 2025, the Town of Lunenburg, through Town Counsel Adam Costa and Matthew Provencher of Mead, Talerman & Costa, formally notified Canamach Corporation of the termination of its contract for the Flat Hill Road project for cause. She read the termination notice into the record, which cited Canamach's failure to meet contract completion timelines, failure to provide good-faith estimates of completion, damage to the Town's roadway from equipment left on town property, and inadequate efforts to reopen the roadway.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment acknowledged that the Town had worked at length to hold Canamach to the contract rather than terminate immediately, noting that Canamach was a Mass Department of Transportation pre-qualified contractor and had submitted the lowest bid by several hundred thousand dollars. She cautioned that rebidding the project would likely result in substantially higher costs and would require a new design team, causing further delay. The Town is also working to secure an extension on existing grant funds and may need to seek additional appropriations at a future Town Meeting. She noted that additional Chapter 90 funds received this year would help offset some of that gap. The question of whether to reopen the bridge which MassDOT had ordered closed following its inspection remains under active review, with any

decision to be publicly announced.

School Department FY25 Budget Surplus

Town Manager Warren-Dyment reported receiving a memorandum from School Superintendent Dr. Jodi Fortuna on September 3 regarding a budget surplus of approximately \$582,114.44 for FY25. She offered important context and cautionary notes for the public:

- The reported surplus figure includes an approximately \$114,000 encumbrance, representing potential outstanding vendor invoices for goods or services rendered before June 30, 2025. While she did not expect the full \$114,000 to represent real outstanding bills, the true surplus figure may be somewhat lower until the books are fully closed.
- Under Massachusetts municipal finance law, any unexpended operating budget funds as of June 30th are returned and flow into certified free cash. These funds cannot be retained by the department or redirected without action at Town Meeting.
- Town Manager Warren-Dyment stated that the earliest any surplus funds could be appropriated for a new purpose would be November 18, 2025, via a Special Town Meeting, following free cash certification.
- She confirmed, based on her meeting with the Superintendent and School Business Manager that morning, that positions restored through the override were in fact filled, and that the Chromebook purchases were made. The surplus therefore originates elsewhere and will require further internal analysis to fully explain.
- The School Committee is planning a public Q&A session at its next meeting. Town Manager Warren-Dyment also noted that the FY26 budget, which was developed by the prior team, would need to be reviewed line by line to determine whether the same assumptions that produced the FY25 surplus are embedded in the current year's budget, a process that she acknowledged would take months.

Member Lehtinen asked whether the Town's Finance Director would have flagged the surplus when funds were returned. Town Manager Warren-Dyment and Clerk Emkey clarified that the school has not yet closed its books, and accordingly the funds have not yet been returned to the Town. The Finance Director's oversight role would come into effect later in the reconciliation process.

Member McLeod inquired whether an outstanding encumbrance of approximately \$114,000 this late in the fiscal year was unusual. Town Manager Warren-Dyment indicated that she would be surprised if the full \$114,000 represented genuine outstanding bills, though some amount may be real.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

No items were presented under this agenda item.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

No items were presented under this agenda item.

IX. MINUTES/WARRANTS/ACTION ITEMS

There were no minutes, warrants, or action items for consideration.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Member McLeod reported on the following:

- Lunenburg Business Association: The 4th Annual Golf and Cornhole Tournament will be held Saturday, September 13, at Settlers Crossing Country Club beginning at 11:00 AM, with food by the Lions Club and online raffle ticket sales available.
- Planning Board: At its Monday night meeting, the Planning Board granted a special permit for a five-way common driveway at 1083 Northfield Road, following a variance previously granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals on May 28, 2025. A public hearing on the MBTA Communities Act town meeting article is scheduled for October 27. The Planning Board also issued a warning regarding scammers targeting applicants in the permitting process; residents with questions about unexpected bills should contact the town directly using contact information from the town's official website.
- Library Board of Trustees: Next meeting is Thursday, September 18.
- Agricultural Commission: An upcoming Farmers Market will be held Friday from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Thomas C. Passios School. The Agricultural Fair and Farmers Market is scheduled for Saturday, September 27, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the same location, featuring touch-a-tractor, hay rides, games, food, and music.

Member Lehtinen reported on the following:

- School Committee (September 3): The Chair reported the approximately \$582,000 budget surplus. Picture day is scheduled at the primary school. Open house events are planned throughout September, and the first middle school dance is October 3. The Superintendent reported enrollment of 1,593 students across all schools. Capital Planning Committee member Peter Beardmore urged prompt action on budget requests due by October 1.
- Board of Assessors (September 3): Residential, commercial, industrial, and chapter land growth was assessed at \$27,324,570, with an expected tax value from growth of approximately \$392,000, excluding personal property and specific exemptions. There were 33 functional adjustments (14 residential, 8 commercial) and 96 obsolescence adjustments (16 residential, 80 commercial). Eight means-tested exemption applications were received, all appearing likely to qualify. The next Board of Assessors meeting is October 1; one vacancy remains on the Board.

XI. UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS SCHEDULE

Clerk Emkey noted the following upcoming meetings: a brief Zoom-only meeting on Monday, September 15; the next regular meeting on September 23; and the Tri-Board meeting on September 30. Clerk Emkey also reminded the public that the Special Town Meeting warrant is currently open and closes October 2.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

• PUBLIC

John Bowen, 162 Highland Street, addressed the Select Board via Zoom regarding the Flat Hill

Road project. Drawing on his experience as a former owner of a DCAM-certified construction business, Mr. Bowen expressed concern that litigation or settlement costs with Canamach may ultimately be less than the contractor's liability under the contract, which he described as a common tactic. He urged the Select Board to ensure that any legal action taken against Canamach meaningfully exceeds the contract value, both to make affected residents whole and to send a clear message to future contractors. He noted that while litigation could take six to seven years, a strong legal posture would be worth the effort.

• **TOWN MANAGER**

Town Manager Warren-Dyment had no additional comment.

• **BOARD**

Clerk Emkey had no additional comment beyond the Special Town Meeting warrant reminder noted above.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

Member Lehtinen moved to adjourn at 7:39 PM. Seconded by Member McLeod. Call For Vote: Three – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (3-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,
Renee Emkey

These Minutes were reviewed and approved by the Select Board on: Tuesday, September 15, 2026